Involvement inside and outside the classroom fosters leadership, multicultural understanding, civic responsibility, professional expertise, and academic achievement.

Introduction

The first goal in *The Iowa Promise* is “To create a University experience that enriches the lives of undergraduates and helps them to become well-informed individuals, lifelong learners, engaged citizens, and productive employees and employers.” To meet that objective, and to carry out our mission “to educate students for success and personal fulfillment,” we cannot and do not limit our attention to the formal teaching and learning that takes place within the curriculum. We must also aspire to the highest quality in—and widespread use of—programs and activities that further learning alongside the curriculum.

An extensive body of research exists that demonstrates that student involvement both inside and outside the classroom benefits students in many ways, and that institutions can shape the undergraduate experience in ways that will encourage such involvement (Astin, 1985; Strange & Banning, 2001). Our own RISE study finds that “as with students elsewhere, engagement matters and it matters early.” In addition to encouraging academic engagement, the University must provide—and support or collaborate with others who provide—opportunities for involvement in co-curricular activities, which can contribute to the development of leadership skills, multicultural understanding, civic responsibility, professional expertise, and any number of other valuable aptitudes and attitudes.

Programs and activities such as these, by contributing in various ways to student learning alongside the curriculum, also contribute to many of the undergraduate education-related strategies in *The Iowa Promise*—including the following examples:

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

1c: Mission pervades organization

1e: Institutional integrity
. . . Providing them with opportunities to develop leadership and teamwork skills . . .

. . . Continuing efforts to internationalize the educational experience

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

. . . Communicating to them the value of community involvement and participation in democratic governance

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

. . . Providing curricular and cocurricular opportunities that will enable them to understand and succeed in a multicultural and global community

Programs and activities that help students develop skills and extend their reach academically and personally have many benefits, from increasing retention to increasing options post-graduation. Perhaps more important, when successful, these activities help students recognize their capacity for accomplishment, and equip students with tools they will use far into the future.

**Scope**

The self-study steering committee asked the subcommittee on Getting Involved to look at the opportunities for educationally purposeful co-curricular engagement that are available to UI students; to determine, if possible, the extent to which students take advantage of those opportunities; and to identify barriers to and assess the benefits of engagement, from the point of view of both students and faculty/staff.

**Research Process**

As described in the “Research Processes” section of the introduction to this special emphasis self-study, the subcommittee on Getting Involved relied primarily on qualitative research methods that included a series of structured and semi-structured interviews with faculty and staff (the departmental interviews) and with students (the student focus groups).

Information about co-curricular opportunities associated with departments and major programs, as well as some information about advising, was gathered from the DEO survey and from supplemental interviews conducted by the subcommittee on Education within the Major.

The analysis of student engagement at The University of Iowa also relies heavily on the findings of the RISE study.

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**Getting Involved Subcommittee Members:**

David Grady, Associate Vice President and Director, University Life Centers (co-chair)

Scott McNabb, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Policy and Leadership Studies, College of Education (co-chair)

Bill Nelson, Associate Director, University Life Centers and Director, Office of Student Life (co-chair)

Kelley Ashby, Associate Director, Office of Student Life, 6/06 through 12/06, and Associate Director, Pomerantz Career Center, 1/07 to present

Angela Bong, Graduate Student

Wayne Fett, Senior Associate Director, Recreational Services

Jennifer Hemmingsen, Internship and Assessments Coordinator, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Todd Ingram, Clinical Assistant Professor, College of Nursing

Robert Kirby, Associate Director, University of Iowa Honors Program

Kenny Layton, Undergraduate Student

Kim Marra, Professor, Department of Theatre Arts, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Mary Mathew Wilson, Coordinator, Civic Engagement Program

Dave Merry, Graduate Student

Amy Rohlfing, Undergraduate Student

Von Stange, Director, University Housing

Michelle Stricker, Adjunct Lecturer, Pomerantz Career Center

Pam Trimpe, Program Associate, Old Capitol Museum
Summary of Findings

UI students have access to an impressive array of opportunities for educationally purposeful co-curricular activity. The University is building on its commitment to undergraduate involvement in research with a variety of new programs, and on its commitment to experiential and service learning through programs such as Service Learning Institutes for faculty.

Students who participate in these activities—according to their own comments, the observations of faculty and staff, and the extensive body of research on the subject of student engagement—enjoy many educational, vocational, and personal benefits. Despite the volume of options and the positive outcomes, however, evidence from the RISE study suggests that only a small percentage of students engages in these activities regularly.

Factors that might contribute to low involvement include poor coordination of co-curricular activities across units, ineffective advertising, and lack of meaningful evaluation. Also, students report that involvement decisions are guided by peer influence, which suggests that the University can do more to help students make good choices.

Description and Evaluation of Programs and Activities that Contribute to Learning Alongside the Curriculum

Educationally Purposeful Co-Curricular Involvement Opportunities

Overview

The sheer volume of opportunities for educationally purposeful co-curricular engagement at UI makes creating a comprehensive list of them very difficult. To arrive at a representative sample of the kinds of activities available—and a sense of the frequency with which departments offer them—the subcommittee on Getting Involved started by creating a list of types of activities, organized into general categories. The subcommittee turned this into a checklist, and asked the departments they interviewed to note which kinds of opportunities they make available to students.

Table II-22 lists the types of activities the subcommittee identified, by category. Appendix II-H details which departments reported offering each type of co-curricular involvement opportunity.

Table II-22: Types of Student Involvement Opportunities Offered by University of Iowa Offices/Departments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement Opportunity</th>
<th># of Offices/Departments Providing Opportunity (n = 24)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connecting co-curricular activities with academic course work</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For-credit courses</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest lecturer/speaker/panelist opportunities for students</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement Opportunity</td>
<td># of Offices/Departments Providing Opportunity (n = 24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic/Course Related/Skill Building</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership training, education, and development</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-credit topic-based workshops facilitated by non-students</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to represent UI off campus at regional/national meetings</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer educators</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer mentoring</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student involvement in presentations, research, and scholarly activity with faculty/staff</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student involvement in publication or media development</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate research and/or teaching assistantships</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career/Employment/Networking</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career/professional networking</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting or facilitating networking opportunities with alumni</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internships or practica (for-credit and non)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internships (paid)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student employment</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diversity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity training/education</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to interact with people from different cultures</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Events/Exhibitions/Performances</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event/program/workshop planning and production by students</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student exhibitions and performances</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health and Well-Being</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and wellness activities/initiatives</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual exploration and understanding</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Service/Volunteerism</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory board membership</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus-based service/volunteerism</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-based service/volunteerism</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For example, Table II-22 illustrates that representatives from 14 offices and departments reported offering opportunities for students to interact with people from different cultures. They were:

- Center for Diversity & Enrichment
- Center for Teaching
- College of Nursing
- Fraternity & Sorority Life Programs
- International Programs
- International Students & Scholars
- Museum Studies
- Office of Student Life
- Office for Study Abroad
- Political Science
- Rape Victim Advocacy Program
- Student Disability Services
- Theatre Arts
- Women in Science and Engineering

Learning alongside the curriculum can take many forms. Field work, laboratory experiments, and simulations can enrich classroom-based courses. Practica can round out professional educations. Internships can add practical skills to academic principles. Studies abroad, cultural events, and artistic or political performances can refine and extend the preparations that students have made in their coursework. Service learning arrangements can benefit students and social organizations alike. These experiences become even more valuable when they are accompanied by critical reflection on the experience.

For purposes of this self-study, the subcommittee on Getting Involved chose to address the following categories of co-curricular activity:
Recognition and Funding of Student Organizations

According to the Policies and Regulations Affecting Students, a student organization may be officially recognized by the Partnership for Student Governments at Iowa (PSGI), a collegiate dean, Recreational Services, or the Office of Student Life (OSL).

In FY 2008 the mandatory UI student activity fee is $29 and the official authorized budget for allocation to student organizations is $876,554. These funds are administered by PSGI’s Student Assembly Budgeting and Allocating Committee (SABAC), which consists of nine undergraduate representatives (six voting, three alternate) and five graduate or professional students (three voting, two alternate). All voting members of SABAC are PSGI senators. SABAC is advised by the director of the Office of Student Life. The committee is responsible for recommending both annual and supplemental funding.

Student Organizations and the Office of Student Life

The Office of Student Life (OSL) describes its mission as: “to provide educational, leadership, and social opportunities for the greater University community, with a primary focus on students. Our staff works with, through, and for students and student organizations, and in conjunction with other University and community partners, to enhance the holistic development of students and their academic and co-curricular experiences.”

The student organizations OSL supports range from the University of Iowa Student Government (UISG) and SCOPE (the Student Commission for Programming and Entertainment) to the Greek community, to social, service, and academic organizations such as the Indian Student Alliance, Habitat for Humanity, Alpha Phi Omega-Omicron Service Fraternity, the UI Association of Nursing Students, and the Mock Trial Club. A complete list of these organizations is available on the OSL web site.

For the 2007-08 academic year, 381 student organizations reported their membership numbers to the Office of Student Life for a total of 43,668 student memberships (no information is available regarding how many students are involved in more than one organization). A table of the groups and their membership numbers can be found in Appendix II-I. OSL has assigned most (344) of these organizations to a category in order to look at the distribution of organizations by type, as illustrated in Figure II-4.
OSL also sponsors or advises major annual events, diversity initiatives, leadership opportunities, and arts and entertainment programs.

Dance Marathon

The University of Iowa Dance Marathon is a student organization that provides year-round support to youth cancer victims and their families. “The Event” is a 24-hour Dance Marathon where students assemble to celebrate the child survivors and remember the children who have passed away throughout the year. Students plan and participate in other events throughout the year, the primary goal of which is to raise money for children with cancer and to educate the community about them.

Among the activities OSL sponsors are Dance Marathon, RiverFest and RiverRun (an annual, student-organized concert festival and run/walk race to benefit a local non-profit), Homecoming, the 10,000 Hours Show, and Welcome Week. OSL also offers services, such as Student Credit and Money Management Services, Student Legal Services, and the University Box Office.

OSL is involved in many diversity initiatives. It supports the annual Celebrating Cultural Diversity Festival and Martin Luther King, Jr. Human Rights Week, for example, and also maintains the Multi-Cultural Calendar, which provides a comprehensive listing of multi-cultural events on campus and in the area. The four campus cultural and resource centers—the Afro-American Cultural Center, Latino Native-American Cultural Center, Asian Pacific American Cultural Center, and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Center—are units of the OSL, offering programs and services that include:

![Figure II-4: Number of Student Organizations by Category (as classified by the Office of Student Life)](image-url)
The Office of Student Life reports that 79 of the student clubs and organizations it recognizes, including both undergraduate and graduate student organizations, are academically oriented (see Appendix II-J for the complete list). Twenty-one of the OSL-recognized organizations (26%) are local affiliates for national associations, and seven (8%) are academic fraternal organizations. Undergraduate academic organizations emphasize co-curricular involvement, participation in interdisciplinary activities, and gaining exposure to and support for educational and professional experiences.

The 10,000 Hours Show
10K is a year-round effort to engage young people in volunteer service, culminating in a free concert for which the only admission is 10 or more volunteer hours to local nonprofits. The “show” of the 10,000 Hours Show is 10K volunteer staff reaching out to their peers to get them involved in their community through volunteering. The mission of the 10,000 Hours Shows nationally is to mobilize young people to meet immediate community needs and recognize those who do, helping develop the next generation of active community leaders.

Co-curricular Activities Associated with Colleges, Departments, and Major Programs

The DEO survey conducted for this self-study asked about co-curricular opportunities associated with departments’ major programs. Of DEOs surveyed, 37% (20 out of 54) indicated that their departments offer co-curricular activities, including workshops, job-shadowing, orientations for new majors, and working with student groups. Thirty-one percent (17 out of 54) of departments offer a lounge for undergraduates, and 89% (48 out of 54) have a student group associated with their major.

A Representative Collegiate Example: The Tippie College of Business

The Tippie College of Business offers one good example of how academic programs involve students in professional groups that match their interests and in governance groups that allow them to participate in decisions about College policies.

Student organizations are an integral part of the Tippie College of Business. The organizations of the College serve not only as a catalyst for networking with faculty, staff, and alumni, but also as a tool for students to excel both academically and as leaders. Nineteen organizations are associated with the Tippie College, some directed towards specific majors and others open to any business student. Some facilitate career advancement, some focus on community service, and others enhance the College environment.
The **Hawkinson Institute of Business Finance**, a selective organization within the College, focuses on career placement in the finance and accounting fields. Each year, 25 to 35 top undergraduate students are invited to join the organization on the basis of academic performance, leadership potential, and interpersonal skills. The institute works with these students throughout their academic careers to prepare them for challenging careers upon graduation. The Hawkinson Institute provides résumé assistance, mock interviewing, and career coaching. The institute has maintained a 100% placement rate since it was established.

The encouragement of community service is a common goal among Tippie organizations. In 2006-07, business students participated in “The House that Tippie Built,” the largest community service project in the history of the College. Beta Alpha Psi sponsored the project, working in collaboration with numerous other College organizations to raise $50,000 to build a house for a family in need. Students held fund-raising events and physically built the Habitat for Humanity house.

The **Tippie College of Business Senate**, an organization focused on environmental enhancement within the College, is a newly formed body of undergraduate business students serving as a student advisory board. The Tippie Senate’s primary objective is to facilitate a forum for the exchange of ideas and to provide recommendations to the College’s Undergraduate Program Office, as well as to faculty and staff. The Senate is currently working to implement the Tippie College of Business Senior Class Gift Program, the first of its kind for the College. The program will encourage seniors to donate a small amount to the fund upon graduation and continue to contribute to the College as alumni. The program will begin a tradition, benefit future students, and demonstrate the impact of a Tippie education.

The **Tippie College of Business** and the Colleges of **Education**, **Engineering**, and **Nursing** all maintain web pages listing student organizations associated with those colleges.

**Representative Examples from the DEO Survey**

Following are some examples of co-curricular activities mentioned by respondents to the DEO survey. The activities are organized by category to illustrate the range of ways in which they can benefit students, although most of the organizations listed here serve more than one purpose.

**Academic/Professional Development**

The Department of Computer Science supports the campus chapters of two national computer science professional organizations—the Association for Computing Machinery, and **Women in Computer Science**. Faculty advise and support these groups. The wide-ranging activities of these groups include academic and technical presentations by guest speakers, career planning, conferences, visiting corporations, and social activities. Gifts from a corporate sponsor have provided each of the groups funding to cover several years of operating expenses.

Honors students in the Department of Accounting participate in Beta Alpha Psi, a student organization that holds weekly meetings with professional accounting organizations (in both the public and private accounting arenas), sponsors “Meet the Firms Night” in the fall and an awards banquet in the spring, and organizes field trips.

The School of Art and Art History has several student organizations: Undergraduate
Students in Design (USID), the Ceramics Society, the Art History Club, and the student chapter of the National Art Education Association (NAEA). USID meets regularly to exchange information about graphic design, and they hold a large show at the end of the academic year for senior BA and BFA students. The Ceramics Society raises money to visit ceramic studios in other cities and states, and sometimes to attend conferences. The Art History Club, made up of undergraduates, works with the graduate students of the Art History Society to organize symposia, field trips, and speakers. The student chapter of NAEA works to design professional development experiences for students.

Peer Mentoring

International Programs (IP) has established a student group called PRISM—Preparation and Resources for International Studies Majors, Minors and Maybes. The group sponsors monthly guest speakers on international careers, has a student mentoring program, develops service learning projects, and plans collaborative projects with other international student groups. IP also sponsors the International Crossroads Community, one of UI’s residential learning communities. And IP is establishing a Student Ambassadors program, which will send International Studies students out to talk with groups in their home communities about their experience at The University of Iowa, studying abroad, and internationalization topics in general. This program will help IP establish connections across the state, and will help students develop professional contacts.

Service and Outreach

The Department of Chemical and Biochemical Engineering fosters several student organizations, including the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, Omega Chi Epsilon, the Chemical Engineering Honors Society, and the Multi-Ethnic Society of Engineers. These organizations organize and implement several outreach events, such as the Spooky Spring 5K to raise money for the Iowa City Homeless Shelter.

Creative Endeavor

The Department of Theatre Arts offers about 25 productions a year, all of them co-curricular, and all of them open not only to theatre majors but to anyone in the University community. The department also sponsors No Shame Theatre, a student organization that performs once a week in the Theatre Building. The department also was instrumental in founding the performing arts learning community for first-year CLAS students.

Social Interaction

The Department of Biochemistry sponsors a Biochemistry Undergraduate Majors (BUMS) club that organizes various activities and events during the year to bring the undergraduate majors together. In addition, undergraduates working in research laboratories present the results of their research at a biochemistry conference on campus each spring semester.

The College of Nursing provides student lounge areas in several places throughout the Nursing Building. These lounges provide spaces for students to meet informally, and often serve as the sites for organized social and professional activities. The College arranges a series of Monday night interactions geared to undergraduate students, called Monday Night Medleys. The College's undergraduate student
The University of Iowa Minorities Student Nurse Association (UIMSNA) works to recruit, support, and mentor minority student nurses from racial and ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds that are historically underrepresented within the nursing community, including but not limited to men and persons of color. The Gamma Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau, the nursing honor society, sponsors several events throughout the year that encourage interactions among undergraduate and graduate students and faculty.

Undergraduate Research

To reap the full rewards of attending a major research university, undergraduates need ample opportunities to collaborate with faculty in conducting research.

Results of the RISE survey demonstrated the very positive impact of involvement in undergraduate research with faculty. The item “Worked on a research project with a faculty member” (on projects other than class assignments) was associated, for example, with the following self-reported outcomes for both first-year students and seniors: cumulative grade point average, growth in general/liberal arts education, growth in career/professional preparation, personal/interpersonal growth, and overall/composite growth. In fact, working on a research project with a faculty member was associated with more positive outcomes than any other activity included in the survey. About 9% of first-year students and 24% of seniors reported being involved in such projects.

Undergraduate Research Opportunities in Departments and Major Programs

Of the respondents to the DEO survey conducted for this self-study, 85% (46 out of 54) indicated that their departments make research opportunities available to undergraduates. Some departments have in place their own formal programs and/or criteria for undergraduate participation in research, while others use the programs available through the University of Iowa Honors Program and the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates.

The Department of Physics and Astronomy, for example, enjoys substantial external funding, some of which it uses for undergraduate research opportunities. Most undergraduates in the department participate in a research experience before graduation. Economics students who meet the criteria for the University of Iowa Honors Program can participate in a departmental honors program, conducting their own research with faculty supervision; non-honors students can also work with faculty on research projects, through independent study. In the Department of Marketing, undergraduate students may take “Directed Readings” with a faculty member, and may complete honors projects or work as research assistants. Mathematics offers a number of undergraduate research assistantships.

Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates

The Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates (ICRU) was created in fall 2006 as a collaboration among the University of Iowa Honors Program, the Graduate College, and the Office of the Vice President for Research. The Center matches undergraduates with faculty mentors, and helps finance student research with ICRU Scholar Assistant, ICRU Summer Research Fellows, and Iowa Research Experiences for Undergraduates (IREU) grants.
The ICRU Scholar Assistant and ICRU Summer Research Fellows programs replace the former Undergraduate Scholar Assistant (USA) program, which was administered by the Pomerantz Career Center. The ICRU began with more than $350,000 available in its annual operating budget for supporting Iowa undergraduate student research.

The ICRU administers the Office of the Vice President for Research Excellence in Undergraduate Research Awards program—competitive awards that honor students for original projects in the arts and humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, and mathematics and engineering.

Spring 2007 also saw the second round of Research in the Capitol, an annual series of poster presentations and arts performances in the Iowa Statehouse Rotunda in Des Moines. The program, which involves 8 to 10 students from each of the three Regent universities, showcases and celebrates how and what undergraduates have learned by doing research in their fields.

Role of the Graduate College

The Graduate College plays an active role in fostering undergraduate research experience opportunities.

In 2005-06, the College established the Office of Graduate Ethnic Inclusion (OGEI). In collaboration with several other offices and grant programs, OGEI coordinates and administers a number of diversity programs aimed at improving the recruitment, retention, and degree completion rate for underrepresented students.

OGEI hosts the Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP), a summer program that pairs promising young researchers with faculty members expert in a research area of interest to them. The Graduate College has a 20-year partnership with the other Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) institutions to offer this program. Students receive a $3,200 stipend, plus travel expenses, for their eight-week summer stay at UI. Almost 500 students have benefited from their SROP experience. Of the 203 who participated from summer 1997 through summer 2006, 151 have completed their baccalaureate degree (some are still “in progress”), four have completed Ph.D. programs, 40 are currently enrolled in Ph.D. programs, and 21 have completed other postbaccalaureate degrees. In 2000, the CIC SROP received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring.

The interdisciplinary research programs administered by the Graduate College (genetics, immunology, molecular and cellular biology, and neuroscience) collaboratively run a summer research program for 20 undergraduate students interested in bioscience research. The Iowa Biosciences Advantage program (described in the “Entry and Transition” section of this self-study) runs a summer series for undergraduate students in the biological and life sciences, and the Departments of Biochemistry and Microbiology have an active summer program as well. Combined, these programs involve more than 100 undergraduate students in summer research programs across campus each year.

In fall 2007, the Graduate College was awarded a four-year Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program grant totaling $880,000 to support disadvantaged undergraduates with strong academic credentials. UI McNair scholars will participate in a year-long program including research training with close mentorship. The goal of the program is to recruit increased numbers of undergraduates from underrepresented populations and from first-generation and low-income student
populations into graduate programs, with a focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields.

The overarching goal of these Graduate College programs is to mentor students in a manner that will make them more successful as undergraduates and to better prepare them for the transition to graduate education.

Iowa Civic Analysis Network

The primary goals of the Iowa Civic Analysis Network (I-CAN) are to provide the Iowa Legislature with timely, high-quality information on important policy issues facing the state, and to provide students with marketable training in policy research. I-CAN started in 2006 with sponsorship from the Department of Political Science and the University of Iowa Honors Program. About a dozen students complete a spring honors seminar on policy research methods.

4c: Useful curricula

Study Abroad

Through the Office for Study Abroad in International Programs, a UI student in any major can choose from an array of study abroad opportunities in 30 countries on 6 continents. Students may also choose to participate in programs offered by other U.S. or foreign universities.

The number of undergraduates studying abroad has risen steadily over the last several years, from 564 in 2000-01 to 801 in 2006-07. The University has set a target of 1,000 undergraduate students studying abroad each year by 2010.

Figure II-5 illustrates the breakdown of undergraduates who participated in study abroad programs in 2006-07 by major field of study. A table of the number of students participating in 2006-07 by host country is included in Appendix II-K, which also contains the number of students participating in 2006-07 by ethnicity and by gender.

Figure II-5:
Percentage of Undergraduates in Study Abroad Program During 2005-06 by Major Field of Study

Most students participate in study abroad programs during the summer (40% in 2006-07) or during one semester of the academic year (41% in 2006-07). About 13% studied abroad for periods of three weeks or less (the majority of them during the winter session), and 6% studied abroad for an entire academic year.
Volunteerism, Civic Engagement, and Service Learning

In 2005 the Office of the Provost and the Office of the Vice President for Student Services collaborated to launch the Civic Engagement Program (CEP), an office dedicated to facilitating volunteerism and service learning. The CEP helps faculty members integrate service learning into the curriculum and also connects community organizations with UI faculty, staff, and student volunteers. Its mission is to “strengthen students’ curricular and co-curricular learning opportunities by linking the University’s teaching, research, and service mission with community needs and strengths.”

The CEP points students to a searchable database of volunteer opportunities at community-based organizations—the Corridor Volunteers web site. The program also provides consulting services, supports one-time service projects, offers volunteer management workshops, and facilitates the University’s membership in Campus Compact, described in the institutional section of this self-study.

Each fall and spring semester since fall 2005, the CEP has facilitated the UI Volunteer Fair. On average, 70 or more community organizations have participated, and more than 1,000 students have visited the fair.

UI students played an important role in the University’s contribution to relief efforts following the Gulf and Atlantic hurricanes in 2005. About 250 students contributed an estimated 3,000 hours to community service relief projects.

The University has initiated a drive to increase opportunities for students to earn academic credit for experiential learning. As one part of this effort, in May 2005 and May 2006 the UI Center for Teaching hosted week-long Service Learning Institutes to train and support faculty interested in developing service learning courses. Fifteen faculty members participated each year, and in each year those faculty developed more than 20 new service learning courses, for a total of 49 new courses. Over the two years nearly 1,300 students completed the courses and, in cooperation with community organization partners, performed more than 28,000 hours of community service in the state and a community in Mexico. Appendix II-L summarizes faculty, student, and community partner participation in the courses and describes several of the initiatives that have emerged from the Institutes.

The Center for Teaching has collected some assessment data from students who took the courses developed by the 2005 institute cohort (which began offering courses in 2005-06). According to the data, which are summarized in Appendix II-L, 66% of student respondents said they were more likely to volunteer in a community organization following their experience in a service learning course, and 95% said they had benefited from their service learning activities. Center for Teaching staff are planning additional assessment efforts, including a survey of faculty to determine their understanding of and interest in the role of undergraduate course coordinators in service learning courses, a survey of institute faculty to learn about their experience designing and teaching service learning courses, and a student survey to be used in service learning courses each semester.

Included in the University’s strategic planning indicators of progress is a series that tracks enrollments in service learning courses and numbers of student volunteers. In association with the 10,000 Hours Show alone, in 2006-07 2,200 students volunteered with community organizations, surpassing the target of 2,000.
University of Iowa faculty, staff, and students enrich the larger community with a wide variety of intellectual, creative, and cultural contributions.

Students from all disciplines are welcome and encouraged to audition for roles in musical and theatrical performances. Such participation gives students the opportunity to work with faculty, interact with peers who have common interests, and be part of the University’s intellectual, creative, and cultural contributions to the larger community.

In the Department of Theatre Arts, for example, opportunities for participation outside of regular instruction include:

- Partnership in the Arts—Each year the department brings a team of professional artists to campus for six to eight weeks, to collaborate with students on creating a new work.
- The Iowa New Play Festival—Every spring the department presents a week-long festival of new work written by MFA and undergraduate playwrights. Students have an opportunity to interact with a visiting panel of writers, actors, dramaturges, directors, and producers.
- Iowa Summer Repertory Theatre—Students involved in the “Summer Rep,” which presents three major productions by a single playwright each summer, may earn points toward an Actors Equity Association membership.
- The Guest Artist Program—Each year the department brings professional artists and scholars to campus—for anywhere from a few days to a full semester—to work on productions and teach students.

In the School of Music, students may audition to participate in a variety of performing ensembles.

Iowa’s new Honors Woodwind Quintet contributed to the Santa Catarina Music Festival on January 14-27, 2007, in Jaraguá do Sul, Brazil, where five honors students performed and taught Brazilian band students who lack instrument specialists for advanced instruction. It has been doing the same for Iowa schools that lack programs for advanced education in music.

The University Lecture Committee (ULC) is a UI charter committee that includes faculty and staff members but consists primarily of students. The ULC runs the University of Iowa Lecture Series, an “intellectually diverse program that brings the broader University of Iowa communities face-to-face with the world’s notable thinkers throughout each academic year.” Speakers within the last year include President Jimmy Carter, Valerie Plame-Wilson, Nadine Strossen, and Noam Chomsky. The series also sponsored a lecture by Jeff Chang on the history of hip-hop in America; a talk by filmmaker Christopher Harris about the ways in which his films deal with history, memory, race, and identity; and a lecture by Native American singer/songwriter and activist Star Nayea, among many others. A list of upcoming and previous lectures is available on the ULC web site.

Social Justice and Advocacy

An important category of co-curricular involvement is the opportunity to participate in programs that promote social change.
The Women’s Resource and Action Center (WRAC) at The University of Iowa—a unit of the Division of Student Services—is an example of an organization that provides such opportunities, by encouraging collaboration between scholars and activists. WRAC sponsors educational programs, such as conferences, lectures, and workshops; provides individual counseling services and referrals; and maintains the Sojourner Truth Library, with materials on women’s health, gender studies, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender studies, and much more. WRAC welcomes student volunteers to serve as group facilitators, advisory board members, or members of Iowa Women Initiating Social Change (IWIS), a feminist activist volunteer group.

The University of Iowa Center for Human Rights (UICHR) was founded in 1999 as a direct outgrowth of Global Focus: Human Rights ’98, a year-long University of Iowa commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948. Initiated by a multidisciplinary group of faculty, its mission is to assist in the promotion and protection of human rights at home and abroad by providing distinguished multidisciplinary leadership in human rights research, education, and public service to The University of Iowa, its surrounding community, the state of Iowa, and beyond. Students can volunteer with the center or apply for internships.

Several student organizations emphasize social justice and advocacy. Examples include the Iowa Human Trafficking Awareness Project, the National Alliance on Mental Illness at The University of Iowa, the Student Action Coalition, Teach for America, the Project for a New American Citizen, and Unite for Sight.

**Governance**

The opportunity to participate in student government is another valuable co-curricular learning opportunity for students.

The mission of the University of Iowa Student Government (UISG)—the undergraduate body of the Partnership for Student Governments at Iowa (PSGI)—is: “... to empower students ... [and] to ensure a student-oriented environment through education and advocacy.” UISG allocates funding to recognized student organizations, sponsors programs and events, and collaborates with University leadership.

Elected and appointed positions in UISG and service on UISG committees give students valuable experience in public and governmental relations, finance, management and policy, and legislative issues.

**Leadership**

In addition to leadership development opportunities within the UISG, students can choose to take advantage of a variety of opportunities for leadership development opportunities available through the Office of Student Life.

The comprehensive Student Leadership Development Program (SLDP) provides institutes, conferences, recognition programs, roundtables, and credit-bearing courses for students. The Student Leadership Institute (SLI), a two-day, off-campus retreat for advanced student leaders, involves 30 students selected based on their interest and potential for fostering a collaborative approach to leadership at UI.

“My Iowa,” the Minority and International Student Summit, is a free weekend retreat for students who want to gain awareness and understanding of diversity issues at UI.
A Fraternity and Sorority Management Workshop brings fraternity and sorority leaders together to discuss common challenges, and the Omega Institute is a leadership retreat for fraternity and sorority chapter members.

The Career Leadership Academy through the Pomerantz Career Center (described in the Environments and Resources for Learning section of this self-study) is a four semester academic credit-bearing program which focuses on developing both leadership and employment skills in undergraduate students from all majors. The academy comprises weekly seminars, activities, and events designed to give students the skills employers are seeking from college graduates: communication skills, interpersonal skills, presentation skills, and the ability to work well with others. Participants in the Career Leadership Academy receive one semester hour of academic credit for each semester they complete, and academy graduates receive a notation on their transcript when they complete all four semesters. In addition, academy participants have access to exclusive programs such as career exploration opportunities, networking events, and leadership development experiences. Students entering the Career Leadership Academy must: have at least four remaining semesters in order to complete the program; have completed 15 credit hours by the beginning of Phase I; and maintain a 2.5 cumulative GPA.

Peer Education and Mentoring

Peer education at UI exists in three realms—academic support, peer advising programs, and co-curricular experiences. The majority of UI mentoring programs are focused on building a connection between students with common academic goals and interests and assisting undergraduates in the pursuit of out-of-classroom experiences. Students serving as peer educators assist University offices and programs with outreach, advising, and social activities, and often serve as the first point of contact with new and current students. Following are some representative examples.

**Department of Psychology Peer Advisors**

Each semester a group of junior and senior psychology majors are selected to serve as Psychology Peer Advisors. Psychology Peer Advisors volunteer their time to help the academic coordinator with undergraduate advising. Peer advisors receive academic credit for their participation in the peer advisor seminar. Their activities include meeting with prospective psychology majors during campus visit days such as Scholars Day, Hawkeye Visit Days, and orientation for freshmen and transfer students; and meeting with current psychology majors during walk-in advising hours to answer questions regarding specific courses and instructors, degree requirements, career planning, and planning for graduate school.

**Tippie College of Business Undergraduate Peer Advisors**

The Tippie College of Business selects undergraduate students (sophomores and above) to serve as peer tutors. Students involved in this peer opportunity receive three credit hours and assist their peers in the Judith R. Frank Business Communications Center. The business college promotes this program as an optimal environment for cultivating leadership and sharing one’s expertise with peers. Students can also qualify for a $1,000 (per year) Dore Scholarship.

**School of Engineering Center for Technology Communications Peer Tutors**

The School of Engineering includes peer tutors in its Center for Technical
Communications (CTC). The CTC’s mission is to help future engineers become “articulate technical communicators” to meet employers’ demands in the field. Eight peer advisors, identified by the Engineering faculty as strong writers, work with their peers to improve their writing skills. The program is expanding to include an Online Writing Lab, staffed by peers. Recent peer advisors express satisfaction in helping to change the Engineering culture and note that being a peer advisor has helped them stand out in the interview process.

Women in Science and Engineering Mentors

Approximately 200 women participate in the Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) mentor program each year. Upper-level undergraduates are paired with first-year students in similar majors to help them make a smooth transition to University life on-and off-campus, assist in choosing classes, provide study support, and serve as positive female role models. Mentor activities occur in both formal (workshops on healthy living, medical school admission seminar, study abroad and internship opportunities) and informal (finding an apartment, social gatherings, lunch with faculty) settings. Seventy-one percent of first-year WISE women who entered the program in 1999 completed their degree in 2003, exceeding the national average of 30-46% four-year completion rates in these fields. Sixty-three percent of the students serving as mentors in 2007-08 were previous “mentees” and over one-third are returning mentors.

Health Education Peers

The Department of Health and Sport Studies offers a two-credit course for undergraduates interested in promoting health and wellness in the residence halls and conducting educational outreach programs to undergraduate students. Students in this course gain knowledge about a variety of health services on campus and make referrals to their peers as needed.

Iowa Edge Mentors

As described earlier, the Iowa Edge is a retention program to help first-year students of color and first-generation college students adjust to life at a large university. The Iowa Edge is aimed at building community among African American, Asian American, Native American, Latino, and first-generation college students. Each year, ten peer leaders are selected to assist with the program’s extended orientation. These are successful students with a minimum 2.5 GPA and strong communication skills who are knowledgeable in the areas of advising, financial aid, residence life, and various support services pertinent to first-year transition issues.

Pomerantz Career Center Peer Program

Students participating in the Pomerantz Career Center Peer Program work with their peers in the career exploration process. They help their peers develop résumés and cover letters, hone their public speaking skills through participation in workshops and career fairs, and host employers during mock interviews and employer sessions. Students who pursue peer advisor internships also build relationships with the professional staff and career advisors, which helps to strengthen their own career exploration skills and preparation for the interview process and the transition to the job market upon graduation.
**Academic Advising Center Student Tutors**

The Academic Advising Center coordinates undergraduate academic tutoring services. Student tutors are selected on the basis of their GPA (minimum 3.0), experience in their major, and class standing. There are both paid and free academic tutoring services available to undergraduates, as well as free assistance with study skills and coursework. Peer academic tutors share their expertise with other students and gain teaching skills.

**Office for Study Abroad Peer Advisors**

Study Abroad Peer Advisors provide outreach services, information workshops, and one-on-one advising to students interested in or preparing to study abroad. Peer advisors mentor undergraduate students with similar interests and draw on their own study abroad experiences. Study abroad peer advisors play a major role in presenting information to their peers at pre-departure orientation and reentry workshops, designed to equip students with the necessary tools to make the most of their study abroad experience. Advisors are required to complete a special project as part of appointment; examples include creating marketing and outreach publications and developing new workshop topics on timely and relevant study abroad issues.

**Belin-Blank Center/University Programs Peer Advising Program**

The University Programs (UP) peer advising program was created to serve first-year University Program (Iowa Talent Project, NAASE) students in their transition to The University of Iowa. The program provides a connection between first-year UP students and upper-class UP students. The peer advisors’ goal is to provide accurate and pertinent information to first-year students, while also referring students to campus resources and Belin-Blank Center staff when appropriate.

**Student Employment**

Student employment can be an important mode of experiential learning. Iowa students who finance their educations in part by working for campus libraries, laboratories, departments, residence halls, etc., learn to take better advantage of campus resources. Benefits increase when students’ work practices can be linked to academic forums for sophisticated reflection on their job experiences.

The Student Employment Office provides information on four types of work for UI undergraduate students: work-study (part-time employment for students who are enrolled at least half-time and demonstrate financial need), part-time employment on campus, part-time employment off campus, and cooperative education internships. Employers pay 100% of the wage for students who are employed part-time. They generally pay 50% of the wage for work-study students, and the federal or state work-study program pays the rest.

According to the UI student part-time employment web site, in the past year (including summer) 12,030 students working on campus earned more than $24.4 million, and more than 1,500 jobs were advertised on Jobnet, the web-based University employment database.

In fall 2006 the Office of Student Financial Aid compiled information about 4,594 actively employed part-time student workers and 1,072 actively employed work-study students for the Part-Time Wage Survey and the Work-Study Wage Survey. The overall average hourly rate of pay for student employees in fall 2006 was $8.30, and for work-
study students $7.79. Appendix II-M provides additional details about the type of work these students were engaged in at the time of the surveys.

A September 2007 point-in-time count of undergraduate, degree-seeking students found 3,961 students employed part-time and 627 employed under work-study programs. Figure II-6 illustrates the distribution of those 4,588 student employees by year in college. Appendix II-M illustrates the distribution of these student employees by gender, ethnicity, residency, and college.

![Figure II-6: Fall 2007 Count of Undergraduate, Degree-Seeking Students Employed Part-Time and in Work-Study Programs by Year in College](image)

Major campus employers of students include the Iowa Memorial Union (over 900), Recreational Services (over 450), and University Housing, which hires more than 120 each year to fill resident assistant positions. Students also fill positions as desk clerks, computer lab monitors, fitness center monitors, and food service workers.

Recreation

Recreational sports programs, facilities, and services can contribute to creating a healthy environment for student learning and development. At The University of Iowa, Recreational Services (Rec Services) employs a variety of initiatives to try to involve new students in recreational activities as soon as they come to campus.

During the first evening of summer orientation programs, Rec Services invites students to the Field House for refreshments, to play sports such as volleyball or table tennis, to use the climbing gym, or just to relax. The event provides a welcome break from the hectic pace of orientation. In conjunction with the Office of Student Life and University Housing, staff members also offer a presentation entitled “What There Is To Do On Campus.”

Once classes begin, students may choose to attend the Kickoff Classic, a welcome week event held during the middle of the day in Hubbard Park. Staff invite the University community to pick up information about Recreational Services, participate in various activities, and receive free t-shirts. Attendance is well over 400 students each year. Rec Services also offers free orientations in its fitness centers, and sponsors Fitness Week during the first week of school, with all aerobic and cycling classes offered free
of charge. Each of these events is intended to introduce new students to Rec Services programs and to create opportunities for them to get involved.

Over the few years prior to this self-study, Rec Services has begun marketing a wider range of programs to appeal to more students. The division now offers more intramural competitive group activities (which has led to a notable increase in participation by women), an increased focus on self-directed fitness, and more lifetime leisure activities for one semester hour of credit, such as kayaking and rafting.

Rec Services makes a point of providing recreational opportunities that appeal to international students—such as badminton, table tennis, martial arts, and soccer—and sponsors a tennis sport club for international students. Every year, Rec Services co-sponsors the Celebrating Cultural Diversity Festival along with several other departments.

Rec Services programs for UI students, faculty, staff, and members of the community are listed in Table II-23.

Table II-23:
Division of Recreational Services Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aquatics</th>
<th>The Field House pool is used for various aquatics programs including lifeguard certification and a United States Masters Swimming Program for students, faculty, staff, and community members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fitness &amp; Wellness</td>
<td>Three campus fitness centers which include tennis courts, racquetball courts, squash courts, basketball/volleyball courts, badminton courts, a climbing wall, multipurpose activity rooms, a 50-yard swimming pool, a jogging track, cardiovascular equipment, weight equipment, and group exercise programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intramurals</td>
<td>Men’s, women’s, and co-rec programs in 30 different sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Programs</td>
<td>Non-credit course offerings including rowing, master swimming, tennis, and martial arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macbride Nature Recreation Area</td>
<td>A 485-acre recreation area that provides opportunities for camping, hiking, picnicking, cross-country skiing, canoeing, sailing, archery, and visits to the Raptor Center (a raptor education and rehabilitation center, and a joint venture with Kirkwood Community College)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Clubs</td>
<td>Sport clubs are formed so participants in each sport club can learn new skills, improve existing skills, potentially engage in competition, and enjoy recreational and social fellowship. Iowa currently recognizes 33 sport clubs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>Six week tennis clinics or individual lessons for people of all ages and skill levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touch the Earth</td>
<td>A variety of backpacking, canoeing, bicycling, kayaking, and cross-country skiing trips designed to give students a chance to participate and explore their interest in outdoor recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Camps</td>
<td>Two outdoor programs: Wildlife Camps (at Macbride and at Lakeside Labs), for area students who have completed 1st through 11th grade; and the School of the Wild, an NCA accredited Special Purpose School located at Macbride, offering a five-day program for local elementary schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the basis of two studies (1998 and 2004) that indicated students’ willingness to pay increased fees for more recreation space and service, in 2006 the University decided to construct the $69 million Campus Recreation and Wellness Center (CWRC), slated to open in spring 2010. This new recreation facility on the east side of the Iowa River will serve in part as a recruitment vehicle. Because student fees for use of the center will be billed with tuition, students will not need to pay an extra admission charge, which should encourage use. Recreational Services hopes to create a “student union”-like atmosphere at the CWRC by including lounge and café space and computer stations and by staying open late, particularly on weekends. The CWRC should become a central gathering place on campus. The University is exploring ways to take advantage of the new facility’s proximity to the Main Library and the link it will create between learning and recreational spaces.

Faculty, Staff, and Student Perceptions of UI Involvement Opportunities

In the departmental interviews and student focus groups (described in the “Research Processes” section of the introduction to this special emphasis self-study), many of the questions posed by the subcommittee on Getting Involved asked faculty, staff, and students to 1) describe the outcomes they expected and hoped for from student engagement in co-curricular activities, and 2) describe any perceived barriers to achieving those outcomes.

Reasons to Get Involved

The students in the focus groups mentioned several reasons why they choose to get involved in co-curricular activities, including:

To “make Iowa smaller.” The size and complexity of the University of Iowa can result in some students feeling lost or overwhelmed. The students in the focus groups appreciated the opportunity to scale the University down to a more manageable environment by networking and developing relationships with others.

To relieve boredom. Many of the students in the focus groups, describing themselves as having been very busy in high school, expressed a concern about avoiding boredom once they got to Iowa. “I was involved in high school and enjoyed it,” said one student. “Classes weren’t enough by the first day.” Students interviewed for the RISE study indicated that they thought they would have to spend more time studying when they got to college, and in fact they have more free time than expected.

To create change. Several students described a desire to help create change on campus. Students of color who participated in the National Pan-Hellenic Council focus group felt a particularly strong urge to get involved for this reason, commenting that “there are not a lot of activities for students of color” and that they “didn’t see active opportunities for diversity” on campus.

To increase success in future job searches and scholarship applications. Some students expressed concern about building their résumés, and felt campus involvement could help them do so. One student commented, “Doing well in school isn’t good enough anymore. You won’t get scholarships or jobs without activities or some kind of internship—something outside of schoolwork.” Another student commented, “I’ve been told that I need to fill up my résumé and I need to get involved. I need to meet new people and get my name out there.” Students understand that employers look for more than a good grade point average in their job applicants.
To learn practical skills. Some students in the focus groups felt they learned a number of practical skills from their involvement in co-curricular activities, mentioning most often skills such as managing conflict, communication, time management, understanding their personal limits, and navigating between different roles in different settings.

Faculty and staff in the focus groups commented on some of the same benefits, such as skill-building. One staff member commented that student employment not only provides financial benefits but also “bring[s] reality to the classroom perspective and allows students to develop a network and professional work habits they will need in the future.” Some faculty and staff also noted that involvement in co-curricular activity can change a student’s personal perspective. Staff from International Programs noted that study abroad experiences can profoundly change an undergraduate’s view of the world and his or her place in it. A political science professor gave the example that internships, research opportunities, and off-campus study in Washington, D.C., “encourage a mindset of engagement rather than cynicism about politics.” Such opportunities also apply the academic experience to students’ lives in a practical way.

The students of color in the focus groups added to the list of “practical skills” gained through co-curricular activity some that centered on the theme of social survival in an unfriendly environment—such as learning to be patient with others, maintaining self-control (learning when to walk away), managing adversity (dealing with ignorance, lack of understanding from others, and stereotypes), and making better decisions (mostly related to self-control). The “chilly” environment described by these students may be related to the RISE study finding that more than 40% of respondents said they had “rarely” or “never” been encouraged to make contact with students different from themselves, and just under 40% had “rarely” or “never” had a serious conversation with students different from themselves.

Barriers to Realizing Desired Outcomes of Student Engagement

Underinvolvement

The RISE study found that “engagement in educationally-purposeful activities and experiences is not widely distributed across the student body, nor evenly distributed across students’ time at UI.” The report indicated that 88% of first-year students and 83% of seniors spend 0 to 5 hours per week on co-curricular activities (i.e., “student organizations or government, campus publications, art or music, etc.”) and almost all—94% of first-year students and 91% of seniors—spend 0 to 5 hours per week in community service or volunteer activities not related to class.

In spite of the tremendous number of opportunities available to students—and the remarkable numbers who participate in some of them (i.e., Dance Marathon and the 10,000 Hours Show)—most UI students do not seem to be taking advantage of those opportunities, at least not on a regular and sustained basis.

It could be argued that the RISE study might underreport student involvement because the “0 to 5 hours per week” response choice does not discriminate between students who do nothing and those who are involved in an activity for four or five hours each week. The interviews conducted by the Getting Involved subcommittee, however, seemed to substantiate the report’s conclusions. Faculty and staff interviewees reported that they observe a small group of students heavily involved in co-curricular activities. Senior students involved in the RISE study also reported seeing many of the same
Getting Information to Students

Faculty and staff interviewees expressed concern that key information about co-curricular activities does not reach as many students as they would like, and they would like to find more creative ways to publicize available opportunities.

The student focus groups reinforced this concern. When asked how they learned about involvement opportunities at the University, a few students mentioned receiving information during Welcome Week, at the Student Organization Fair, from the Office of Student Life web site, or during Orientation—but these came up far less frequently than word-of-mouth and peer influence. Most focus group students indicated that they got involved originally because another student told them about an opportunity or encouraged them to participate. Observing someone else’s involvement was a powerful influence for many of these students. One student commented, “There is exposure to so many opportunities, students don’t know what to choose. You need a contact to point you in the right direction.”

The students interviewed for this self-study acknowledged that that the number of mass e-mails they receive can become overwhelming, and students tend to delete them without reading them.

The lack of access (or attention) to information about activities and involvement opportunities may contribute to the kind of student comment collected during the RISE study: “There is nothing to do here but drink.”

Articulation and Assessment of Desired Outcomes

When asked to articulate the desired learning outcomes for programs and services, many departmental interviewees cited outcomes such as “making the student experience as positive as possible,” “providing social opportunities,” or “providing social support.” While these are worthwhile goals, none of them speak to how the student will change and grow as a result of participating in those initiatives and programs, or what the student will actually learn. Some offices and departments can articulate clearly how they believe students benefit from their programs and services, but do not engage in regular assessment or collect evidence about their outcomes. Without clearly articulated desired learning outcomes and methods to assess them, units cannot know with certainty how effective and beneficial their programs and services are.

Lack of Coordination Among Units

Many units across campus provide engagement opportunities for students, but they do not seem to coordinate and share their experiences well. A staff member from the School of Journalism and Mass Communication commented:

There needs to be more college- and University-level coordination, collaboration, and training to facilitate such opportunities. Right now, programs are working in silos. Maybe a dozen departments and programs use peer mentoring, for example, but there is no efficient way for them to share ideas and help each other out. There’s no one place . . . for advisors or students who want to get involved with such programs to go and find out what’s available.

Such comments by the interviewees, along with concerns about how well we inform
students about available opportunities, seem to corroborate the RISE study finding that although UI offers many opportunities for student engagement, it is generally up to the student to find those opportunities and create his or her own positive experience. According to the report, first-year students and seniors alike describe as “challenging” the process of finding the opportunities and resources one needs to create a successful and engaging college experience (p.39).

Uneven Diversity Efforts

Several units represented in the departmental interviews described dedicated efforts to recruit, support, and engage minority students. The Center for Diversity & Enrichment, as described in the “Environments and Resources for Learning” section of this self-study, is dedicated to reaching out to and supporting underrepresented students. A representative of International Programs noted that study abroad experiences help to create “global citizens—people who are able to appreciate cultural differences ... and are better able to communicate with others.” University Counseling Service works with underserved students to help them succeed in and out of the classroom. Within various academic departments, the Daily Iowan (in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication) actively recruits minority students from Chicago; Health and Sport Studies incorporates diversity training in its mission; and the Darwin Turner Action Theater—the Department of Theatre’s social outreach group—“creates works focused on diversity issues of social justice” which they take on tour “to schools and communities all over the state.”

These diversity efforts seem uneven across the University’s many units, however, or at least diversity is unevenly emphasized. More important, despite the number of offices and departments that report focusing on issues of diversity in recruitment, programming, and services, the students of color who participated in the Getting Involved focus groups expressed dissatisfaction; some even indicated that they felt misled because the institution was promoted to them as a diverse place, and they did not find that diversity when they arrived here. Many of these students told us that they became involved for just that reason—because they did not find the kind of support and social interaction they hoped for already in place when they arrived, and they felt a need to instigate change and create their own opportunities.

Issues for Further Study

Some additional issues that came up in the Getting Involved interviews deserve further investigation, to determine if they are widespread concerns among students.

Several students indicated that UI lacks a sense of community and shared purpose outside of athletics. While there are many ways in which groups of students become connected to the University and to each other—ways in which they find or create community within the larger community—there are few rallying points that bring a large proportion of the student population together around a common focus. Some felt that other students and student organizations do not support the organizations in which they participate, or the initiatives they sponsor. This issue concerned students of color in particular, because of the lack of ethnic and racial diversity on campus and in the Iowa City community. Some students of color expressed frustration with the lack of low-cost venues for late night social events that do not serve alcohol. They referenced a time when the Afro-American Cultural Center, or “Afro House,” served as a hub of activity that frequently hosted late night events; it no longer serves as a social venue in that way.
Some groups commented on the lack of resources available to student organizations, especially smaller groups. The members of one of the smaller groups represented felt they had been overlooked when it came to funding, while the members of larger groups recognized a disparity but did not know how to remedy the problem.

Conclusions—Faculty, Staff, and Student Perceptions of UI Involvement Opportunities

The students, faculty, and staff interviewed for this self-study recognize many benefits to student engagement in co-curricular activities—in line with the extensive body of research on the subject, and with the findings of the RISE study. They also identify, however, a number of barriers to realizing those benefits.

A small percentage of students reports regular involvement in co-curricular activities, and failure to effectively communicate available options may be partly to blame. Uneven distribution of resources and a lack of coordination across units might also hinder efficient and effective delivery of programs and services. Moreover, it is difficult to gauge the effectiveness of UI co-curricular programs when few have clearly articulated their desired outcomes or implemented assessment strategies.

Of greatest concern are the student comments that they feel a lack of community at the University—especially students of color.

Summary and Conclusions—Learning Alongside the Curriculum

Signs of Success

The sheer number of opportunities for productive co-curricular engagement at UI makes creating a comprehensive list of them difficult. We have “something for everyone,” from volunteerism and service learning, to student organizations, to student employment, and beyond.

Some of these activities achieve very high levels of participation. In 2007, for example, Dance Marathon attracted more than 300 volunteers and more than 1,000 dancers (and raised almost $881,000). Since the founding of the 10,000 Hours Show in 2002, students have volunteered more than 82,739 hours to community service through that program. Each year, about 800 UI students study abroad in more than 50 countries. University Housing hires more than 120 students to serve as resident assistants each year, in addition to hiring students as desk clerks, computer lab monitors, fitness center monitors, and food service workers.

Many of the activities UI offers—as general categories—have been proven to contribute to student learning. Most of the departments represented in the departmental interviews, for example, offer student employment or internship opportunities. We know that students who engage in part-time work or internships while in college gain job-related skills and competence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Research has also found that participation in community service—more specifically, service learning—has positive effects on students’ sociopolitical attitudes and beliefs (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Similar findings exist regarding the positive effects of involvement for many other kinds of activities offered at UI.

The faculty, staff, and student interviews conducted for this self-study supported that evidence. Student focus group participants cited many examples of the skills and relationships they gained, and other ways in which they found their experiences personally enriching. Senior student participants in the RISE study asserted that, in
large part, their involvement in co-curricular activities kept them at UI. Faculty and staff interviewees indicated that the engaged students they interact with enjoy psychological, practical, vocational, and financial benefits from their co-curricular involvement.

**Moving Forward**

Despite the available options, evidence from the RISE study suggests that the percentage of students that engages in educationally purposeful co-curricular activities is disappointingly low. Furthermore, students who do not become engaged in activities associated with student success early in their UI careers might pursue “the engagement activity of least resistance”—the bar scene—instead.

Various factors might contribute to low involvement. Co-curricular opportunities are not well coordinated across units, often not advertised effectively to students, and not always evaluated for purposes of improvement. Students report learning about opportunities mostly from their peers, and choosing to get involved—or not—largely based on peer influence. All of this suggests that we can do a better job of helping students make good choices by connecting them with positive peer role models, communicating their options more effectively, and including co-curricular programs in our planning as we work to promote a culture of evidence-based assessment.

In interviews, some students reported feeling a lack of community at UI. This was an issue of particular concern for students of color, and a concern that is echoed in the results of the 2005 undergraduate diversity climate survey, which indicate that racial/ethnic minority respondents feel less of a sense of inclusion at the University than their majority peers. In addition to continuing efforts to create a more diverse and welcoming climate on campus, we must consider ways to communicate a clear and consistent message—as suggested in the “Entry and Transition” section of this self-study—about what it means to be a successful student member of this community, and to foster a sense of identity and pride.