LETTERS AND SCIENCE
FACULTY SENATE

21 March 2011

Materials are available online in the L&S Handbook

http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterOne/chapter1-4materials.htm
COLLEGE OF LETTERS AND SCIENCE FACULTY SENATE MEETING

21 March 2011
B10 Ingraham Hall

Agenda

All materials are available online, at:
http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterOne/chapter1-4materials.htm

1. Announcements, Updates and Questions
   a. Update on University Budget Reductions
   b. Update on Madison Initiative for Undergraduates
   c. Update on efforts to support Graduate students
   d. Other updates/announcements as circumstances may require

2. Approval of minutes of the L&S Faculty Senate meeting held 15 March 2010

4. Report of the Faculty Honors Committee 283


7. Report of the Equity and Diversity Committee 286

Please note: For Item 7, two documents are available online. The full Report of the Equity and Diversity Committee of the College of Letters and Science, concerning the "Grade Gap/Future Gap: Addressing Racial Disparities in L&S Introductory Courses" and a brief (two-page) summary of the report. Only the summary will be mailed to Senators.
2008-2010 REPORT OF THE FACULTY HONORS COMMITTEE AND HONORS PROGRAM

The Letters and Science Honors program currently enrolls approximately 1300 students. 224 students matriculated as first-year honors students in the fall of 2008-09 and 298 in the fall of 2009-10. 260 honors degrees were awarded in 2008-09 with 103 students receiving Honors in the Liberal Arts, 82 receiving Honors in the Major and 75 receiving Comprehensive Honors (completing requirements for both Honors in the Liberal Arts and Honors in the Major). In 2009-10 there were 264 Honors graduates with 95 students receiving honors in the Liberal Arts, 97 receiving Honors in the Major and 72 receiving Comprehensive Honors.

The period from fall 2008 through the end of the spring semester 2010 was significant in several ways. The spring of 2008 marked the 50th anniversary of a petition signed by 172 students in 1958 demanding more rigorous classes at UW which led to the development of the L and S Honors Program. We moved into our new home at Washburn Observatory during the summer of 2009 and formally dedicated the building on September 11, 2009. Throughout this period we worked on preparing for the 50th anniversary of the L and S Honors Program which we celebrated with a 2 day program November 4 and 5, 2010.

The administrative structure of the program remains the same as in 2007-08. Professor Charles Snowdon (Psychology) continues as Director. The full-time staff consists of Jeffrey Shokler continuing to serve as the Program’s Associate Director, Mary Czynszak-Lyne as its Office Administrator, and Molly McGlone as Assistant Director with oversight of the program’s advising and curricular operations.

Innovations

Admissions

We completed our second and third years of admitting students under our new system of inviting all students accepted into the College to consider applying for admission to Honors. Our new admissions philosophy emphasizes student motivation and, significantly, no longer views high academic achievement in high school as a necessary prerequisite for admission to pursue an honors degree; rather, it views high academic achievement as a desired learning outcome of pursuing an honors degree in the college.

This new process has continued to be successful in many ways. We have paradoxically reduced the size of our entering classes to obtain a better fit between our available resources and the number of students we serve. We have significantly reduced the number (and proportion) of students on academic probation so that only 2 students were on academic probation in the fall of 2010. We do not know if this is due to improved advising due to smaller numbers, greater motivation on the students we are accepting or a combination of factors.

Evaluating the first 3 years of this new process we find no difference in mean high school rank, high school GPA SAT or ACT scores but somewhat greater variance. The proportion of student accepting our offers has decreased from a mean of 75.3% in the four years prior to the change in admissions to 56.7% in the past three years. The proportion of women has not changed going from 59.1% in the four years prior to the change to 60.8% in the last three years. The percentage of in-state students has decreased from 55.8% to 33.8% since the change in policy. The percentage of students identifying as Caucasian has decreased from 85.3% to 75.5% since the change. Some of this is due to an increased number of international students from Asia, but some is also due to an increased effort to recruit targeted minorities. By not emphasizing quantitative academic measures but focusing on finding highly motivated students we are making some steps toward increasing our diversity.
Advisor Notes:
Jeffrey Shokler had developed a computerized system for maintaining notes on advising sessions we have with our students, much like the computerized medical records that many physicians now use. The idea has now spread campus wide and with MIU funding an Advisor Notes system based on the design created by Jeff Shokler is now being rolled out to the entire campus allowing advisors to follow a student from SOAR through pre-major advising through major advising.

Evaluation of Honors in the Major
It has been twelve years since the establishment of the “new” honors curriculum that created the Honors in the Major, Honors in the Liberal Arts, and Comprehensive Honors degree options for students in the college. We noticed considerable variation among departments in what is required for Honors in the Major. While we recognize the value of diversity across different disciplines, we started to review programs and develop a set of best practices drawn from the curricula and experiences of different departments. Assistant Director McGlone and Director Snowdon have had meetings with several departments to find out what aspects of Honors in the Major are working and which are not and to compile a series of success stories that can be shared with all departments.

Honors 480 and 180 Diversity Dialogues
For the last three years (2008-2010), the L&S Honors Program has offered the Honors Fellows Program, a two semester course sequence that dealt with issues of diversity and social justice. In the spring semester, upper class students (approximately 12-15 students each year) would take the small seminar Inter L&S 480: Diversity Dialogues and Leadership Facilitation, and then those same students (“Honors Fellows”) would have the opportunity to facilitate discussions with first year students in the 1-credit class, Inter L&S 180: Diversity Dialogues (with approximately 40 first year students each year). The program was designed to: engage students in discussion around diversity and social justice; explore the three core breadth areas (sciences, social sciences, and humanities); create honors community; and give upper class students an opportunity for leadership in the honors program.

For the Honors Fellows, the program is an intensive year-long experience in which they participate in difficult conversations around issues such as race, social class, gender, sexuality, immigration, religion and ability. As part of their spring semester experience, each student writes a lengthy research paper or other project on one related issue of topic that is relevant to them or their academic interests. Projects for this past spring (2010) included: “Desegregation and the Implication of Race in the Milwaukee Public Schools,” “The International Experience at UW-Madison” (an audio project); “Social Justice in Medicine;” and “Inequality in Dental Care.” Student response to Inter L&S 480 has been largely positive, describing the class as an important one that got students thinking in new ways about the issues at stake:

“It has been an amazing experience. I am much more willing to discuss these topics (even bring them up!) in my life now. I am so excited this program was developed.”

“I know it can be frustrating for some people at times, but I continue to think this is the most valuable course I could take at school in terms of relevance to the ‘real world’ and importance to our society.”

The most common criticisms about Inter L&S 480 were about the lack of diversity within the class itself (not enough students of color), the loose structure of the course, and the perceived lack of participation from some of the other students.

In the fall semester, we have found that students really enjoy working with the first year students:

“I enjoyed getting to watch students come to their own conclusions, discover parts of their perspectives that may not have known about or considered before…it was really rewarding to see them respect each other’s opinions and genuinely participate.”

“I learned a lot from the students, which I didn’t expect.”
**Improved Communication with Other Units**

We continue to improve our communication with other advising and administrative units in the College. Molly McGlone became a member of the L and S Advisor Consortium, and an *ex officio* member of the College Curriculum Committee and the Council on Academic Advising. Honors closely collaborates with both Cross-College Advising and L&S Assistant Deans with the hiring and training of SOAR student advisors. Director Snowdon is a member of the FIGS Advisory Committee, the Faculty Advisory Board to LSSAA, the Go Big Read Selection Committee, the University Honors Council and the SOAR Vision Committee.

**50th Anniversary:**

We created an Honors Advisory Committee made up of petition signers, local alumni, some former Directors and current students to help the Honors Program prepare a series of celebrations and create a development program to coincide with these celebrations. As noted above we had a two day symposium in November 2010, with talks by alumni representing all decades of the program along with current students (Sophomore Apprentices and Leadership Trust Awardees). We have also worked hard on development sending personal letters to all surviving petition signers and relocating Honors alumni from 1962-78 who had been unidentified in the Foundation records, mailing personal letters to each of them. The anniversary has created a “buzz” which has led to significant increases in donations over the past three years.

**Program Grants and Awards**

The Program annually awards approximately $150,000 to departments in support of their Honors courses (either small stand-alone honors courses or faculty taught sections of larger courses) and Honors curriculum development. In addition, the Program provides grants and awards to students in several categories: Sophomore Summer Research Apprenticeships, Senior Honors Thesis Research, Leadership Trust Awards, Mark Mensink Honors Research Award, and the Abraham S. Burack Travel Award.

**National Scholarships**

The last two Truman Scholars from the University, Julie Curti and Jeffrey Wright also happen to have been honors students serving as student representatives on the Faculty Honors Committee. Daniel Lecoanet (who also served on the Faculty Honors Committee) won a Churchill Scholarship to study in England and also received a $250,000 Hertz Foundation Fellowship. The majority of UW students who received nationally competitive scholarship awards in 2008-10 were students in the L and S Honors Program.

**Leadership Trust Awards**

We have received a generous grant from a donor who wishes to remain anonymous to pay two semesters of tuition and a $3,000 supply allowance for student initiated programs that provide services and benefits to the University community and beyond. Since 2003, we have awarded funds for 10 different projects, most of which are still being continued by subsequent generations of students. In 2008-09 we made two awards, one for the development of a *Wiscipedia-* a student generated wiki designed to provide up to date information about how to navigate the campus. The Chief Information Officer and Director of LSSAA were both excited by this project. The other project is developing a resource data base on the problems of refugees and how agencies and individuals in Wisconsin can be more effective in helping refugees. In 2009-10 we awarded Yongqing (Douglas) Yang the award to create the University of Wisconsin Literacy Initiative which offers a unique gateway for UW-Madison students to help the broader Madison community by organizing and offering free training to become volunteer tutors of English as a Second Language, as well as in Basic Literacy. The goal of the project is to bring together interested undergraduate and graduate students to help support the city’s lower income and educationally disadvantaged adult residents in their attempts to not only increase their command of the English
language, but also to improve their economic and social positions in the workplace, community, and at home. The project has been a great success in just a few months. For the first time in its history the Madison Literacy Council reduced its backlog of clients to zero and there are now so many trained student tutors that some are now working with UW Human Resources to provide training in English as a Second Language and financial literacy skills to UW employees in need of assistance.

These awards have stimulated some outstanding ideas among our students and have allowed the recipients to develop important leadership and service skills.

Program Enhancements
Honors Programs Abroad
In conjunction with the University of Michigan Honors Program and the UW’s International Academic Programs, the Program offers an honors study-abroad opportunity in Florence, Italy. Director Snowdon was part of an evaluation team that did an on-site visit in summer 2010 and made several changes to improve the program. The Honors Program is collaborating with the Office of International Academic Programs on an honors program at University College Utrecht in the Netherlands (one or two semesters). We are currently working with the Department of Spanish and Portuguese to develop an Honors Study Abroad program where students can use Spanish language skills in a service learning environment.

UW Forensics Team
The L&S Honors Program assumed sponsorship of the UW Forensics Team about seven years ago. Forensics had effectively died at the UW in 1992 but was resurrected by a core of active students in 2001. These students, on their own initiative, began training and competing in local and regional forensics meets and, shortly thereafter, began seeking official sponsorship at the university. The Honors Program has also subsidized the part-time salary of a coach for the team, Ben Jedd, who has been able to make great strides in making the team competitive at all levels.

Common Book Program
We were successful in securing support for an Honors Common Book Program for First-year Students. Friends of the UW-Library agreed to provide funding for the Common Books and help in sponsoring the dinner and meeting with the author. The 2008 Common Book was *Breathing Spaces: How Allergies Change our Lives and Landscapes* by Greg Mitman (History of Science and Medicine) and the 2009 book was *Human Goodness* by Yi-Fu Tuan of Geography. With the start of Go Big Read we are actively partnering to work on selection of books and creating opportunities for honors students to meet with the authors.

Student Retreats
In late July each year the Program sponsors the annual summer retreat at Hilltop Farm in Spring Green for students with Sophomore Summer Honors Research Apprenticeships and for their faculty mentors. Student presentations are quite impressive in terms of their grasp of the research problems they have been studying and their poise in presenting their work to a broad audience. The annual Fall Retreat for our first-year Honors students is held in September or October each year and provides first year students with a chance to meet faculty and staff and ask questions about a variety of topics from disciplinary and career interests to how to obtain balance in their lives.

Advising
Advising for first-year students.
Starting in the summer of 2009 we began advising independently from L&S at SOAR. This has given us the opportunity to have our own morning presentation where we give information about the L&S degree requirements while also discussing the underlying philosophy and value of a liberal arts education and the L&S Honors Program. We are able to more fully integrate the honors requirements with the general L&S
degree requirements, which helps to reinforce the idea that our honors coursework is a part of the L&S degree. As part of our presentation, we highlight unique honors opportunities including honors classes, honors research experiences, honors programming, and honors advising. As a result of having our own SOAR room, we have found that students have a stronger understanding of the honors program and honors requirements, and we can then spend less time in the fall reviewing honors requirements, and more time addressing student questions.

Our student reviews from SOAR have been very strong. For the summer of 2010, 89% of our students found the Academic Advising very useful or extremely useful, and our advisors (both academic and peer advisors) received 90% positive feedback (agree or strongly agree) on all advising measures (being informed, communicating clearly, and providing personal attention). Some individual comments from students include:

"Honors Advising was a small and personal setting--very easy to get questions answered."

"I absolutely loved everyone that helped in my advising session. Both my advisor and the students. Any question I asked they were more than helpful and reassuring. They were also just incredibly nice. They made me feel really confident that my decision to go to Madison was the right one. I feel that I chose a great schedule and I will be very happy with my classes. I really liked that I felt like we made a personal connection."

"All of the advisors were very helpful and made me feel comfortable in asking questions and getting answers."

Honors advisors thoroughly revised processes for Summer Orientation, Advising and Registration (SOAR) and first-year orientation sessions. The two are now much better integrated and shape, in essence, two parts of a whole. We hold a session known as “Honors 181” for students in the first week of the semester and another around enrollment time in October known as “Honors 182.” These sessions help us to efficiently advise our first year population in small groups and to give them the assurance that they will meet with an advisor at least twice in their first semester. We have found that the first session is best given before the add/drop deadline, giving students the chance to adjust their schedules if their courses are not a good fit. Similarly, the second session occurs after the timetable is released but before the final drop deadline (where students will receive a DR on their transcripts), which allows the advising contact to include a discussion of academic progress and future planning in the same session.

Advising for all students.
The L&S Honors Program website publicizes our Advising Syllabus, provides advisor profiles, answers to frequently asked questions, and provides information about the various advising options offered through our office. Advisors link their advising profiles to the walk-in hours posted on the Web Calendar. An instant messaging chat advising program has been initiated that is available two hours a day (Monday though Thursday), including evening hours that has proven popular among our students studying abroad.

Advisor training
Assistant Director Molly McGlone built upon our Advisor Development Program to successfully provide new and continuing Honors advisors (both professional and peer advisors) an overview of the advising field, with particular emphasis on conceptual and relational issues of advising. Readings, group activities, role plays and discussions were used to explore the definitions and values of advising, to examine the commonalities and diversities of our target population of high-achieving students, and to build and enhance advising-related skills. The advising team meets weekly to enhance their skills and discuss any particularly difficult issues that have arisen. As part of the evaluation process McGlone sits in on an advising appointment with each advisor to provide feedback.
Awards:
Molly McGlone received an L and S Advising Award in 2009 and Associate Director Jeffrey Shokler was named a recipient of the Student Personnel Association’s Norman Bassett Award for Outstanding Achievement in Student Services in 2010.

Challenges:
Like all units of the College our main challenges concern resources. We have a staff of 2 full-time academic staff, a full time classified staff member, a half time director and two half time Project Assistants plus 5 students hired as student hourly. This is the smallest FTE to student ratio of any of the CIC Honors Programs/Colleges. Nonetheless, by working hard and working smart, we are able to meet most of our mission. We utilize the intelligence and motivation of our students as Peer Advisors.

The Assistant Director position to supervise Curriculum and Advising has become so involved with curricular and administrative issues that it is hard to meet the advising components of the position. As a result of this we have had to suspend the Honors 480/180 courses until we can obtain additional staffing.

At Wisconsin, we do not have to worry about the academic profile of our undergraduates and, philosophically, we in Honors prefer need based scholarships over merit based awards. However, many of our signature programs- Sophomore Summer Honors Research Apprenticeships, support of Forensics, support of community service activities, etc. are based on annual proposals to a variety of funding sources that are also in demand to fund other programs as well. We are actively seeking long term continuous support (endowments or bequests) to support our most successful programs and have had some success in the past two years. We are using the occasion of the Washburn renovation and the 50th anniversary to develop a successful fund raising program so that we can provide firm financial support for our future.

Finally, with impending budget cuts, it will be increasingly difficult for departments to collaborate with us in offering honors level courses. Although we can provide lecturer replacement funds for several courses, many departments cannot afford to have their faculty diverted from their regular teaching needs to teach honors courses. Some wonderful faculty are actually doing overloads in order to be able to teach an honors class, but we should not count on faculty volunteering to have an overload in order to sustain an honors program. Our hope is that with the MIU hires at least some departments will be able to increase Honors offerings as a part of the high impact practices that are required in accountability for MIU positions.

With our vision of Honors that is consistent with intellectual curiosity and the goals of the Wisconsin Idea, we hope to maintain an exciting and vibrant program with diverse students who will be the future of our state, our nation and our world.

2008-2009 Faculty Honors Committee Members:
Suzanne Desan (History)
Sabine Gross (German)
Jia Luo (Student Member, Economics and Biochemistry)
Alexander Nagel (Mathematics)
Mario Ortiz-Robles (English)
Byron Schaefer (Political Science)
Sissel Schroeder (Anthropology)
Charles Snowdon (Psychology, Chair)
Karen Steudel (Zoology)
Peter Timbie (Physics)
Jeffrey Wright (Student Member, Political Science and International Studies, Truman Scholar)
2009-10 Faculty Honors Committee Members
Suzanne Desan (History)
Dana Geary (Geoscience)
Sabine Gross (German)
Mary Halloran (Zoology)
Daniel Lecoanet (Student Member, Physics and Astronomy)
Mario Ortiz-Robles (English)
Byron Schaefer (Political Science)
Sissel Schroeder (Anthropology)
Charles Snowdon (Psychology, Chair)
Laura Stewart (Student Member, History)
Peter Timbie (Physics)

Ex Officio:
Mary Czynszak-Lyne, Office Administrator
Jeffrey Shokler, Associate Director
Molly McGlone, Assistant Director
(This page has been left blank intentionally.)
College of Letters and Science Academic Planning Council  
Annual Report to L&S Faculty Senate, March 2010 through February 2011

**Chair**  
Gary Sandefur, Dean

**Elected and Appointed Members**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Aylward (Classics)*</td>
<td>Maria Muniagurria (Economics)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry Brighouse (Philosophy)</td>
<td>Rick Nordheim (Statistics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilia Guzei (Chemistry)</td>
<td>Seth Pollak (Psychology, LaFollette)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Leary (Folklore, Scan Studies)</td>
<td>Aliko Songolo (African Languages and Literature, French and Italian)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie Manion (Political Science and LaFollette)</td>
<td>Don Waller (Botany and Biological Aspects of Conservation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Ad hoc appointments: W. Aylward served in 09-10 while J. Leary was on sabbatical. A Songolo completed term vacated by H. Dubrow; M. Muniagurria completed term vacated by B. Clayton.

**Ex-Officio Members**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Debby Bushéy (L&amp;S Student Academic Affairs; Classified Staff Issues Committee, 2009-2010)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anita Lightfoot (Integrated Liberal Studies; Classified Staff Issues Committee, 2010-2011)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Morgan (Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences; Chair, L&amp;S Curriculum Committee chair 2009-2010)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kris Olds (Geography; Chair, L&amp;S Curriculum Committee chair 2010-2011)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ex-Officio Observers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria Cancian (LaFollette and Social Work, Associate Dean for the Social Sciences) (January 2011)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Ellis-Weismer (Communicative Disorders, Associate Dean for Research Services)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gery Essenmacher (Interim Associate Dean for L&amp;S Student Academic Affairs) (November 2010)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann Groves Lloyd (Associate Dean for L&amp;S Student Academic Affairs) (Until November 2010)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Gunther (Associcate Dean for Budget and Finance)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles N. Halaby (Sociology; Associate Dean for the Social Sciences) (Until January 2011)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magdalena Hauner (African Languages and Literature; Associate Dean for the Humanities)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine M. Klein (Assistant Dean, Academic Planning, Program Review, and Assessment)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy Mathiak (Director, Communications and College Relations)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guido Podestá (Associate Dean, International Studies)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Westphal-Johnson (Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education and Academic Administration)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Wilcots (Astronomy; Associate Dean for the Natural Sciences)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**L&S Academic Planning Council Activity**

The L&S Academic Planning Council advises the dean on strategic planning, as well as on programmatic (program review, expansion, alteration, and deletion) and fiscal matters. The council’s operating procedures appear online in the L&S Handbook, at:  
Strategic Planning. Throughout 2009-2010 and continuing into 2010-2011, Dean Sandefur frequently consulted the council on budgetary and strategic planning and policy issues affecting the college and university. Topics included:

- In Fall 2010, the council reviewed proposals submitted in the third round of the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates competition. The process was improved somewhat since a two-tiered submission procedure was used, in which pre-proposals were considered and the most promising among these were invited to prepare full proposals. The competition is ongoing; results should be released in Spring 2011.

- In 2009-2010, the council participated in the review of the Cluster Hiring Initiative (CHI). Based on L&S contributions to the process, and the APC’s strong recommendation that the program be continued (but modified to have a different mechanism for funding and regeneration), the Vice Provost for Faculty and Staff Programs developed recommendations concerning ongoing support of the program. These will likely be discussed by the council in Spring 2011.

- Like many other groups and units on campus, the council discussed Chancellor Martin’s proposed New Badger Partnership. In general, members favor the concept of increased flexibility and autonomy for the university, but note that “the devil is in the details,” and few details have been available.

- The council has spent considerable time (and will spend more) advising the dean about budget reduction priorities. As ever, any reductions made should preserve the high quality of educational programs (both individual majors and programs in service to campus requirements and other units), as well as high quality research. Through these means, the council believes that L&S provides the foundation for excellent service to the citizens of the state.

Program and Unit Changes. As noted in previous reports, program development seems to be related to the resources available to support these endeavors. The development of new programs, centers and institutes is often linked to influxes of new funding, or to new ways to use existing funds. For example, MIU funds may be awarded to support hiring that will make possible a new program, or gift funds may be used to support a new research center. Program development processes now emphasize that proposal authors work to understand the resource implications of their initiatives, and that all participants in the endeavor understand their own and others’ contributions. Those contributions may be obtained through new funding or through reallocation of existing resources. Finally, it is generally the case that academic programs reliant on “soft” funds are not approved.

Despite the challenges inherent in developing new academic programs in an era of constrained resources, we are pleased to report that two new programs focused on the environment have been approved at the campus level. As many L&S faculty members are aware, programming in this area has been discussed at UW-Madison for decades, and these programs are a breakthrough. Both have been developed through reallocation of resources, and both reflect strong partnerships L&S has with other units on campus. They are:

- The new L&S major in Environmental Studies, to be overseen by the Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies (GNIES). The program stresses a highly interdisciplinary approach to the topic, and since it requires students to complete another major, it holds the promise of helping all L&S departments and programs explore the connections between their disciplines and environmental studies.
The new, shared L&S and CALS major in Environmental Sciences. This is a rigorous program across the many branches of science concerned with the environment. Two departments have volunteered to take on administrative roles for this program, which will be coordinated by a cross-college program committee. In CALS, the Department of Soil Science will work with students completing the program within the new CALS Bachelor of Science degree requirements; in L&S, the Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Science will work with students completing the program within L&S BA or BS degree requirements.

A list of other matters considered by the council since the council’s last report to the L&S Senate is attached to this report (see Attachment A).

Program Review. As always, several regular academic program reviews are under way (Attachment B). In light of recent staffing changes and budgetary stresses, the council has slowed the pace of reviews substantially.

The council’s recommendation that L&S guidelines for program review be realigned with the university’s Strategic Framework was delayed while the University Academic Planning Council revised the campus-level guidelines. Unfortunately, undertaking the task of realigning program review guidelines has been a lower priority than other business. As a result, reviews to be convened under the (anticipated) new guidelines have not been convened. Assistant Dean Elaine Klein, who facilitates this process for the college, will present a proposal to the APC regarding the new review guidelines.

Policy Matters

The council discussed a wide variety of issues which might have policy implications for the college. Matters presented to the council for consideration included such topics as:

- The UW-Madison Research Enterprise
- The UW System “Growth Agenda” report
- National Research Council rankings
- The Report of the L&S Equity and Diversity Committee and the need to respond to the Achievement Gap
- The proposed “New Badger Partnership”
- The “Future of Humanities” initiative

Two discussions of this nature led to college-level policy recommendations:

1. As required by Chapter Five of Faculty Policies and Procedures, schools and colleges are required to have policies governing departmental restructuring. Previous L&S policy in this area was considered by the both the council and college leadership to be too succinct to provide appropriate guidance, and a new policy on Departmental Creation, Restructuring, or Discontinuance was approved (see Attachment C).

2. Dean Sandefur conferred with the council, L&S department chairs, and campus leadership concerning the phenomenon in which faculty members who have accepted outside offers delay resignation from UW-Madison. The council approved a clarification of the existing Faculty Leave policy, to help the college better manage its allowance of positions open for recruitment of new faculty. With respect to faculty leaves of absence, “except in unusual circumstances, leaves of absence will not be granted to
members of the faculty who have accepted outside offers.” The revised policy is published in the L&S Handbook, at http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterFour/chIV-14.htm#FacLeave.

Membership Changes

As reported last year, May 2010, several individuals completed their service on the council, and in September, Dean Sandefur welcomed several new members to the council (Harry Brighouse, Anita Lightfoot, Maria Munigiarra, and Kris Olds). In May 2011, nearly half of the council’s members will complete their terms; however, as news about the State of Wisconsin budget began to emerge, Dean Sandefur expressed concern about having so many new members face the task of reviewing proposed budget reductions. Several members volunteered to extend their service by one year to ensure that work undertaken in Spring 2011 will have continuity of understanding and experience when it resumes in Fall 2011.

Meetings

In an effort to minimize conflicts with standing departmental meetings, the council will shift its regular meeting time. After polling L&S departments and programs, it was determined that the new meeting time can be on alternate Tuesday afternoons (second and fourth), from 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. Similarly, the L&S Curriculum Committee will meet on the first and third Tuesday, from 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. L&S Senate meetings will continue to be held once each Fall and Spring semester on a Monday in mid-semester, from 3:30-5:00 p.m. (cancelled when there is insufficient business).

Questions and Comments

This report was endorsed by the L&S Academic Planning Council on March 2, 2011. Questions about the report or the council’s activities may be submitted to Dean Sandefur, to the Associate Dean responsible for the department or program involved, or to Assistant Dean Elaine M. Klein (kleine@ls.admin.wisc.edu).

Submitted by Elaine M. Klein, Ph.D.
Assistant Dean, L&S Academic Planning, Program Review and Assessment
L&S Academic Planning Council, March 2010 – February 2011

Requests related to academic programs

- 3/10/10 Approved request to resume admission to graduate track in Chinese Linguistics
- 4/28/10 Create: Ph.D. minor in Visual Cultures
- 9/22/10 Create: Undergraduate major in Environmental Sciences: CALS- B.S., L&S- B.A., B.S
- 9/22/10 Create: Undergraduate major in Environmental Studies: L&S- B.A., B.S. Administered by Nelson Institute
- 12/8/10 Create: Certificates in Chinese Professional Communication
- 12/8/10 Create: Certificates in Japanese Professional Communication
- 12/8/10 Approve: Double degree arrangement, International Public Affairs (Masters Degree) and Neuroscience (Ph.D.)

Requests related to L&S centers/institutes

- 10/13/10 Create: Center on Child Welfare Policy and Practice
- 10/20/10 Name change: Center for the History of Print Culture in Modern America (to “Center for the History of Print and Digital Culture”).

Requests for Comment or Consultation

The L&S APC recommended that UW-Madison support the following requests from UW System institutions, which are seeking to plan the following new programs:

- 4/14/10 UW- Milwaukee: MA and PhD in Linguistics
- 4/21/10 UW- Parkside: undergraduate major in Environmental Studies (BS)
- 9/15/10 UW- Stout: Master in Industrial and Applied Mathematics
- 9/22/10 UW-Milwaukee: MS in Architecture
- 1/26/11 UW-Whitewater: Proposed BA/BS in Enviro Science/Studies
- 2/23/11 UW-Eau Claire: Bachelor of Professional Studies
- 2/23/11 UW-Milwaukee: PhD in Social Sciences and Community Health
- 2/23/11 UW-River Falls: Bachelor of Applied Science

The L&S APC recommended support for the following requests for program activity at UW-Madison:

- 9/15/10 Create: School of Medicine and Public Health, Department of Neuroscience
- 12/8/10 Permission to plan: School of Medicine and Public Health, MS/PhD program in Epidemiology
- 12/15/10 Name Change: Institute for Cross-College Biology Education (to “Institute for Biology Education”) 
- 12/15/10 Name Change: Center for Biology Education (to “Center for Biology Education Outreach”) 
- 1/26/11 Create: School of Human Ecology, Center for Financial Security

The L&S APC returned the following request, seeking more information:

- 9/15/10 Create: School of Medicine and Public Health and Department of Urban and Regional Planning’s Dual Degree
## L&S Program Reviews in Progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department/Program (Major Code)</th>
<th>Self Study</th>
<th>Committee Review</th>
<th>Committee Report</th>
<th>APC Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian Studies (092) Concentrations: East Asian, Southeast Asian. MA Southeast Asian Studies (935) Cert. in East Asian</td>
<td>Charged Fall 2007; Received</td>
<td>Committees Convened; interviews complete</td>
<td>Complete; responses from centers and related departments received</td>
<td>Completed Spring 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative Disorders (216)</td>
<td>Charged Fall 2008; Received</td>
<td>Committee visit Fall 2009</td>
<td>Finished; department response received</td>
<td>Completed Spring 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics (261)</td>
<td>Charged Fall 2007; Received</td>
<td>Committee visit Fall 2009</td>
<td>Finished; department response received</td>
<td>Completed Spring 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (405)</td>
<td>Charged Fall 2008 Received</td>
<td>Committee visit Jan 27-29, 2010</td>
<td>Finished; department response received</td>
<td>Fall 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capstone Certificate: Geographical Info. Systems (358)</td>
<td>Charged Fall 2008 Received</td>
<td>Committee work conducted Summer &amp; Fall 2009</td>
<td>Finished; department response received</td>
<td>Completed Spring 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoscience (468, 470, 472)</td>
<td>Charged Fall 2007 Received</td>
<td>Committee visit Feb 4-5, 2010</td>
<td>Finished; department response received</td>
<td>Completed Fall 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism (PhD Mass Communication – 630)</td>
<td>Charged Fall 2009 Resumed Spring 2011</td>
<td>Review Committee is being convened</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages and Cultures of Asia (596)</td>
<td>Resumed Fall 2008 Received</td>
<td>Committee visit Fall 2009</td>
<td>Finished; department response received</td>
<td>Completed Fall 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science (805)</td>
<td>Charged Fall 2008 Received</td>
<td>Committee visit Fall 2009</td>
<td>Finished; department response received</td>
<td>Completed Fall 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology (832; non-accredited programs only)</td>
<td>Charged Spring 2009; Extension to Spring 2010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish &amp; Portuguese (936, 810; Cert Spanish for Bus Majors)</td>
<td>Charged Fall 2008 Received</td>
<td>Committee convened; site visit April 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics (949)</td>
<td>Charged Fall 2008 Received</td>
<td>Committee visit Feb 18 &amp; 19, 2010</td>
<td>Finished; department response received</td>
<td>To be completed Spring 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## OTHER REVIEWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Joint Reviews (Major Code)</th>
<th>Self Study</th>
<th>APC Discussion</th>
<th>Committee Review</th>
<th>Committee Report</th>
<th>UAPC Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MA Gender and Women’s Studies</td>
<td>Received</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>UAPC will convene</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Audiology</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate Program Reviews</td>
<td>Review convened</td>
<td>APC Discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>APC Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archaeology</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Review convened</td>
<td>Committee work</td>
<td>APC Discussion</td>
<td>Next Steps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for World Affairs and the Global Economy</td>
<td>February 2009</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>Reorganization recommended; report submitted to APC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
L&S Policy on Creating, Restructuring, or Discontinuing Departments, Programs, and Department-like Units

Approved by L&S Academic Planning Council, 3 November 2010

“A department shall consist of a group of faculty members recognized by the faculty and chancellor, and the Board of Regents, as dealing with a common field of knowledge or as having common or closely related scholarly interests” (FP&P 5.01(A).

As scholarly interests change over time, circumstances arise that require the faculty to reexamine the existing (or incipient) organization of the departments, programs, or other academic units with which they are affiliated. This introspection may lead to a request to substantially reorganize these entities to better reflect faculty interests. Faculty policy defines “substantial” change that warrants deep consultation: “Substantial restructuring includes, but is not limited to the merger of departments, the transfer of groups of faculty in or out of departments, and the establishment of department-like bodies” FP&P 5.01(A).1 When such reorganization is desired, FP&P dictates that it may proceed in a formal process that includes a period of study, development of clear recommendations, and approvals granted by the affected departmental/unit executive committees, College and University Academic Planning Councils, Chancellor, and Senate. Throughout the process, the unit is expected to consult extensively both with the Deans’ offices, the APC’s, and others who may be affected by the change.

The following L&S policy on the Creation, Restructuring, or Discontinuation of Departments and Programs seeks to ensure that FP&P 5.01 is followed and that affected individuals are afforded an opportunity to engage in these discussions. In preparing recommendations for restructuring, four broad questions need to be addressed concerning the substantial changes to departments, programs, and other “department-like” units:

1. Centrality: To what extent is the mission and purpose of the unit fulfilling a need that is central to the overall mission of the college and/or university? Are the mission and purpose sufficiently distinct from other units that already exist?
2. Quality: What is the quality of the department or program?
3. Service: In what ways, and how well, does the department/program meet the needs of undergraduate and graduate students?
4. Cost effectiveness: To what extent is the department/program cost effective? If it is not cost effective, does the centrality of its role and quality of its performance (as conveyed in items 1, 2 and 3 above) outweigh the need to be cost effective?

If restructuring is desired, the answers to these questions may be incorporated in a memo to the Dean and L&S Academic Planning Councils. The memo should convey a candid response to these questions, and express clearly the rationale for change.

When the request is endorsed by the APC, the next step is to develop a plan to address practical matters related to the desired change. Since different situations will precipitate change and each situation will bring its own set of questions to be answered, there is no template for this plan; however, units are encouraged to consider several categories of issues that should be addressed:

---

1 Per FP&P 5.01(A): “A department shall consist of a group of faculty members recognized by the faculty and chancellor, and the Board of Regents, as dealing with a common field of knowledge or as having common or closely related scholarly interests.” Other gatherings of faculty may be considered to function like departments per FP&P 5.01 (B). “Department-like bodies,” or, groups of faculty who are not all in the same department but who share responsibilities for departmental functions (FP&P 5.40) also exist. These guidelines pertain to all three of these formally convened groups.
• governance and process (decision-making processes that allow all affected parties to participate in discussions about restructuring; adequate communication and consultation with stakeholders; careful attention to relevant campus policy);

• people (personnel, including untenured faculty, classified, and academic staff; students, current and former; other stakeholders, such as boards of visitors);

• resources (financial and physical);

• ongoing responsibilities (e.g., ensuring students’ ability to complete academic programs; continued administration of grants and contracts); and

• time (stages of implementation and deadlines for accomplishing them).

Requests for change will generally proceed through the following steps:

1. Conversations about department/program creation, restructuring or discontinuation will, in most cases, be initiated by the faculty; however, the dean may, after consultation with the Academic Planning Council, request that the faculty initiate these conversations.

2. In the event that these conversations lead to a decision that restructuring is warranted, the faculty should inform the Dean and APC via a memorandum seeking to create, restructure, or discontinue the department or program.

3. Consistent with FP&P 3.08 B.3 (b), the APC will invite the department chair or program director (or an appropriate member of the faculty in a leadership position) to be present at and participate in a discussion of the request.

4. Following this discussion, the planning process should be undertaken in a period of not less than six months. If circumstances suggest that a shorter period is both reasonable and desirable, by mutual agreement of the unit, the deans, and the APC, the “start date” for planning may be adjusted to include some portion of the discussion period preceding the memo.

5. Development of the plan will be led by the program faculty. The faculty may designate leaders who will consult extensively with the Associate Dean and the Assistant Dean for Academic Planning as the plan is prepared.

6. During the planning phase, faculty representatives, the Associate Dean, and the Assistant Dean for Academic Planning should communicate with other APC’s if needed.

7. When it is complete, the unit must approve the plan and submit it to the Dean and the APC.

8. Per FP&P 3.08 B.3(b), appropriate representatives of the department/program faculty will be present and invited to participate in the APC discussion of the plan.

9. If the APC approves the plan, it is presented, with a description of procedures followed, to the UAPC. (If more than one School/College is involved, all APC’s should approve the same plan. If necessary, impasses between the APC’s and/or deans will be adjudicated by the chancellor before the plan is sent to the UAPC for consideration.)

10. The UAPC will either approve the plan or return it for revisions.

11. When approved by the UAPC, the plan is presented to the Chancellor and to the Faculty Senate.

Questions about this policy and process should be addressed to the Dean, the Associate Dean, or to the Assistant Dean for Academic Planning.
College of Letters and Science Curriculum Committee
Report to L&S Faculty Senate
Academic Year 2011 (to date)

Curriculum Committee Members and Chair

Marc Fink (Music) Ken Sytsma (Botany)
Diane Gooding (Psychology) Sean Teuton (English and American Indian
Liane Kosaki (Political Science) Studies)
Venkat Mani (German
Naomi McGloin (East Asian Languages and Literature) Students:
Kristopher Olds (Geography) (Chair) Myranda Tanck (2010-2011)
Gary Shiu (Physics) Leslie Watkins (2010-2011)

Ex Officio members:
Elaine M. Klein (Assistant Dean, Academic Planning, Program Review & Assessment)
Christopher F. Lee (Assistant Dean, L&S Student Academic Affairs)
Jennifer Kaufmann-Buhler (L&S Honors Program)
Michael J. Pflieger (Assistant Dean, L&S Student Academic Affairs)
Nancy Westphal-Johnson (Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education & Academic Administration)
Tammy Weisensel (Assistant to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education & Academic Administration)

Overview

The L&S Curriculum Committee (LSCC) advises the Dean on the curricular integrity of academic programs offered in the College of Letters and Science, from degree requirements affecting all L&S undergraduates, to changes to requirements for existing majors, certificates, and options. The committee reviews proposals to add, change, or delete courses from the L&S subject listings, after departmental approval and prior to final approval by the Divisional Executive Committees. To maintain the integrity of the Liberal Arts curriculum, the committee also considers requests to allow courses offered outside the college to count toward L&S undergraduate degree requirements by awarding them the designation of “Liberal Arts and Science” courses. This work is described in greater detail online, at http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterOne/chapter1-3.htm. At the Dean’s request, the committee considers other issues related to undergraduate education for purposes of advising him, the faculty and L&S departments and programs, and the L&S division of Student Academic Affairs.
**Proposals to Add, Change or Delete Courses**

The LSCC is responsible for college-level review of proposals to add, change, or delete courses listed in the *Course Guide* subject listings that are managed by L&S departments and programs. Proposals approved by department faculty are sent to the LSCC. A technical review is conducted to evaluate whether they conform to technical requirements for entry into the course database. The LSCC chair reviews all proposals to determine if they are ready for committee consideration, and committee members review all proposals online prior to the meeting. At any of these levels, questions may be asked of the units submitting the proposals; L&S staff work with departments to resolve questions that come up before proposals are submitted to the Divisional Executive Committee. (See *Attachment A* for a diagram illustrating this process.) Since the committee’s last report to the L&S Senate (March 15, 2010), the LSCC approved proposals to create 76 new courses, change 128 existing courses, and delete 18 courses. 3 proposals are awaiting department responses to questions raised in the approval process.

**Other course-related issues.**

- In recent years, campus has undertaken an effort to trim course lists and retire courses that have not been taught in ten years. The committee encourages departments to monitor their course array and retire courses when they are no longer likely to be taught. The committee also endorses development of “topics courses” at various levels (elementary, intermediate, and advanced) to take advantage of greater flexibility in offering new or infrequently taught courses. More information – including the LSCC’s guidance regarding repetition of “topics” can be found in the *L&S Handbook*, at [http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterOne/chapter1-3-topicscourses.htm](http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterOne/chapter1-3-topicscourses.htm).

- The LSCC’s recommendations concerning the use of Directed Study courses and numbers has been circulated to departments after notice was received about groups outside the university encouraging students to use these courses to earn credit for volunteering. The statement is online at [http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterFive/chV-18.htm](http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterFive/chV-18.htm).

- As the Office of the Divisional Executive Committees considers revisions to the course proposal process and questions asked on the course proposal form, LSCC members and L&S staff hope to be involved in those discussions.

**Liberal Arts and Science (LAS) Designation.** The LSCC considered several requests from non-L&S programs to consider how their courses are found to meet College criteria for Liberal Arts and Science courses (see [http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterOne/LAS-Criteria.pdf](http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterOne/LAS-Criteria.pdf)). Undergraduate students in L&S must complete a minimum number of credits in approved LAS courses: students completing the current Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science (BABS07) degree requirements must have at least 108 LAS credits, and students completing the 1971 requirements must have at least 100 “C” credits, and up to 20 “T” credits.

Applications for LAS have been somewhat standardized in recent years. The committee asks that requests include a detailed syllabus accompanied by a substantive memorandum explaining how the course contributes to students’ liberal education, and specifically, how the LAS criteria are met. Requests are reviewed by the full committee and discussed extensively in one or two
meetings. Since the committee’s last report, 12 courses have been considered for LAS designation, and there are ten LAS requests pending resolution of questions asked. This increase in interest in the LAS designation is likely triggered by the anticipated retirement of the “T” designation (see below). Finally, in cases where it was both possible and desirable to do so, the committee recommended that approvals be made retroactive to the semesters reflected in the course syllabi reviewed. We believe that this allowed several students complete their degrees in a timely way.

“T” Course Issues. As noted above, under the 1971 curriculum students were allowed to meet requirements with a limited number of credits earned in “T” credits (the name refers to the twenty-credit limit). The “T” designation is scheduled to be retired from use in 2012, and as a result of that change, we anticipate more requests for LAS designation, since many departments will seek to convert their “T” courses to the LAS designation.

International Academic Programs’ Report on the Study Abroad Subject Listing. The committee heard an update on the Study Abroad Subject listing, which is an administrative tool used to facilitate transfer of credit from UW-Madison approved study abroad sites. These courses are primarily used to process credit needed by non-UW-Madison students who participate in our programs. Less frequently, credit is used for UW-Madison students in cases where no appropriate UW-Madison transfer courses is available. The SAB listing appears to be working well, and as more departments and programs create “Study Abroad” topics courses within their own subject listings, the need for this tool is diminishing.

Proposals to Change Requirements for Academic Programs

LSCC guidelines regarding changes to requirements for academic programs remain in effect (http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterOne/chapter1-3ccpol.htm). Since the last LSCC report, several departments and programs sought changes to their academic programs; these appear in this report as Attachment B. (The increase in this activity can be attributed to the regular cycle for revision to the Undergraduate Catalog.) The Committee and L&S Administrative staff continue to work with departments to articulate the connections between requests for curricular changes and efforts to assess student learning in academic programs, to link changes to evidence, and to demonstrate more clearly that learning is improving. As part of the approval process, implementation dates are established and plans are developed to ensure that students in the “old” programs are able still to complete those requirements, or that they may be transitioned into the new requirements without adversely affecting their progress.

Implementing Revisions to the L&S Baccalaureate Degree Requirements

The committee continues monitor issues arising from the implementation of changes to the L&S baccalaureate degree requirements, known as BABS07. The interim Associate Dean of L&S Student Academic Affairs recently submitted a memorandum seeking counsel on several policy
matters related to that curriculum; the committee will be considering those matters during the remainder of its 2010-2011 meetings.

Other Curricular Issues

Course Overlap Issues

Implementation of LSCC recommendations concerning course overlap have been slowed by difficulty obtaining meetings among key staffers in L&S SAA, the Dean’s Office, Curricular Services, the Offices of the Registrar, and the Divisional Executive Committees. Though we continue to push for progress on this matter, some progress has been made via attitudinal shifts. For example, the committee staff and others are actively counseling departments not to include “overlap language” in prerequisite statements, and departments for which forward progress in curriculum matters are encouraged to take the initiative to set and enforce prerequisites.

Service Learning

International Service Learning Opportunities. The LSCC met with representatives from International Academic Programs, the Morgridge Center for Public Service, and the UW Without Borders initiative to discuss growing interest in students participating in service learning opportunities while on study abroad, or in programs for which service requires travel abroad. There is a plethora of initiatives on campus to encourage international service learning, and these will only increase over time. The LSCC acquired knowledge about the current state of thinking about this phenomenon, and engaged in dialogue about the various procedures to ensure that international service learning is supported but also receives adequate oversight in a coordinated and strategic way on our campus. In general the LSCC is highly supportive of international service learning, but we recommended that coordination within L&S, and between Colleges and Schools, be enhanced.

Consultation Regarding Establishment of a “Service Learning” Course Indicator. The LSCC met with Professor Nancy Mathews, Director of the Morgridge Center for Public Service, to discuss a proposal to create a new course designation which will allow faculty members who teach service learning courses that meet certain criteria to designate their courses as “Service Learning Courses”. The use of such an indicator is similar to the LSCC assignment of “breadth designations”, or to the University General Education Committee assignment of Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, and Ethnic Studies course designations. In each of these cases, faculty members and/or departments submit a syllabus for review by a designated faculty committee or liaison; the materials are reviewed to establish that they meet criteria established by the faculty; and if approved, Curricular Services is informed that the designation may be applied (usually via the Divisional Executive Committee course proposal form). The creation of standard criteria will ensure a degree of consistency in this area across the course array, though some courses will likely fail to meet the criteria and will not be eligible for the indicator (as is the case with other course indicators). A “Service Learning” course indicator will allow students to identify these courses, while also allowing campus academic planners to
monitor enrollments in Service Learning courses. There are also risk management issues involved, in that students engaged in for-credit service learning activities are covered by campus liability policies. The committee is inclined to be supportive of the proposal, but noted that there are several implementation matters yet to be worked out.

Assignment of Breadth Indicators

In response to a question posed by the Divisional Executive Committees, the LSCC prepared a formal memorandum explaining how and why the committee assigns L&S Breadth Designations, and the role these designations play in the L&S baccalaureate requirements. That memo is attached as Attachment C.

Discussion: General Bachelor of Liberal Studies Degree

As reported last year, Dean Sandefur had asked the LSCC to consider whether the College of Letters and Science should propose creation of a general degree in the Liberal Arts and Sciences. When this issue was presented to the L&S Senate, the LSCC was encouraged to continue its discussions, with the strong caution that any program at UW-Madison must be rigorous. Furthermore, the Senate recommended that the faculty of the Integrated Liberal Studies program be invited to consider the matter, as well. Since then, the LSCC invited ILS faculty to attend LSCC discussions of the topic, and ILS has discussed the concept extensively. The LSCC discussions have so far been unsuccessful in identifying a specific student audience among our traditional residential students who might be targeted by such a program; however, the review of several UW System proposals that focus on facilitating transfer from two-year institutions and on completion of degrees in specific programs, may help guide the committee’s future discussions.

Report of the Equity and Diversity Committee

The LSCC reviewed a report prepared by the L&S Equity and Diversity Committee. In a study of the courses most frequently taken by first-year students, in which at least 45 targeted minority students were enrolled, the EDC found that students in underrepresented groups have higher rates of “adverse outcomes” (grades of D or F, drop or withdraw from course), than do equally prepared (as inferred from ACT score) majority students. Focusing on five “gateway” courses (Chem 103, English 100, Comm Arts 100, Math 112, Psych 202), the authors found that, although these differences are greater in quantitative courses (Chemistry, Math, and Psychology) than in non-quantitative courses (Communication Arts and English), once the results are normalized as deviation from the mean, all classes display similar gaps. This gap is observed at all levels of preparation, with some of the worst gaps appearing at the lowest and highest ACT scores. This phenomenon is particularly troubling because mastery of quantitative classes is needed for admission in all STEM majors, and lower overall GPAs prevent students from advancing into highly-sought programs in Business and Medicine. Thus, students are being locked out of highly remunerated careers linked to certain majors. The EDC surveyed students in these courses to evaluate their perceptions on items related to “engagement” in the course and peer relations. Though overall scores among targeted minority and majority students were similar, significant differences on some items suggest areas that might be
considered for improvement. For example, while general classroom climate was perceived to be positive overall (with different rates reported across classes), students’ relationships with their peers was generally rated considerably lower. In some key questions, the differences between minorities and non-minorities’ replies to the survey indicate a degree of isolation and tension. The EDC has recommended that the Dean convene a task force to work with these departments, with the goal of reducing or eliminating the gap as quickly as possible.

This report was discussed by the L&S Curriculum Committee on February 28, 2011, and is submitted by:

Kris Olds, Professor of Geography and Chair, L&S Curriculum Committee

Elaine M. Klein, Assistant Dean
L&S Academic Planning, Program Review and Assessment
Faculty member proposes course to department; course is approved per departmental process.

Proposal sent to L&S Curriculum Committee.

Revised proposal sent to Divisional Executive Committee Office.

Proposals to add/change/delete courses are forwarded to Registrar's Office for entry into Course Guide.

Departments send:
Electronic copy (pdf preferred) or 3 hard copies to LSCC for Technical and Committee Review. Please note: these documents are reviewed as though they are "drafts", just in case they need revision prior to submission to college/campus committees.

Please include:
Cover letter from chair (one letter per set of proposals)

To:
L&S Curriculum Committee
c/o Tammy Weisensel
307 B South Hall
weisensel@ls.admin.wisc.edu

By:
Ten days prior to Curriculum Committee meeting that falls before Divisional Committee Deadline

Departments send:
20 copies (hard copy only) of revised/final proposal

To:
Divisional Executive Committee Office (134 Bascom Hall)

By:
Three weeks before Divisional Executive Committee meeting

L&S sends:
L&S CC Chair's notice of course approval to Divisional Executive Committee Office (e-mail and hard copy) with correspondence about revisions.

NOTE: Divisional Committees may have additional questions for department or for L&S Curriculum Committee.

- L&S CC staff & chair work with dept to resolve technical questions.
- L&S CC considers proposals when questions are resolved (may vote "approve pending resolution of minor questions").
- Notice of approval and revised proposals sent to Dept. and to Divisional Executive Committee Office.

For more information about the L&S Curriculum Committee, see section I.3 of the L&S Handbook
www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook
Substantive revisions were approved for the undergraduate majors in:

- Geography GIS/Cartography (May 10, 2010) The requested change reduces overall credits required and aligns courses required with courses offered.
- Botany (October 11, 2010) These changes allow students more options to complete the program by adding appropriate courses to the lists used to meet requirements.
- Economics (October 11, 2010). Changes approved include a request consistent with the desire of many departments that students at UW-Madison complete a meaningful proportion of work, not only at the upper or "advanced" level, but in courses taken in residence on the UW-Madison campus.
- Italian (December 13, 2010) These changes reduce the number of credits required beyond the two year language sequence from 27 to 24; this is consistent with other revisions undertaken to the courses that serve the program, and align the credits required with the number offered.
- Psychology (October 25, 2010). Substantial revision of the program, including changes to the requirements for and timing of declaration of the major. Subsequent to this approval, a further technical clarification was approved concerning limits placed on the number of times a student may attempt to complete Psych 225.

Other program approvals

- Folklore Certificate (October 11, 2010). Requirements for the Folklore Certificate were revised to reflect a recategorization of courses that meet requirements, and to better explain the role the different types of courses play in the program. The committee praised this effort as one likely to serve students well, by providing them with the context in which they will learn.
- Certificate in Gender and Women’s Studies (November 8, 2010). Approval of limitation on the number of introductory courses students may take, thereby encouraging them to advance toward more challenging work in this area.
- LGBT Certificate (November 8, 2010). Similar to the change approved for the Certificate in GWS, this request was approved to limit the number of introductory courses students may take, thereby encouraging them to advance toward more challenging work in the field.
- PhD minor in Gender and Women’s Studies (February 28, 2011). Approval of a new rule governing the number of exclusively graduate-level GWS courses that may be applied to the GWS Ph.D. minor, such that a student may complete the program with 9 credits if all 9 credits are in exclusively graduate-level Gender & Women’s Studies courses; if a student completes the minor with 12 credits, they must be in courses numbered 300 and above.
- PhD minor in Science and Technology Studies (October 11, 2010). In discussion, committee members commended the program for efforts to serve students in this interdisciplinary program by allowing them the latitude to work with faculty to pursue studies via individually defined themes within STS rather than narrowly constrained pre-defined themes identified when the program was established.

Technical corrections were approved for the undergraduate majors in:

- Biochemistry (February 9, 2011) Technical changes approved to align requirements with changes in credits attached to various courses required in the major. These changes were approved by both L&S and CALS, and have been incorporated into the upcoming edition of the Undergraduate Catalog.
- Biological Aspects of Conservation (January 3, 2011) Changes were approved to add to (and otherwise update) the list of course opportunities for students in this major. Approved as a technical correction because they make materials presented to students in brochure and catalog format conform to what's actually available and offered.

- Comparitive Literature (December 13, 2010) LSCC ratification of changes previously approved by the Faculty Honors Committee.

- Linguistics Major. (December 10, 2010). Approval of a technical correction to clarify that the removal of 103/303 from the list of required courses did not reduce the overall number of credits required to complete the program.

Still under consideration
- Revisions to the Jewish Studies Major and Certificate program.
7 March 2011

TO: Divisional Executive Committees

FROM: Kris Olds, Professor of Geography and Chair, L&S Curriculum Committee 
Elaine M. Klein, Assistant Dean, Academic Planning and Assessment (L&S) and Director, University General Education

RE: Assignment of Breadth Designations to Liberal Arts and Science Courses

CC: Andrea Poehling, Divisional Committees Coordinator 
Gary Sandefur, Dean 
L&S Curriculum Committee

It has come to our attention that some of the Divisional Executive Committees may have questions about how L&S Breadth designations are assigned to courses.

As many of your members know through membership in the faculty of the College of Letters and Science, or experience as undergraduate advisors, the L&S undergraduate degree requirements hold that all L&S students must take a substantial number of credits across the three major domains of knowledge represented within the College: the Arts and Humanities, the Social Sciences, and the Natural Sciences. The L&S requirements further subdivide the Arts and Humanities to highlight coursework that focuses on Literature, and Natural Sciences to distinguish between Biological and Physical Sciences, to ensure that students are required to complete a minimum amount of coursework in these areas. These requirements are essential features of L&S baccalaureate degrees in the liberal arts and sciences, ensuring that students obtain breadth of study that complements the depth of study found in the major.

Administration of the L&S degree requirements is the domain of the L&S Curriculum Committee (LSCC). The LSCC is comprised of faculty members from across L&S; they are appointed by the dean, who accepts nominations from the Associate Deans, Department Chairs, and interested faculty themselves. Every effort is made to recruit faculty members who are interested in curricular matters and in liberal education more generally; in addition, these appointments are made to ensure that faculty are drawn from the L&S divisions. The result is
that faculty from the Arts and Humanities, Natural Sciences, (Biological and Physical), and Social Sciences engage in cross-disciplinary discussions about the liberal education we hope our students achieve. These faculty members are joined by *ex officio* members representing advising, administrative, and student perspectives. For your convenience, we’ve attached a list of L&S Curriculum Committee members to this memo (Attachment A). We believe that the strength of this committee is found in its ability to engage in coordinated, student-focused, cross-disciplinary discussions to promote an integrated liberal arts and science experience for students.

One means by which the LSCC administers the breadth component of the L&S degree requirements is via oversight of several “course attributes” (also known as “Timetable” or “GeBLC” codes) assigned in the course database. Questions about these attributes appear in the New Course Proposal form (Q. 10 – 13a). These attributes help L&S students identify courses that may be used to meet the requirements; the attributes include (but are not limited to) the L&S Breadth designations. (The use of codes to identify courses in the various breadth areas predates the 1996 implementation of University General Education Requirements by many decades.) Then, as now, the goal of the L&S Breadth requirement is to ensure that students completing liberal arts degrees are exposed to domains of knowledge beyond the focus of their major.

The LSCC’s assignment of these designations to courses is inextricably linked to the goals of liberal education, and the college has been working to more effectively communicate these goals to students, advisors, and other stakeholders. The revisions to the L&S degree requirements implemented in Fall 2007 were driven, in part, by an identified need to explain more clearly the purpose of various requirements. After considerable discussion and consultation, the LSCC developed a statement describing the role “Breadth” plays in our baccalaureate degree programs. This statement, published in the *Undergraduate Catalog*, explains that “[at] the heart of any degree in the liberal arts and sciences is an active understanding of the variety and breadth of the many scholarly approaches to knowing the world….Working together, each of these three fields of knowledge represents a particular ‘way of knowing’ about the world around us.” The broad goals expressed for courses in each of the three domains include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Arts and Humanities courses “encourage students to analyze the range of creative and cultural artifacts, expressions, and ideas of human existence—history, literature, art, culture, folklore—and to use that information to better understand humanity and to cultivate civic and social responsibility.”
- Courses in the social sciences “demonstrate ways of knowing the world through the systematic study of human society, interactions, and institutions…from a wide range of perspectives and research techniques, both quantitative and qualitative…”
- In the Natural Sciences, students “gain an appreciation for science as a way of systematically looking at the natural world, understanding how this process can be used to inform decision-making in a wide range of political, economic, and social contexts.”

In articulating these goals, the LSCC hopes to convey that “breadth” of learning does not mandate that all students must become specialists across all domains; rather, our students should become better informed consumers of information and knowledge about the world around them. The full statement concerning L&S Breadth was presented to, and endorsed by, the L&S Faculty Senate (L&S Fac Doc 279, 20 April 2009). [Attachment B]
When the LSCC considers requests to create new courses that carry breadth designations, these broad goals for each of the three domains are implicit, though often, they will be explicitly discussed. They are always considered when courses outside L&S are considered as “Liberal Arts and Science” courses. In these discussions, the committee bears in mind the principle that breadth matters most for students who are exploring an area outside the domain in which their major falls.

As noted above, breadth designations facilitate administration of the L&S degree requirements, which affect the majority of UW-Madison undergraduates. After the implementation of the University General Education Requirements (UGER), these codes were recruited to serve an additional purpose, since students earning degrees in schools and colleges other than L&S often take L&S courses that may be used to satisfy UGER Breadth. Although many non-L&S students satisfy UGER breadth by taking courses designated with the L&S codes, schools and colleges other than L&S have the latitude to include other courses to meet these requirements when viewed in the context of their own curricular needs. For example, while the College of Engineering allows introductory language courses to satisfy the UGER Humanities requirement for Engineering students, L&S rules prevent those courses from carrying the L&S “H” designation.

Thus, the L&S Breadth codes intersect with (but are distinct from) UGER Breadth. It may therefore be useful to know more about the administration of the UGER curriculum. L&S has been entrusted by the University Academic Planning Council to serve as the “Trustee” on behalf of all schools and colleges to administer the UGERs. The Dean of L&S appoints the University General Education Committee (UGEC), a campus-wide policy committee that reports to the University Academic Planning Council. Membership includes faculty from across the university, as well as on ex officio membership from key administrative and advising units across campus that serve undergraduates. This committee provides administrative oversight and evaluation of the UGER. Review and approval of courses meeting faculty-developed UGER criteria for Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, and Ethnic Studies is overseen by faculty members who serve on the UGEC. For UGER Breadth, the UGEC continues to utilize existing L&S Breadth indicators, as assigned by the L&S Curriculum Committee, while also affording the schools and colleges some flexibility to interpret “breadth” in the context of degrees earned in Engineering, Human Ecology, Business, Education, and Agricultural and Life Sciences. The UGER liaisons and staff frequently consult with deans’ offices and advising staff across campus on questions related to the requirements, from managing student requests for exceptions to adding new courses to the UGER course array.

We should note that both L&S and the UGEC are interested in further discussions of the role Breadth plays for undergraduates. The LSCC is currently engaging in discussions of developing an assessment strategy for our Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science (BABS07) degree programs, and that plan will, necessarily, include discussions of breadth. The 2008 long-term UGEC Assessment Plan includes plans to assess student learning with respect to breadth as a component of the Wisconsin Experience, and that project will necessarily involve schools and colleges other than L&S, and will likely include conversations with the Divisional Executive Committees, the Biodeans, and other groups that can weigh in on student learning goals.
associated with divisional breadth. We anticipate that these conversations will clarify student learning outcomes for General Education, as well as for L&S.

In conclusion, we wish to assure the committees that our committee is actively engaged in managing a curriculum, of which Breadth of study is an essential component. The structure of our committee affords us the opportunity to engage in discussions about breadth that allow coordination of expectations for this requirement among the various divisions, in service to a integrated pedagogical experience.

If you have questions about these topics, we would be happy to discuss them further.

Kris Olds, PhD
Professor of Geography
Chair, College of Letters & Science Curriculum Committee

Elaine M. Klein
Assistant Dean, College of Letters and Science
Director, University General Education
2010-2011 L&S Curriculum Committee Membership

Term Members:

Marc Fink, Music, Year 2 of 3
Diane Gooding, Psychology, Year 2 of 3
Liane Kosaki, Political Science, Year 3 of 3
Venkat Mani, German, Year 2 of 3
Naomi McGloin, East Asian Languages & Literature, Year 3 of 3
Kristopher Olds, Geography, Year 3 of 3 (Chair)
Kenneth Sytsma, Botany, Year 3 of 3

Ex Officio:

Elaine Klein, L&S Administration (Academic Planning, Program Review, and Assessment of Student Learning)
Christopher Lee, L&S Student Academic Affairs (Undergraduate Academic Services)
Jennifer Kaufmann-Buhler, L&S Honors Program (Curriculum)
Michael J. Pflieger, L&S Student Academic Affairs (Undergraduate Academic Services, DARS)
Nancy Westphal-Johnson, L&S Administration (Undergraduate Education and Academic Administration)

Student Members (appointed through ASM):

Myranda Tanck
Leslie Watkins
College of Letters and Science
Undergraduate Study in Letters and Science

The College of Letters and Science (L&S) provides a broad and deep array of learning opportunities for undergraduate students. Situated at the heart of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, our courses not only provide students with basic tools for learning, but also help students acquire a thorough understanding of the many ways in which artists, scholars, scientists, and professionals create, understand, interpret, investigate, and communicate about the diverse and complex world around us. Whether in the classroom or in the laboratory, on the Web or in the workplace, our educational mission is to help students to actively develop their own sense of how they might best understand the world.

Understanding the world, communicating that understanding to others, and taking action based on what one knows, takes many forms. What we call the “liberal arts and sciences” includes a wide range of academic pursuits: creative production and performance in the printed and visual arts; the analysis of global history, foreign languages and world literatures; scientific inquiry into the physical and natural world; qualitative and quantitative investigation into political, economic, and social processes; and many, many more. No matter what the field, L&S classes and instructors emphasize critical thinking, analytical investigation, and effective communication. The learning experiences that L&S offers are invaluable for students in both their professional careers and their productive lives within the community — helping students develop flexible and transferable skills, both for “making a living” and “making a life.”

The Wisconsin Experience: Essential Learning in Letters and Science

The three elements of learning described below — tools, breadth, and depth — work together to create a broad and rich education in the liberal arts and sciences, and promote attainment of core areas of essential learning: knowledge of human cultures and the natural and physical world, intellectual and practical skills, personal and social responsibility, and integrative and applied learning. These and countless other experiences comprise the Letters and Science approach to helping students obtain a distinctive “Wisconsin Experience.” (For more on the Wisconsin Experience, see http://www.learning.wisc.edu/.)

Foundations: Tools for Learning

For all UW undergraduates, these learning experiences begin with students satisfying the university's General Education Requirements — usually by taking courses taught within the College of Letters & Science. These common foundations cover key topics which are necessary for any undergraduate major and any prospective career: oral and written communication; mathematical and logical reasoning; and the diversity of cultures within global society. In addition to these university-wide requirements, all L&S students must attain knowledge of a foreign language, in work that combines training in both communication and culture, so students may better understand and participate in the global community of the twenty-first century. Together, these “tools for learning” may be acquired through many different courses taught by
many different Departments. The key is that they are never taught in isolation, but always considered together with broad exposure to various “ways of knowing” from the arts and humanities, the natural sciences, and the social sciences. (For more on the General Education Requirements, see www.ls.wisc.edu/gened/; for more on the L&S requirements, see ...)

**Breadth: Ways of Knowing**

At the heart of any degree in the liberal arts and sciences is an active understanding of the variety and breadth of the many scholarly approaches to knowing the world. Every student in the College of Letters and Science experiences significant exposure to three principal fields of knowledge: the arts and humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. These broad fields of knowledge aren’t the same as the areas of depth that we call “Majors.” In fact, any particular Major — or even a particular course within a Major — might well involve more than one of these fields of knowledge. (For example, imagine a seminar on “people and the environment” that combines historical background, research on social patterns of energy use, and scientific understandings of climate.) Working together, each of these three fields of knowledge represents a particular “way of knowing” about the world around us.

Courses in the **arts and humanities** attempt to know the world through the production and analysis of artistic, literary, and scholarly work. Some courses examine the fine and performing arts, or literature, presenting students with opportunities to interpret and think critically about these creative expressions of the human condition. Other courses help students to understand and compare religious and philosophical conceptions of humankind. Still other courses take on historical subjects, focusing on moments of change and periods of continuity for the peoples and regions of the world. These courses all encourage students to analyze the range of creative and cultural artifacts, expressions, and ideas of human existence – history, literature, art, culture, folklore – and to use that information to better understand humanity and to cultivate civic and social responsibility.

Courses in the **social sciences** demonstrate ways of knowing the world through the systematic study of human society, interactions, and institutions. The social sciences explore these issues from a wide range of perspectives and research techniques, both quantitative and qualitative. Through these courses students learn how to formulate research questions and determine what techniques are best used to answer those questions — for example, exploring ideas and developing theories, conducting surveys and building models, or observing and participating in social life itself. Developing such analytical skills assists students as they approach complex problems and seek to solve them in both the workplace and the community.

Courses in the **natural sciences** involve knowing the world through scientific inquiry — assembling objective information that can be used to explain observed natural phenomena in a way that is thorough and verifiable. The natural sciences are often divided into the Physical Sciences (dealing with matter and energy, or the study of the earth, atmosphere, and oceans) and the Biological Sciences (dealing with life and living systems, like plants, animals, and environments). These courses often contain laboratory components that allow students to gain firsthand experience in scientific research methods. By completing this requirement, science and non-science majors alike will gain an appreciation for science as a way of systematically looking
at the natural world, understanding how this process can be used to inform decision-making in a wide range of political, economic, and social contexts.

Together, these broad “ways of knowing” give students a complementary set of tools for seeing, imagining, and asking questions about the world — tools that enhance creative problem solving no matter what the field. And, because twenty-first century knowledge is not neatly compartmentalized, it’s worth noting that these areas of study intersect and overlap; courses in some areas draw upon strategies used in the others. Experiences in “breadth” courses can be life-changing: we frequently hear that a course taken to fulfill a breadth requirement introduced someone to a subject that became a new Major, a new way of looking at a current Major, or a lifelong interest.

**Depth: Practice and Understanding (Major)**

The process of declaring and completing a Major — often, but not always, attached to a particular university Department — provides students with an opportunity to concentrate on an in-depth investigation of at least one subject or issue, putting their tools for learning and ways of knowing to focused use. This intensive understanding of one topic helps students to appreciate the potential depth of the others. A students’ work in the Major reflects a continuing progression of skills, knowledge, and values, where advanced learning opportunities in upper-level coursework grow from and expand upon earlier experiences, helping students build additional depth in writing, speaking, information literacy, and critical thinking skills from the perspective of a particular discipline. In senior capstone or independent research projects, students are frequently asked to synthesize what they’ve learned and apply it in a variety of new situations. By the conclusion of their studies, students in the Major are better able to understand themselves and their society, to develop their intellectual powers outside of a University setting, and to make productive contributions to the world around them. (For a list of Departments and Majors in L&S, see <link>.)
(This page has been left blank intentionally.)
GRADE GAP/FUTURE GAP:
ADDRESSING RACIAL DISPARITIES IN L&S INTRODUCTORY COURSES

Report of the Equity and Diversity Committee of the College of Letters and Science
to Dean Gary Sandefur and the College Community

May 2010

Committee Members

Deborah Brandt (English), Chair
Judith Burstyn (Chemistry)
Vera Crowell (Office of the Dean, L&S)
Jeffrey Henriques (Psychology)
Steven Kosciuk (Student Academic Affairs, L&S)
Gloria Mari-Beffa (Mathematics)
Benjamin Marquez (Political Science)
Ruby Paredes (Assistant Vice Chancellor)
Adrienne Thunder (Cross-College Advising Service, L&S)
Eric Wilcots (Associate Dean, L&S; Astronomy)
DeVon Wilson (Assistant Dean & MDC, L&S)
GUIDE TO CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ................................................................................................................. 3

BACKGROUND: ................................................................................................................................. 3

Findings............................................................................................................................................ 3

Recommendations: Eliminate the Grade Gap in Key Introductory Courses by 2014........... 4

INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................... 5

The Grade Gap in Key Introductory Courses ..................................................................................... 6

Climate Gaps and Grade Gaps ............................................................................................................. 12

The Peer Gap ....................................................................................................................................... 13

The Engagement Gap .......................................................................................................................... 16

Teacher Engagement and the Climate Gap ......................................................................................... 19

The Confidence Gap ............................................................................................................................ 20

A Final Finding .................................................................................................................................... 21

Recommendations: Eliminate the Grade Gap in Key Introductory Courses by 2014 .......... 23

Recommendation # 1: Convene a Taskforce for the Elimination of Grade Gaps ............... 23

Recommendation # 2: Disseminate Information about the Grade Gap to Faculty and
initiate discussions around student performance ................................................................................. 24

Recommendation # 3: Provide incentives for departments to innovate with curriculum
and course structures in order to raise student engagement and performance and
reduce grade gaps. Reward departments that implement results-oriented,
scalable strategies ................................................................................................................................. 24

Recommendation # 4 Support the Department of Mathematics in improving grade
outcomes for under-represented students in lower division math courses,
including Calculus .............................................................................................................................. 25

Recommendation # 5 Focus more TA professional development on inclusive excellence... 25

Recommendation # 6 Offer Teaching Awards for Inclusive Excellence in Introductory
Teaching ................................................................................................................................................ 26

Recommendation # 7 Focus more instructional attention on peer relations in
introductory courses ............................................................................................................................. 26

Recommendation # 8 Link the elimination of the grade gap in introductory courses to
efforts to Eliminate the Broader Achievement Gap. ..................................................................... 27

IN CONCLUSION: The Accountability Gap ....................................................................................... 27

Appendices ......................................................................................................................................... 28

Appendix 1: How the Surveys Were Conducted .............................................................................. 29

Appendix 2: Six Year Graduation Rates ......................................................................................... 30

Appendix 3: ACT Adjusted Final Grades ....................................................................................... 31

Appendix 4: Reported Study Time ................................................................................................. 32
Executive Summary

Background:

This report addresses the problem of the grade gap between non-targeted and targeted minority students in five key introductory L&S courses: Chemistry 103, Communication Arts 100, English 100, Psychology 202 and Mathematics 112. In each course and at nearly every preparation level—from least to most prepared—non-targeted students receive higher grades than their similarly prepared targeted minority counterparts. Indeed, targeted minority students who enter the university with the highest ACT scores experience some of the widest grade disparities in relationship to their majority counterparts. These discrepancies in educational outcomes create an aspiration gap—as targeted minority students are shunted from desired majors and career paths and the university falls short in its public promise to bring out the best in students regardless of race.

Specifically this report explores relationships between grade gaps and classroom climate. It is based on a survey of more than 1700 first-year students and 75 of their instructors in the five focal courses. The survey was administered in November 2009, and student survey responses were linked to individual final grades. Our study required us to look at five courses that varied considerably by academic discipline, format, and pedagogy. Our analysis focused in two areas: (1) significant differences in reported experience between targeted and non-targeted students and (2) significant differences in climate ratings reported by all students across the 5 focal courses.

Findings

1. Significant differences in grade outcomes by targeted and non-targeted status occurred in all five courses. These differences occurred at both the bottom and the top of the grading scale and at nearly every preparation level.

2. In courses with higher overall rates of adverse outcomes (i.e., grades below a C), gaps in adverse outcomes between targeted and non-targeted students were more severe than they were in courses with lower overall rates of adverse outcomes.

3. There was a small but significant difference in how targeted minority and non-targeted students rated classroom climate overall. Targeted minority students rated the climate more favorably.

4. Targeted minority students reported significantly higher rates of anxiety when they worked academically with peers of other races and reported higher rates of unease in forming study groups outside of class. Overall targeted minority students were more likely to characterize the learning environment in their introductory courses as competitive compared to non-targeted students.

5. Compared to non-targeted students, targeted minority students were more likely to report that hurtful racial incidents and uses of racial stereotypes occurred in their classrooms.
6. Both targeted minority and non-targeted students reported that their course learning was influenced by a wide array of resources in and out of the classroom. Compared with non-targeted students, targeted minority students rated the impact of course organized groups; learning centers and tutorials; small group activity; academic advisors; and tutors as having significantly higher impact on their learning.

7. Climate ratings between the five courses differed significantly. Both targeted and non-targeted students in Communication Arts 100 and English 100 reported significantly higher levels of engagement and more positive relations with instructors than students in Psychology 202 or Mathematics 112, with Chemistry 103 in the middle.

8. Instructors in favorable-climate courses were significantly more likely to report making greater efforts around teaching than instructors in courses with lower climate ratings. Instructors in favorable-climate courses were more likely to report that their instruction needed improvement than instructors in courses with lower climate ratings.

Recommendations: Eliminate the grade gap in key introductory courses by 2014.

The following recommendations are designed to build a foundation for focal departments to implement strategic action plans to eliminate racial grade gaps by 2014. These recommendations also will help the Dean put in place a system of incentives to bring quick and steady annual improvements. The recommendations call for small investments of money and large investments of will power.

1) Convene a taskforce for the elimination of grade gaps.
2) Disseminate information about grade gaps to L&S faculty and initiate department-wide discussions on student performance.
3) Provide incentives for departments to innovate with curriculum and course structures in order to raise student engagement and performance and reduce grade gaps. Reward departments that implement results-oriented, scalable strategies.
4) Support the Department of Mathematics in improving grade outcomes for underrepresented students in lower division math courses, including Calculus.
5) Focus more TA professional development on inclusive excellence.
6) Create faculty and TA teaching awards for inclusive excellence in introductory teaching.
7) Focus more instructional attention on peer relations in introductory courses.
8) Link the elimination of the grade gap in introductory courses to efforts to eliminate the broader achievement gap.
Introduction

Removing the salience of skin color from our systems of access and reward remains the great unfinished business of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It has been 55 years since our society renounced official racial discrimination in education, yet the effects of that racial legacy impinge on the life of our university, continuing to condition our classrooms and diminish our claims to innovation and greatness. It is the daily, routine acceptance of racial disparities in educational achievement, as something to be lived with, as something normal, as something beyond our local or immediate powers to change, that assures that these disparities—and their destructive social consequences—will continue. It is high time to rid ourselves of a repudiated past.

This report looks at one disparity: the systemic grade gap between non-targeted and targeted minority students in key introductory courses. In each course and at nearly every preparation level—from least to most prepared—non-targeted students receive higher grades than their similarly prepared targeted minority counterparts. Overall, as the report will illustrate, targeted minority students receive a disproportionately high rate of low grades—more than twice the rate of other students on average. They also receive a disproportionately low rate of high grades. Indeed, as we will see below, targeted minority students who enter the university with the highest ACT scores are apt to experience some of the sharpest grade disparities in relationship to their counterparts. These outcomes hurt the entire academic community. Targeted minority students see their academic plans upended and their professional dreams diverted, as low GPAs close off avenues to desired majors and make it harder to thrive. Teachers see their instructional efforts reproducing racial inequality instead of ameliorating it, as their methods too often fail to reach and reward underrepresented students who depend on them. And majority students are left with fossilized views of self and others that constrict their habits of learning, thinking, cooperating and competing. Above all, the grade gap feeds the UW-Madison graduation gap—one of the widest among peer institutions in the country. Consequently, we produce a future gap for our state and broader society. We have to do better.

In this report we examine grade gaps in five large introductory courses: Chemistry 103, Communication Arts 100, English 100, Mathematics 112, and Psychology 202. We chose these courses for study because they enroll large numbers of students, fulfill general education requirements, and otherwise serve as gateways to further study in STEM, liberal arts, business, and other fields. As these courses are taken mostly by first-year students, they provide undergraduates with their first sense of themselves as college learners and their first introduction to the intellectual climate on campus. These five courses are diverse in discipline, format, and instructional staffing. As we will see, a grade gap is present in all five courses.

We then propose a series of recommendations for how the College of Letters and Science and its faculty can eliminate the racial grade gap by 2014. Our recommendations are based on two years of study and discussion, including reviews of scholarly literature and focus group data; meetings with key campus personnel, researchers and student leaders; and a survey on classroom climate that we administered in Fall 2009 to all students and instructors in the five courses. The student survey, to which more than 1,700 students responded, allowed us to link students’ opinions and perceptions about their learning environments to their final grades. We also received survey responses from 75

---

1 This report uses the term targeted minority to refer to students from groups historically underrepresented in U.S. higher education. These include African Americans, Latino/a Americans, Native Americans and Southeast Asian Americans.
instructors across the five courses, allowing us to consider their opinions and perceptions about their preparation, effectiveness, practices, and values as teachers. (See Appendix 1 for a description of the survey procedures.) Survey results show targeted and non-targeted students alike appreciate educational supports on this campus. On the whole, they trust their instructors to do right by them. Likewise, instructors express confidence in the ability of all of their students to excel, and they say they prize inclusive pedagogical strategies. However, our study also turned up gaps in classroom climate—in peer relations, student and instructor engagement, and students’ reported confidence—that require our immediate attention. We also found that some courses more effectively than others employ high-engagement pedagogies that lift the performance of all students. As we will see, the findings of our study are not clear cut but rather complex and complicated, begging for follow-up by the Dean, the Academic Planning Council, departments, program directors, and instructors. In our recommendations we suggest avenues for such follow-up.

We submit this report well aware that other efforts are underway on campus to address the racial achievement gap. These include initiatives by the Vice Provost for Diversity and Climate; the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning; the Academic Advancement Program and Pathways to Excellence; as well as academic departments, including the Departments of Chemistry and Mathematics. Continued efforts to invest in advising and the professional skills of advisors; to coordinate services; strengthen the pre-college experience; build stronger academic bridges between departments and student academic services; incorporate innovative pedagogy, and take successful experiments to scale—all have the potential to contribute to better and fairer academic outcomes for all students. We also applaud the decision by the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates to fund an expansion of the First Year Interest Groups (FIGS), a proven model of inclusive excellence.

At the same time we submit this report well aware that while the University of Wisconsin-Madison has been making some progress in increasing the graduation rate of targeted minority students, we rank a disappointing 34th among 44 other AAU institutions in closing the gap. (See Appendix 2.) After six years, 83 out of 100 non-targeted students at UW-Madison will graduate, but only 66 out of 100 targeted minority students will graduate. Only 58 out of 100 African American and Native American students will graduate after six years. The consequences of these losses are enormous when we ponder the small number of targeted minority students who matriculate on this campus to begin with.

The L&S Committee on Equity and Diversity decided early in our investigations to focus particularly on the role that classroom climate plays in the grade gap. We recognize that classroom climate is not the full story. But we discovered very little research on this campus or nationally about the role of the classroom environment in contributing to student performance gaps—even as we collected anecdotal evidence of its impact. So while not the full story, classroom climate is an important part of the story—and especially relevant to departments and their faculty who want to turn their teaching toward inclusive excellence. The first step in that turn is facing the complex facts of the grade gap itself.

The Grade Gap in Key Introductory Courses

We preface this discussion by acknowledging the diverse teaching, learning and disciplinary conditions across the five courses in our focus. Psychology 202 is a large social-science lecture class
with no discussion sections. Chemistry 103 is a science lab course led by faculty with TAs supervising labs and leading discussion sections. English 100 and Communication Arts 100 are comprised of stand-alone, director-supervised, TA-taught sections, as is Mathematics 112. Some courses use and study mathematical language; others use and study only natural language. The instructional staffs differ as well in size and character: 5 permanent academic staff instructors in Psychology; 11 Mathematics TAs; 30 Communication Arts TAs, 44 English TAs and 31 Chemistry TAs. FTEs differ across the programs, as does the level and focus of TA professional development. Grading policies and grade distributions vary as well—as do instructional priorities and practices.

Nevertheless, all these courses have something in common: sharp disparities in grade outcomes by race. In all courses targeted minority students achieve lower grades than non-targeted students at similar preparation levels.\(^2\) In each course, targeted minority students receive more of the low grades and fewer of the high grades. Figure 1 captures the overall character of the grade gap among students across all courses. Notice that while non-targeted students with top ACT scores receive the highest grades, as the entrance test might predict, this is not the case for targeted minority students with similarly high entrance scores. Indeed, their final grades match those of non-targeted students who enter the university with the lowest ACT scores. Clearly we have performance problems in key introductory courses—a disparity in how student potential converts to achievement and reward.

**FIG. 1**
Composite Final Grades Across ACT Scores In 5 Intro Courses Fall 2009

The next series of figures provides different perspectives on grade gaps within the five courses. First, Fig. 2 shows final grades (unadjusted for preparation level). In other words, these are the average grades that each group of students took forward as part of their GPAs at the end of the Fall 2009 semester. Fig. 3 shows ACT adjusted final grades (by relevant math and verbal scores) in order to demonstrate that disparity persisted even when we controlled for preparation level. These disparities did not vary significantly by targeted group. (See Appendix 3 for a breakdown of final grades by each targeted minority group.)

\(^2\) For purposes of this study preparation level means a student’s score on the ACT, a standardized entrance exam that is designed to predict how well a student will perform academically in his or her first year of college.
The next series of figures addresses one of the most consequential aspects of the grade gap: the disproportionate number of adverse grade outcomes for targeted minority students enrolled in the five courses. As we can see in Fig. 4, at almost all ACT levels, including the highest, targeted minority students overall receive low grades at twice the rate or more of other students. Indeed targeted minority students with the highest ACT scores experience more adverse outcomes overall than non-targeted students with the lowest ACT scores. In these outcomes we can hear the sounds of

---

3 Adverse grade outcomes are defined as D, F, W(withdrawal) or U(unsatisfactory)
doors slamming—as low GPAs in the first semester of college can block forever students’ paths to desired majors and careers.

**FIG. 4**
Adverse Outcomes Across ACT Scores

![Graph showing percentage of students (%) based on ACT/SAT Composite Score across different score ranges. The graph compares non-targeted and targeted students.]

Fig. 5 shows the proportion of adverse grade outcomes in each of the 5 introductory courses. These rates differ significantly across the courses, a fact we will continue to consider as the analysis proceeds. Here, notice that as adverse outcomes rise overall, as they do in Chemistry 103, Psychology 112, and especially in Mathematics 112, targeted minority students become at greater risk of receiving low grades compared to their non-targeted counterparts.

**FIG. 5**
Proportion of Students With Adverse Outcomes

![Bar chart showing the distribution of a final course grade of A across the five courses. The chart compares non-targeted and targeted students.]

The grade gap, however, pertains to more than just adverse outcomes. We also found that underrepresented students remained decidedly underrepresented among those who received top grades. Fig. 6 shows the distribution of a final course grade of A across the five courses. As we can
see, targeted minority students in Chemistry 103, English 100, and Psychology 202 were half as likely to earn A’s as non-targeted students. Targeted students were 3 times less likely to earn A’s in Mathematics 112 than non-targeted students. And in Communication Arts 100, targeted students were 5 times less likely to earn A’s. As we know, students compete on the basis of GPA to gain entrance to majors, pursue professional training, and benefit from other scholarly opportunities. So a grade gap at the top also carries enormous consequences for students, their families and their communities, not to mention our university, our professional fields and our society overall. We must apprehend the reverberating effects of a persistent grade gap. If the university is to be a genuine engine of opportunity, our teaching must become equally effective in bringing out the best in students of all races.

As the committee worked with these data, we came to understand that different pedagogical practices and priorities across the five courses resulted in different grade distributions. English 100, for instance, uses a portfolio system by which students, with ample support from peers and instructors, continue to revise, improve, and correct their written work throughout the semester. Chemistry 103 and Mathematics 112, on the other hand, calculate grades by averaging the scores of tests and other assignments. These differences no doubt account in part for the differing rates of adverse outcomes across the five courses. Many fewer students in English 100 and Communication Arts 100, for instance, experienced adverse outcomes than students in Chemistry 103 or Mathematics 112, a focus to which we return later. However, given these differences in grading distributions and in order to fully understand disparities in grades by race, it was necessary to standardize final grades.

Fig. 7 provides the results of that adjustment, whereby 0 on the scale represents the grade average for each particular course and the other values represent standard deviations away from that average. Here we are better able to see sharp disparities in all five courses—as non-targeted students have grades that hover at or above the course grade average and targeted minority students have grades that drop sharply below the average. Fig. 8 presents these data when controlled for preparation level.
To sum up, grade gaps by race occurred in all five courses that we studied. They occurred at nearly every preparation level. Grade gaps occurred at the bottom of the grade scale and at the top of the grade scale. Our instructional methods appear to lift and suppress student potential differently by race. In the rest of the report, we will probe potential conditions in classrooms that might relate to this discrepancy.
Before moving on, we observe that the survey established that the racial grade gap could not be assigned to differences either in reported time studying or reported time working a job. In terms of reported study time, we found no statistical differences between targeted and non-targeted students across courses, except for Communication Arts 100, where targeted students were more likely to report spending more than 9 hours a week on their studies. Most students reported studying between 4 and 9 hours a week for each course. No statistical differences emerged in reports of time spent working. Most students reported working 10 or fewer hours a week. (See Appendix 4 for more details.)

**Climate Gaps and Grade Gaps**

After we established the scope of the grade gap, the committee examined survey results for differences in the reported classroom experiences of targeted and non-targeted students. The survey asked students many questions having to do with their sense of peer and instructor relations, their sense of fairness and validation, and their sense of ownership over their learning. Overall, as we see in Fig. 9, both groups rated classroom climate positively (scale is 1 to 5). In fact, targeted minority students rated the climate significantly more highly than non-targeted students, even when controlling for the possible effect of final grades on climate perceptions (Fig. 10). Both groups rated peer relations less favorably than overall environment. The similar climate ratings by targeted and non-targeted students generated much discussion and competing interpretations among committee members—matters we continue to address in the analysis that follows. It was only by drilling down into students’ answers to specific survey items that we found gaps in reported experience between targeted and non-targeted students: gaps in peer relations, gaps in student and instructor engagement, and gaps in confidence. These topics receive further scrutiny below.

**FIG. 9**
Climate Differences Between Groups Aggregated by Instructor

Note. Positive Environment, 22 items, coefficient alpha = .934; Peer Relations, 9 items, .789
Group * Dimension interaction F(1,76)=5.53, p < .025
At first pass it might be easy to conclude that classroom climate does not contribute to the racial grade gap. Targeted and non-targeted students registered statistically similar answers on many questions pertaining to climate and peer relations. However, significant differences between targeted and non-targeted students did emerge on three key survey items. Indeed because answers overlapped so often and because targeted students found many aspects of the learning environment positive, these differences seemed particularly pertinent to the committee, as sites of potential disparity that deserve more attention from teachers and program directors. The items dealt with peer-to-peer relations in the academic realm, particularly as they involved the important activity of peer-to-peer learning. Together, these responses suggest that a fair number of targeted and non-targeted students experienced some negative currents in peer relations, and targeted students experienced them at significantly higher rates than non-targeted students.

**The Peer Gap**

In three survey items about classroom climate, targeted minority students reported significantly more negative experiences than other students. Figures 11, 12, and 13 display the relevant items and the responses by targeted and non-targeted status.
FIG. 11
I feel anxious about working on assignments with students of other races

FIG. 12
I feel comfortable asking other students in my class to meet outside of class to work on assignments
First, we observe (Fig. 11) that targeted students across all five courses reported significantly higher levels of anxiety than other students, including in English 100, a course that relies heavily on peer group interaction. We also note (Fig. 12) that in courses with the highest gaps in adverse outcomes, targeted minority students reported significantly less ease in finding peer support to work on assignments outside of class. Further (Fig. 13) in Chemistry 103, Mathematics 112, and English 100, targeted minority students were significantly more likely to describe the atmosphere as competitive.

These discrepancies worried the committee in light of well established research on the important role of peer learning in raising student performance.\footnote{See U. Treisman (1992). Studying students studying calculus: A look at the lives of minority mathematics students in college. \textit{College Mathematics Journal}, 23, 362-372; C.H. Crouch & E. Mazur. (2001). Peer instruction: Ten years of experience and results. \textit{American Journal of Physics}, 69, 970-977; K.A. Bruffee (1984). Collaborative learning and the “Conversation of Mankind.” \textit{College English}, 46, 7, 635-652.} Cooperative learning is used to some degree in all five courses we surveyed. In some courses students spend significant time in small peer working groups during class. In other courses, students are expected to organize study groups on their own outside of class. As we will show later, all students and especially targeted minority students rated peers and small learning groups highly—as highly as they rated their instructors—in having impact on their learning. At the same time, as the figures above illustrate, these experiences had overtones of strain and anxiety for some targeted minority students when they worked cross racially. These survey results jibed with focus group data we reviewed from targeted minority students and their advisors on our campus who told of troubled academic relations with peers: students left out of study groups, not chosen as lab partners, not having their ideas taken up in peer discussions. At the same time, we reviewed other research conducted on this campus that linked targeted minority students’ persistence in STEM majors to their sense of self-efficacy and its relationship to social dynamics in the classroom. Self-efficacy, according to the study, included the
ability to work well with majority peers. Persistence in STEM majors was related to positive peer academic relations.\(^5\)

In our recommendations we return to the important matter of developing interactional skills that support successful peer learning groups and positive cross-racial peer relations in classrooms. Here we simply note that our survey data suggest that many targeted minority students may be missing out on the benefits of supportive study groups and are having to manage disproportionate levels of racial strain in some peer learning situations. We believe performance gains could be made in all five courses if all students received better and franker instruction in cross-race communication in academic settings, a point to which we return in the recommendations.

These peer-to-peer strains gain added contextual significance when put together with the number of reports of hurtful racial incidents occurring during classes. In response to the survey item, *Hurtful racial incidents have occurred in this class*, 42 students responded affirmatively, including 26 non-targeted students and 16 targeted students. Overall, hurtful racial incidents were reported by 14 percent of African American respondents; 7 percent of Latino respondents; 7 percent of non-targeted Asian respondents; and 1 percent of white students. We also asked survey takers if students in their classes used racial stereotypes one or more times (Item: *In this class students use racial stereotypes.*) Classmates’ use of racial stereotypes was reported by 13 percent of African American students; 12 percent of Latinos; 8 percent of targeted Asian students; 5 percent of non-targeted Asian students; 4 percent of Native Americans; 3 percent of Whites; and 11 percent of “not specified” respondents.

It is the committee’s view that one hurtful racial incident or one use of a racial stereotype is one too many in a classroom. Here we wish mostly to observe how the negative force of racial segregation in our wider society pushes into peer-to-peer academic relations, making classrooms ripe for unequal levels of comfort, trust, mutual support, inclusion, awareness, and self-efficacy. These inequalities degrade the quality of learning in tangible ways. The habits of racial segregation that continue to plague the wider society—and the interactional ineptitudes they can create—must be addressed in the classroom for what they are: a drag on everyone’s learning. Closing the peer gap must be part of closing the grade gap.

**The Engagement Gap**

In this section we treat one of the most complicated issues raised by our survey findings: the relationship of climate to the matter of adverse grade outcomes. As we saw earlier, adverse outcomes for targeted minority students in Communication Arts 100 and English 100 were less severe than those in Chemistry 103, Psychology 202, and Mathematics 112 (and have been historically). Yet our findings led to no simple conclusions regarding low grades and negative climate reports. For example, in Chemistry 103 and Mathematics 112, courses that exhibited severe gaps in adverse outcomes, we found that targeted minority students receiving low grades reported higher levels of validation and other positive aspects of classroom climate than other students with higher final grades. Moreover, within a given course, on many of the climate dimensions there was little contrast in the student responses across racial demographics.

---

The differences we did find in survey responses were less between students and more between courses. That is, just as grade gaps varied by course, so did students’ reported perceptions of the climate. This difference is illustrated in Figure 14, where the climate gap between courses is illustrated, adjusted for the potentially confounding role of grades in students’ reports of climate.

FIG. 14
Climate Differences Between Courses After Controlling for Final Grade

In this section of the report, we explore relationships among course, climate, and student performance. As we mentioned earlier, this relationship is far from straightforward. In Communication Arts 100 and English 100, a highly rated learning environment was associated with raised performance for all students and a smaller rate of adverse outcomes. In Psychology 202, the learning environment was rated less highly, but the grade gap by race was comparatively small. In Chemistry 103, the learning environment was rated highly, yet the gap in adverse outcomes was high. So we proceed here with caution, reiterating our awareness that the content and character of the five courses vary in ways that wield influence on social relations and learning environments.

We found that the climate gaps among the five courses were explained by how students rated their levels of engagement and validation as well as their experiences working with other students in their courses. On these items, which included students’ sense of motivation, inclusion, self-efficacy, trust in instructor, and opportunity to collaborate with peers and form friendships, we found overall statistically significant differences between courses with higher and lower adverse outcomes for targeted minority students, with Chemistry in the middle. Especially dramatic differences emerged when students rated instructors on how well they built up learners’ confidence and how well they found ways for learners to succeed. Fig. 15 shows the responses by both targeted and non-targeted students to the item: My instructor makes me feel confident in my abilities to learn. Fig. 16 shows responses to the item: My instructor finds inventive ways to help me learn and succeed in this course. 80 percent or more of all students in Communication Arts 100 and English 100 rated their instructors highly in these areas, while 60 percent of all students in Chemistry 103 rated their instructors highly
in these areas. In Mathematics 112 and Psychology 202, about 50 percent of all students rated their instructors highly in these areas.

FIG. 15
My instructor makes me feel confident in my abilities to learn

![Bar chart showing percent agreement for different courses and instructor categories.]

FIG. 16
My Instructor Finds Ways to Help Students Succeed

![Bar chart showing percent agreement for different courses and instructor categories.]

It is especially important to pay attention to these matters in light of the UW-Madison’s professed goals for first-year students. The goals include gaining confidence and competence and making positive connections with faculty, staff, and peers. These are not mere feel-good goals but are conditions basic to strong cognitive performance. Research repeatedly shows that strong positive
emotions of caring, commitment, motivation and engagement are linked to high-level learning. On the other hand, negative feelings of fear, shame, and detachment shut down thinking and learning.\(^6\)

**Teacher Engagement and the Climate Gap**

Our next questions were these: How did teachers’ assessment of their own teaching relate to students’ perceptions of classroom climate? In other words, what relationship could we find between student engagement with learning and instructor engagement with teaching? For this we looked to results of the surveys returned by 75 instructors across the five courses. We asked instructors a number of questions having to do with their general efforts around student learning. These included how they rated their effectiveness in making curriculum relevant to diverse students; making students’ life experiences relevant to learning; encouraging peer-to-peer learning; using multiple strategies to encourage success; providing positive feedback; encouraging students to ask for help; and making student achievement a pedagogical priority. We also asked questions that invited instructors to identify areas of their teaching that needed improvement, including in racial inclusion. Generally we found that instructors in courses with more favorable climates reported making higher efforts around student learning. At the same time, these instructors were more likely to report that their teaching needed improvement. Differences among instructors by course were significant (p< .001). (We also noticed a correlation between efforts around teaching and smaller grade gaps but it was not statistically significant.) We return to these findings and other aspects of the instructor survey in our recommendations.

**FIG. 17**
Instructors’ Self-Reported Ratings of Teaching Effort

To summarize our sense of the engagement gap, we see that students experienced the academic climates in their introductory courses differently. At least in some courses, these

differences had impact on overall performance, and overall performance was linked to smaller gaps in adverse outcomes. A positive climate has the potential to lift the performance of all students while a negative climate can suppress students’ academic potential and lead to underperformance, especially by targeted minority students. It is clear to the committee that programs in Communication Arts 100 and English 100, along with Chemistry 103, have instructional staffs that provide higher levels of active learning and engagement for their students. Communication Arts 100 and English 100 have further found ways to translate active engagement into higher student achievement for targeted and non-targeted students. (We might note that the Math Department in its Wisconsin Emerging Scholars program uses similar high-engagement strategies that also raise student performance, including performance by targeted minority students. However, that experimental program has never been extended to Mathematics 112.) Further, our survey findings show that making greater efforts to improve teaching and learning, including in the areas of racial sensitivity and inclusion, do have a positive impact on students’ perceptions of the classroom climate, which in turn is related to improved student performance. The challenge for the College is to help instructors in introductory courses to discover, develop and widely implement pedagogical strategies that reach targeted and non-targeted students with equal effectiveness, strategies that enhance rather than suppress academic potential. Given the variety of missions, content, and format of these introductory courses, these strategies will necessarily vary. What cannot vary is the expectation that solutions can and will be found.

The Confidence Gap

In this section we examine a quirk in the research data that contributed to the complexity of our findings. On some survey items, targeted minority students who received low final grades reported more positive climate ratings than other students who received higher grades. For example, the following figure, taken from Mathematics 112, relates to the survey item: “My instructor makes me feel confident in my abilities to learn.”

FIG. 18
Math 112 Students: Instructor Inspires Learner Confidence

![Confidence Gap Diagram](image-url)
Among non-targeted students, we see decreasing percentages of agreement with this statement as grades decline. But the reverse is the case among targeted minority students, whereby 60 percent of the 17 respondents who received Ds and Fs moderately or strongly agreed that their instructor inspired them with confidence in their ability to learn. We also see that targeted minority students who received higher grades in Mathematics 112 reported lower levels of validation than non-targeted students, as well as lower levels of validation than targeted minority students with low grades. We saw a similar pattern in Psychology 202. In Chemistry 103, both targeted and non-targeted students showed decreasing agreement with the item as final grades decreased. Interestingly on a companion item on the instructor survey, “I try to instill confidence in my students,” all 5 Psych lecturers; 13 of the 15 Chem TAs; and 3 of the 9 Math TAs strongly agreed with the statement. The other 6 Math TA respondents moderately agreed.

Such quirks throughout the survey made it difficult to draw clear cut relationships between climate and performance, and we urge all departments and programs to continue to investigate and analyze these relationships with their staffs. Members of our committee offered various speculations about this phenomenon. Could first-year students be carrying over expectations from high school? Could we be seeing effects of resilience and determination to succeed on the part of targeted minority students as they proceed in a challenging learning environment? Might teachers be communicating different messages to targeted and non-targeted students about their performance or progress? What accounts for these confidence gaps? Exploring potential answers will help programs better understand relationships between climate and performance, a key to addressing the grade gap.

A Final Finding

We complete our analysis by including survey results in which students were asked to rate the impact of various instructional resources on their learning. (The item read: Rate the relative impact of each factor on your overall learning in this course.) Our simple conclusion: resources matter. They matter particularly to targeted minority students and significantly so in the case of course organized groups; learning centers and tutorials; small group activity; academic advisors; and tutors. Not only do targeted minority students rate these resources as having greater impact but these students also appear to use these resources more. In these responses, students remind us how academic performance is nested within multiple human relationships. Strengthening investments in these critical resources—and increasing the coordination and synergy among them—will be important in closing the grade gap. Recommendations for strengthening impact and coordination appear as part of our final recommendations, where we link the elimination of the grade gap in introductory courses to a larger mission of achievement and inclusive excellence to eliminate the graduation gap.
FIG. 19
Impact of ...

Prior Preparation
Tutor
Study Table
Academic Advisor
Small Group Activity
Large Group Activity
Computer Assisted Learning
Textbook/Readings
Assignments
Learning Center/Tutorial
Course Organized Group
Friends
TA
Professor

▲ Targeted
□ Non-Targeted

Impact Score
3 3.5 4
Recommendations: **Eliminate the grade gap in key introductory courses by 2014**

Recently we saw how the College could quickly improve the retention of first-year students when all units made a concerted and coordinated effort. The same level of commitment and coordination must be brought to the problem of the grade gap. Every year that goes by under the shadow of the grade gap suppresses the horizons of individual students and their families, diminishes UW-Madison’s reputation in the eyes of the public, and degrades the potential of our teaching mission to make a positive difference in society. Solutions must proceed in an integrated way in terms of faculty awareness, curricular innovation, teacher professional development, advising, and student academic relations.

The following recommendations are designed to build a foundation for the Departments of Chemistry, Communication Arts, English, Psychology and Mathematics to eliminate the grade gap in the focal courses by 2014. By no later than Spring 2011, each department will develop a strategic action plan and report progress to the Dean and the Academic Planning Council each semester. While we have focused on five important courses, we encourage Departments to develop systematic data on all courses and document efforts to improve outcomes for targeted minority students who take courses or major in their departments. We call on the Dean and the Academic Planning Council to put in place a system of accountability and incentive that will bring quick improvement. The recommendations call for modest increases in the financial budget and big increases in our will power budget.

**Recommendation #1: Convene a Taskforce for the Elimination of Grade Gaps**

In our deliberations over two years, it became clear to the committee that perhaps the largest and most persistent and hurtful gap in targeted minority student achievement is the one between rank-and-file faculty and the personnel in academic student services. Both groups need to work more closely and knowledgeably together to support the academic thriving of targeted minority students and all students. We need to build direct thoroughfares between academic departments and academic support programs. We need to make solutions to disparities in academic outcomes more central to the mainstream business of academic departments.7

The Grade Gap Task Force will model such collaboration. It will bring together course leaders in Chemistry 103, Communication Arts 100, English 100, Mathematics 112 and Psychology 202 with the L&S MD Coordinator and representatives of key student service programs. Together this small group affects thousands of entering students each year and scores of teaching assistants and advisors. The group will engage with achievement data and hear the voices of students through facilitated presentations such as those orchestrated by Aaron Bird-Bear at the Addressing the Achievement Gap retreat. The group will review advising practices and establish early warning systems in intro courses. It will share best practices in TA professional development and student engagement; and conduct surveys or other research where advisable. It will work on increasing faculty and departmental involvement in the Summer Collegiate Experience and the proposed Center

---

for Academic Excellence. It will guide departments in developing action plans for eliminating the grade gap. It will work on expanding Undergraduate Teaching Fellows (now in place in Communication B writing courses) to other disciplines. It will engage with representatives from other schools and colleges. It will help departments where necessary build in professional development around inclusive excellence and high-impact learning.

Faculty need to understand where their responsibilities overlap with those of student academic services. At the same time, closer connections between academic departments and academic student services could enhance advisors’ knowledge of particular courses and lead to better placement, advising, communication and coordination. The grade gap cannot close until fewer students fall through the cracks. Strengthening connections between academic departments and academic student services needs to be a high priority.

**Recommendation #2: Disseminate information about the grade gap to faculty and initiate discussions around student performance.**

Departments need to be well informed about the extent of grade gaps and their persistence across student preparation levels. Basic awareness could well prompt individual faculty members to make changes in their own teaching and take wider actions in their departments—efforts we would heartily applaud. We recommend that, in academic year 2010-11, the Dean accompany members of the L&S EDC in visits to Departmental Committees in Chemistry, Communication Arts, English, Mathematics, and Psychology to share data and initiate discussions with faculty about raising student academic performance and eliminating grade gaps. This visit will help departments to develop action plans and report progress to the Dean on an annual basis.

**Recommendation #3: Provide incentives for departments to innovate with curriculum and course structures in order to raise student engagement and performance and reduce grade gaps. Reward departments that implement results-oriented, scalable strategies.**

Chemistry and Mathematics are two departments that have been trying out changes in curriculum and course structures in selected sections of introductory courses. This experimentation must continue and outcomes must be documented, analyzed, and refined. It is clear from our survey results that courses with validating structures (particularly opportunities for students to receive timely and responsive feedback; engage with and learn from supportive peers; and reflect and revise their work) make a difference to majority and minority students alike.

The practical challenge is to translate high-impact teaching and learning methods across the various missions, formats and contexts in which first-year instruction occurs. The College must look to sites of inclusive excellence—First Year Interest Groups, Wisconsin Emerging Scholars, Undergraduate Research Scholars, as well as effective programs at other institutions—and figure out how their principles for learning and teaching can be adapted and scaled up for use in large

---

8 See for example the Virginia-North Carolina Alliance for Minority Participation and the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, both programs that are successfully diversifying students in STEM majors.
introductory programs. It also requires that academic departments build expert and proactive multicultural competence into their teaching corps at every level. Above all, we must identify and strengthen teaching practices that result in equal opportunity classrooms. Systematic, differential outcomes by race cannot be acceptable characteristics of our instruction. Neither can the grade gap remain an elective or transitory concern in our programs and departments.

**Recommendation #4 Support the Department of Mathematics in improving grade outcomes for underrepresented students in lower division math courses, including Calculus.**

It was clear to the committee that the College must make significant improvement in student performance in Mathematics 112 and other lower-division math courses, including Calculus. Adverse outcomes in pre-Calculus courses thwart the opportunity for targeted minority students to pursue STEM majors. They also thwart the professed goal of the university to help diversify these professions. Although this is a complex national problem, we simply cannot siphon off so many young people. Mathematics is a foundational discipline and gateway to an array of highly desired majors and professions. Math skills are increasingly necessary for all citizens in a growing technological society. Investment in raising student performance in mathematics must become one of the College’s highest priorities. The cost of inaction—the loss of so much human potential and the negative impact on STEM professions and society—is too great to bear. Failing is not an option.

We endorse the plan for a coordinator of pre-Calculus courses who will have the mission of raising student performance and helping more targeted minority students to get on the STEM track. The coordinator will integrate supplemental instruction by coordinating with the Math Tutorial and other programs on campus, while being the contact person for minority support programs needed to address students’ problems. The person in this position also will coordinate the different curricular innovations that are being currently tried and will stimulate new ones. The person in this position will further coordinate the program with the Calculus sequence and participate in the training of TAs and instructors. Some of these initiatives are already in place in one way or another, but more coordination is needed to keep students from falling through the cracks. As part of this revamping, we call on the College and the Math Department to create WES-style programs for pre-Calculus courses.

**Recommendation #5 Focus more TA professional development on inclusive excellence.**

In conducting our climate survey, we were impressed by the vote of confidence that so many undergraduates gave to their teaching-assistant instructors. Clearly much good teaching takes place in our introductory programs every day. Introductory programs and the College overall must build on these strengths and give all teaching assistants more strategies for breaking the grip of racial disparity in academic achievement. Instructors in our survey reported strong commitment to inclusion, diversity, and equal access in their classroom and rated themselves well prepared in these areas. However, few instructors reported taking what the committee saw as proactive steps: checking grades for racial bias; reaching out to floundering or absent students; communicating with student
advisors; recruiting minority students to the major; re-channeling negative peer interactions; or actively mediating challenges faced by minority students.

Professional development with a focus on inclusive excellence will raise the academic performance of all students and provide indispensable skills to our future professoriate. These efforts can take many forms, beginning with orientations and other staff development already in place in introductory courses. Frank attention to the problem of grade gaps is important. So is guiding TAs in the art of leading successful peer learning groups; addressing common forms of racial tension in peer learning; and developing practical strategies for reaching out to floundering students, recruiting targeted minority students to academic majors, and helping minority students mediate challenges.

We strongly recommend that programs partner with the Delta program, which can offer instructional staff at all levels with training in teaching diverse students. Delta also provides support to test and evaluate intervention strategies in the classrooms. Their approaches have been endorsed by the Vice Provost for Diversity and Climate and the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning. We can improve TA skills by leveraging the success Delta already has had on campus. We further suggest that L&S leverage the expertise of the many diversity oriented programs on campus to help TAs develop pedagogies that reach more students effectively.

Other important partners in this effort must be the L&S Teaching Fellows program and the Future Faculty Partners in the Teaching Academy. The aim should be developing broad competence in teaching for inclusive excellence.

**Recommendation #6 Offer Teaching Awards for Inclusive Excellence in Introductory Teaching**

In our surveys we saw evidence of individual teachers who made outstanding efforts and met with outstanding success in teaching all students effectively. Annual competitive awards for TAs, faculty, and course directors, based on nominations by department, would raise general awareness and serve to recognize this most important dimension in teaching.

**Recommendation #7 Focus more instructional attention on peer relations in introductory courses.**

Racial segregation in the wider society is a barrier to productive learning in the classroom. Just as teachers need strategies for breaking its grip, so do students. When the potential drag of racial segregation in classroom interactions is not candidly addressed, students are likely to fall into socially ingrained interactional patterns that can breed strain, distrust, insult and defeatism. Students need explicit and ongoing guidance in how to work productively together across race. Best practices in peer learning generally can go a long way toward supporting healthy cross-racial learning. (These include active listening, respect for difference, and opportunities to reflect on process.) In addition, students need frank guidance in creating an inclusive, trusting dynamic in the classroom; upfront guidance in how to negotiate difference and majority/minority relations in peer work; and safe mechanisms for voicing concerns and correcting problems. Similar processes need to be in place to address uses of stereotypes or negative racial incidents when they occur in the classroom. As we
mentioned earlier, the committee believes student performance can be raised by increased attention to peer academic relations—both specifically in the introductory courses and more broadly as part of first-year education, including, for instance, in ethnic studies courses.

**Recommendation #8 Link the elimination of the grade gap in introductory courses to efforts to eliminate the broader achievement gap.**

As we mentioned at the start of this report, the committee did its work well aware that other efforts are afoot on campus to address the wider achievement gap, including, importantly, the graduation gap. Eliminating the grade gap in introductory courses will have an immediate and significant impact on the graduation rate. At the same time, targeted first-year students who can see their upper-division peers thriving and graduating will have added incentive to persevere and thrive in their introductory courses. For these reasons, we endorse the proposed Center for Academic Excellence. The center will broker this broader success by helping students connect with high-impact academic experiences; declare majors sooner; and reach junior status on time. All of these elements have been associated with 90 per cent graduation rates by all students, including targeted minority students. Further, the center will be a hub of faculty involvement, thereby drawing together students, academic departments, and student academic services. We urge that actions to eliminate the grade gap be as coordinated as possible with the wider closing-the-achievement-gap effort on campus.

**In Conclusion: The Accountability Gap**

To eliminate the grade gap we must address gaps in faculty awareness, unit-to-unit cooperation, student performance, teaching skills, learning relationships, and advising. Above all we must close the accountability gap. Racial disparity in academic achievement cannot be treated as an inevitable fact of the social order. Rather, we must grasp how we reproduce this fact every day, in the ways we distribute resources and attention; in the ways we make and fail to make decisions; in the ways we act and fail to act. If as a teaching community we do not soon establish the routine competence to graduate large numbers of diverse students, this university risks becoming irrelevant to higher education in the 21st century.
APPENDIX 1: HOW THE SURVEYS WERE CONDUCTED

In consultation with survey experts on this campus and at UCLA, we designed a 92-item classroom climate survey designed for first-year students in Chemistry 103, Communication Arts 100, English 100, Mathematics 112, and Psychology 202. Items pertained to student engagement, fairness, peer relations, self-efficacy, teacher relations, validation, and resource impact. We met with course directors in early Fall to gain their cooperation and assistance in encouraging students to complete the survey.

We administered the survey through Student Voice. Students and instructors in each course were sent an email from Dean Sandefur with a link to a unique URL (generated by Student Voice). That link sent them to the survey website in such a way that their unique UW-Madison email address was connected to their survey response. After a student checked a waiver statement that acknowledged that their survey responses would be connected to their final grade in the course and that also assured them of the complete confidentiality of their responses, they were allowed to complete the survey. Students who completed the survey were eligible to enter a lottery to win $100 in cash, with a $50 incentive if they completed the survey in the first three days.

Students who were in more than one of the surveyed courses were surveyed for just one course with the following priority: Mathematics 112, Chemistry 103, Psychology 202, English/CommArts 100. Students who were in an experimental section of Chemistry 103 were excluded from the survey to avert potential survey fatigue.

The first round of emails was sent on Nov. 6, 2009. Two reminder emails were sent in subsequent weeks and the surveys were closed at the end of the semester. The chart below reports the response rates by course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Survey Respondents</th>
<th>Chemistry</th>
<th>Comm Arts</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Psych</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sampled</td>
<td>1,127</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>1,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responded</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Rate</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Approximately 50 percent of both targeted and non-targeted students in each course responded to the survey.

On November 6, 2009 we administered a survey to 123 instructors in the five courses, also through Student Voice. The survey included 75 items pertaining to validation, teaching priority, peer learning, engagement, diversity, and preparation. 86 instructors signed waivers to take the survey and 75 instructors completed the surveys. Participation ranged from 100% of faculty and academic staff to between 61 percent to 82 percent of TA staffs. Results of the survey were accessed in early January after grades were posted.
APPENDIX 2: SIX YEAR GRADUATION RATES
APPENDIX 3: ACT ADJUSTED FINAL GRADES

ACT Adjusted Final Grades of Minority Students In Five Introductory Courses, Fall 2009

Psych
- SF Asian
- Native American
- Hispanic
- African American

Math
- SF Asian
- Native American
- Hispanic
- African American

English
- SF Asian
- Native American
- Hispanic
- African American

Comm Arts
- SF Asian
- Native American
- Hispanic
- African American

Chem
- SF Asian
- Native American
- Hispanic
- African American
### APPENDIX 4: REPORTED STUDY TIME

**Student Reports of Time Spent Studying in Five Introductory Courses, Fall 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0-3 Hrs/Wk</th>
<th>4-6 Hrs/Wk</th>
<th>7-9 Hrs/Wk</th>
<th>&gt; 9 Hrs/Wk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chemistry</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Targeted</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comm Arts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Targeted</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Targeted</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>63.0%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mathematics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Targeted</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Targeted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Student Reports of Time Spent Working Fall 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0-4 Hrs/Wk</th>
<th>5-10 Hrs/Wk</th>
<th>11-15 Hrs/Wk</th>
<th>&gt; 15 Hrs/Wk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chemistry</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Targeted</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comm Arts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Targeted</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Targeted</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mathematics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Targeted</td>
<td>54.7%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Targeted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grade Gap/Future Gap: 
Addressing Racial Disparities 
In Letters & Science Introductory Courses

One decade into the 21st century, our college faces a serious gap in academic outcomes for targeted minority students and non-targeted students in introductory courses. We are, and must be, better than that. Two years ago, the Letters & Science Equity and Diversity Committee conducted a study to learn more about that gap and its relationship to classroom relationships and climate, and to recommend changes to help close the gap.

Some of the study’s findings are surprising, others are not. Some recommendations will improve outcomes for all students, others will produce better outcomes for targeted minority students. In any case, one thing is clear: the results of this study give us an opportunity to learn and change in ways that achieve better outcomes for students in the earliest stages of their academic careers.

Key Findings Include:
- There were significant differences in course grades for targeted minority students and non-targeted students in all five courses. These differences occurred at both the bottom and the top ends of the grading scale, and at nearly every preparation level. Targeted minority students with the highest ACT scores experienced some of the widest grade disparities in relation to their majority counterparts.
- Differences in course grades cannot be explained by differences in hours spent working or studying.
- Targeted minority students reported significantly higher rates of anxiety when they worked academically with peers of other races and reported higher rates of unease in forming study groups outside of class.
- Both targeted and non-targeted students experienced some negative currents in peer relations and peer-to-peer learning. Targeted minority students were significantly more likely to report negative peer-to-peer experiences than non-targeted students.
- Resources matter. Course organized groups, learning centers and tutorials, small group activity, academic advisors, and tutors were ranked more highly as having a significantly higher impact on learning by targeted minority students.
- People matter. Targeted minority students reported a significantly higher impact of supportive relationships with Professors, TAs, and friends, than did their non-targeted counterparts.
- The five courses differed in pedagogical practices, priorities, and grade distributions. Student ratings of climate differed significantly among the five courses. The grade gap was very similar in all five courses when differences in pedagogy and grade distributions were taken into account.
- Instructors in favorable-climate courses were significantly more likely to report making greater efforts around teaching than instructors in courses with lower climate ratings.

About The Grade Gap Survey:

WHAT: A study of relationships between disparities in grades and classroom climate for targeted minority students and non-targeted students in 5 key introductory courses, fall 2009.

HOW: Survey of 1700 first-year students and 75 instructors in 5 focal courses spanning multiple disciplines and teaching structures. Survey responses were linked to individual final grade. Findings were informed by supplemental analysis of ACT, grade, and other relevant data. Primary areas of focus: 1) significant differences in reported experience, and, 2) significant differences in climate ratings, for targeted and non-targeted students in all 5 classes.

COURSES: Chemistry 103, Communication Arts 100, English 100, Mathematics 112, and Psychology 202, which are large enrollment courses; some of the courses are gateways to significant numbers of majors and career paths.

WHO: “Targeted minority” refers to students from groups historically underrepresented in US higher education, including African Americans, Latino/a Americans, American Indians, and Southeast Asian Americans. Non-targeted minority refers to all others.

Key Recommendations appear on the reverse side of this document.
Key Recommendations:

1) Rank-and-file faculty and personnel in academic student services need to work more closely and knowledgeably together to support the academic performance and achievement of targeted minority students and, by extension, all students. A Grade Gap Task Force will be convened and will model such collaboration by bringing together course leaders from the 5 courses at the heart of this study, leaders of other courses, and representatives of key student service programs to work collaboratively on understanding student experiences, academic outcome data, and devising best practices to improve student experiences and outcomes at all levels.

2) Disseminate information about the grade gap to faculty and initiate discussions around student performance. During 2010-11, Gary Sandefur, Dean of Letters & Science, and members of the college Equity and Diversity Committee will visit departments to share data and initiate discussions with faculty and staff about raising student performance and eliminating grade gaps. This visit will help departments to develop action plans and report yearly progress to the dean.

3) Implement incentives for departments to innovate with curriculum and course structures in order to raise student engagement and performance, and reduce grade gaps.

4) Support the Department of Mathematics in improving grade outcomes for underrepresented students in lower division courses, including Calculus.

5) Focus more TA professional development on inclusive excellence. Survey responses indicate a strong value for Teaching Assistant instructors among targeted and non-targeted students alike. And instructors report strong commitment to inclusion, diversity, and equal access. However, there are strategies that could be implemented, or implemented more comprehensively in ways that increase the TAs professional skills and produce better outcomes for students of color. A more focused effort within the existing strong professional development programs in partnership with the Delta program would create a win-win outcome for all.

6) Survey responses yielded numerous examples of individual teachers who routinely make outstanding efforts to practice inclusive teaching and who yield results. Annual competitive awards for TAs, faculty, and course directors who work to reduce the grade gap would serve to recognize and reward those efforts.

7) Focus more instructional attention on peer relations in introductory courses. Peer academic relations emerged as an important factor in student experiences, particularly for targeted minority students. The committee believes that student performance can be raised by increased attention to peer academic relations, both in introductory courses and more broadly in first-year education.

8) Link the elimination of the grade gap in introductory courses to efforts to eliminate the broader achievement gap.

The key findings and recommendations of “Grade Gap/Future Gap: Addressing Racial Disparities in Letters & Science Introductory Courses,” are summarized in this document. A full copy of the report and recommendations is available at: