

Higher Learning Commission
Self-Study Questionnaire/Report for Non-Instructional Units

Non-Instructional Unit: New Student Programs/First Year Experience

Individual(s) Completing the Questionnaire/Report: Linda Long

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Describe in a paragraph or two what your unit does (i.e., the services it provides).
New Student Programs/ FYE provides leadership in the transition of new students (both first-year and transfers) to our campus. NSP sponsors the summer PREVIEW programs, which are orientation/advising/registration programs for new students and any family members who attend as well. In addition, there are about 12 similar programs during the year for students entering at mid-term or students transferring to UW-Whitewater.

NSP also sponsors programs throughout the year to continue the orientation process. These include: the New Student Seminar, a one-credit class taught by faculty and staff to assist students with life skills and transition issues; the Peer Mentor program; and the fall orientation program (Warhawk Welcome). NSP also works with the Assistant Chancellor for Student Affairs to provide information and programs for family members of students through our VIP (Very Important Parents) Association.

2. Who is/are the constituency/ies you serve, and approximately how many of each constituency do you serve annually? (e.g., students, academic departments, classified staff, etc.)
 - 1800 new freshmen; 500 transfer students
 - family members of students – could be families of seniors as well as freshmen
 - all academic departments
 - most administrative offices on campus
 - student leaders serving as Orientation Leaders and Peer Mentors – 125
 - faculty and staff teaching the New Student Seminar - 60
3. Overview and evaluate the adequacy of the human, physical, and fiscal resources your department deploys to serve students and meet other programmatic needs by answering the questions below:

Human Resources

Evaluate the general adequacy of the human resources (i.e., the # of employees (including student help) and their skills) relative to the unit's ability to serve the constituencies identified above and achieve other programmatic goals. Do this by assigning a number between "1" (completely inadequate) to "9" (completely satisfies needs).

Orientation Leaders – 12-15	8
Peer Mentors – 100	7
Academic staff – 2	9
Classified staff (Program Asst.) – 1	9
Student office assistant	9

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

While any office could accomplish more with additional staff, the addition of the Coordinator of the Peer Mentor Program (a full-time academic staff position) made accomplishing the goals of the New Student Seminar much more realistic. The Peer Mentor program has raised the visibility of this office throughout the year. Previously, much of the campus associated our work with just the summer PREVIEW orientation/registration programs.

All three of the full-time staff are committed to getting our goals accomplished, no matter what it takes. It is a staff that collaborates very effectively within this office and with the rest of the campus. Increasing the size of the Peer Mentor corps could bring down the ratio of Peer Mentors to new students (currently about 1:20) and make their work more individualized.

Physical Resources

Evaluate the general adequacy of the physical resources (e.g., office and storage space, supporting technology, other equipment) allocated to the unit relative to the unit's ability to serve the constituencies identified above and achieve other programmatic goals. Do this by assigning a number between "1" (completely inadequate) to "9" (completely satisfies needs).

6 – storage

7 – general office space

8 – technology

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

New Student Programs has adequate technology, but we are really crowded for work areas for the student staff particularly, storage, and meeting space. Our office keeps a rather large supply of information on hand for our programs, but there really now is only one small area to store these supplies. During the summer, we stuff folders in the hallway, as there is not enough work area. It would also be nice to have an area to meet with small groups of Peer Mentors and to have some work areas for them. We often rely on the kindness of other offices to "borrow" some space in the summer particularly.

We have upgraded the furniture of all the full-time staff members so that we do make the most of the area we have. Our reception area is really quite pleasant and efficient now.

Fiscal Resources

While recognizing that every unit would benefit from a larger budget, evaluate the general adequacy of fiscal resources allocated to the unit to serve its constituencies and achieve other programmatic goals by assigning a number between "1" (completely inadequate) to "9" (completely satisfies needs).

8

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

New Student Programs has benefited greatly from the implementation of the differential tuition. It has enabled us to hire the Coordinator of the Peer Mentor Program and establish our corps of approximately 100 Peer Mentors. Our other primary source of revenue is the orientation fee assessed to new students (first year and transfers). While any department can always make good use of additional funding, we are in a very good position now to serve students and family members. Technology has helped us become more efficient as well.

4. In a paragraph or two, overview significant changes made in your unit since 1996 (i.e., the last North Central Association Accreditation Visit). (e.g., re-organized, key staff changes, change in purposes, etc.)

The change with perhaps the greatest impact has been offering the New Student Seminar for one graduation credit. In the fall, 2004, almost 1000 of the new freshmen completed the course. Additional sections were made possible by the Master Adviser Program and the differential fee. The other major addition is the Peer Mentor Program. All new freshmen and transfers who request it are assigned an upperclass Peer Mentor to assist them with the transition to UW-Whitewater.

In another paragraph or two, describe why these changes occurred.

The force behind the New Student Seminar and the Peer Mentor Program was really the concern about the retention of first year students to their sophomore year. Faculty members, who had been reluctant to approve the course previously, recognized the value of the Seminar; they also became involved in teaching the course to a much greater degree.

MISSION & PLANNING

- In a paragraph or two, describing any significant projects/initiatives that your unit is planning or currently has underway, but has not yet completed.

As a result of our Office Planning and Review, there will soon be a comprehensive FYE Committee set up and chaired by the Asst. Chancellor for Student Affairs. Its goals include developing learning outcomes for all phases of the first year and a more coordinated effort in programs and assessment. Issues also include: further integration of the Peer Mentor program with the New Student Seminar; upgraded training for Seminar teachers; specialized sections of the Seminar for transfers, commuters, and returning adult learners; monthly programming by the Peer Mentors; expansion of the Seminar to two or three credits; development of our own Seminar materials.

- Below are five “core values” the University identifies as central to its purposes and operation. Please evaluate the importance of each core value in terms of how each aligns with the purposes of your unit (i.e., take a hypothetical 100 points and distribute them among the five values, with those values that align more closely to the purposes of your unit receiving more points).

Core Value	Importance (100 points)
Commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and understanding	20
Development of the individual	25
Personal and professional integrity	15
Commitment to serve	15
Commitment to develop a sense of community, respect for diversity, and global perspectives	25
Total=	100 points

- Each and every academic and non-academic unit engages in planning for the future. Review the list of variables below and evaluate the extent to which each of the following influences decision-making behind the planning process for your unit (i.e., take a hypothetical 100 points and distribute them among the planning variables listed below, with those variables playing the larger role in your unit’s planning efforts receiving more points)

Planning Variables	Importance (100 points)
The mission of the university or the unit	15
Academic assessment data/information relevant to student performance against learning outcomes	10
Other data/information gathered relevant to performance (e.g., Audit & Review feedback)	15
Societal/Cultural trends (e.g., changes in demographics, lifestyles, professions)	15
Campus trends (e.g., changes in university-initiated needs and demands)	15

Technology trends (e.g., technology developments that affect delivery of service)	5
Professional trends (e.g., changes evident at other universities/colleges)	5
Available human resources (e.g., # of employees, talents, etc.) within the unit	10
Available financial resources (e.g., budget, available and accessible \$)	5
Available physical resources (e.g., space, existing technology, etc.)	5
Other:	-
Total=	100 points

8. Does your unit have a mission statement?
 Yes No

If you answered "yes," please list the mission statement here. or, if your mission statement can be accessed on the web, please list the URL here.

The mission of New Student Programs/First Year Experience is to provide to new students programs and services that will facilitate a positive transition to the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. These programs will help students make valuable connections and enhance student development that promote student learning.

If you answered "yes," please describe how, if at all, this mission statement plays a role in your unit's planning and/or decision-making.

The initiatives of the New Student Programs Office target student success and retention through positive connections to the campus (whether through faculty mentors, student leaders, student organizations, etc.) We focus on the individual development of new students as well as those student leaders with whom we work.

OPERATION AND PERFORMANCE

9. What are the major or measurable objectives of the unit?

- Retention from first year to sophomore year
- Increasing enrollment in the New Student Seminar
- Retention of students who have completed the New Student Seminar
- Increasing numbers of students across campus in our leadership positions

10. What outcome measures (i.e., data, information) provide evidence that your unit's objectives are being met?

- Overall, first year retention has been on the rise.
- Enrollment in the New Student Seminar has been increasing annually.
- Retention of students in the New Student Seminar has been higher than that of students who do not complete the course for many years.
- We are beginning to see increasing numbers of multicultural students involved in our student leadership positions.

11. Related to question #10, does the unit regularly collect data/information to evaluate how effectively it serves its constituency(ies)? (This might include surveys of constituencies.)

Yes No

If "yes," please list specific data/information sets that the UW-W Self-Study Committees, and/or the Higher Learning Commission's Visiting Accreditation Team can access to review/consult.

- Retention rates for all first year students and those in the seminar
- Student/Parent satisfaction surveys
- Seminar evaluations

- Evaluations of the Peer Mentor program
- Peer Mentor contact information

12. In a paragraph or two, describe specific changes to the unit's operation or planning, if any, have resulted from the collection and use of the data/information identified in the preceding questions. Please be specific.

The differential tuition has made available significantly more resources for the New Student Seminar. Where we once had a dozen sections of the course, in the fall of 2004 we had 56. And it enabled us to involve many more faculty members with Student Affairs staff.

For the first time, New Student Programs has had two full-time academic staff members to work with first year students. This change has helped immensely with program development and planning, as well as the supervision of the student leaders.

The addition of the Peer Mentor program two years ago made more personal contacts with first year students much more significant. Based on feedback from the Peer Mentors and the first year students during the first year of the program, we altered the expectations on the Peer Mentors in both length of their contract and the frequency of contact. During the coming year, the Peer Mentors will also be sponsoring specific weekend events for first year students to further facilitate their transition. We have also stepped up efforts to recruit underrepresented groups as Peer Mentors and Orientation Leaders this year.

13. Please provide a list of services, if any, that your unit provides for constituencies that are external to the university.
- New Student Programs provides family members with a calendar/information booklet, as well as newsletters throughout the year. We also serve as an ombuds service for family members.
14. Please list any partnerships your unit has developed with the community (external to the campus, at the local, national, or global-level).
- The Coordinator of the Peer Mentor Program provided peer mentor training for the Clinton (WI) Middle School. The intent is to expand this program to several schools.

STUDENT LEARNING (COMPLETE THIS SECTION ONLY IF YOUR UNIT HAS AS PART OF ITS MISSION OR PURPOSES THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS)

15. If your unit serves students as its primary constituency, does the unit have learning or development-related objectives relevant to its work with students? That is, does your unit expect that students will acquire certain knowledge or skill sets as a direct result of working with your unit or its programming?

Yes No

If "yes," please list these outcomes/objectives.

These outcomes (in alignment with the goals of the General Education program) were developed for the New Student Seminar:

- Students will demonstrate critical thinking and communication skills through challenging reading and writing assignments and class presentations.
- Students will articulate the purposes of higher education and its potential outcomes.

- Students will participate in two activities that will help them refine their academic and career goals. Students will establish sound relationships with an academic adviser to help guide these decisions.
- Students will explore their own personal value system and long-range goals through journal entries and class activities. They will continue to develop an awareness of their own identity and culture and an awareness of cultural differences.
- Students will demonstrate effective skills (study skills, time management, personal financial responsibility, stress management) to cope with the transition to the university environment and subsequently the world around them.
- Students will acquire information about such health issues as alcohol and other drugs, sexuality, and general wellness issues to help them make responsible choices.
- Students will continue to develop an appreciation for the fine and performing arts through participation in and/or attendance at events.
- Students will become familiar with the vast array of student support services available to them that will enhance their ability to succeed.
- Students will gain an understanding of their rights and responsibilities as students and good citizens.

16. Does the unit use data/information to evaluate the extent to which these learning or development-related objectives are, or are not being met?

Yes No

If "yes," please list specific data/information sets that the UW-W Self-Study Committees, and/or the Higher Learning Commission's Visiting Accreditation Team can access to review/consult.

- EBI assessment of the course against 6 peer institutions
- campus survey of student perceptions of course
- National Survey of Student Engagement

17. What specific changes to the unit's operation or planning, if any, have resulted from the collection and use of the data/information identified in question #15? Please be specific.

During the past year, a committee of faculty and staff collaborated to offer a series of cultural identity workshops for students enrolled in the Seminar. (This was a direct result of feedback from the National Survey of Student Engagement.)

Topics for teacher training are often gleaned from course evaluations.

SELF-EVALUATION

Strengths

18. List and prioritize no more than three primary strengths that have emerged in your unit's efforts to meet its mission, goals, or objectives. To identify these strengths, you may wish to consider: What does your unit do very well? What good things do people say about your unit? How has your unit aided the campus in meeting its mission? In what ways has your unit "gone beyond the call of duty?"

After identifying each strength, specify supporting evidence that suggests that the statement is true. This may include data/information gathered relevant to unit performance, trend data, information gathered from audits or external agencies visit, etc.

1. Specific Strength: The staff of New Student Programs is well qualified, available, and accessible to both students and faculty/staff on campus. We have a reputation for being helpful to students, family members, and the campus community.
 - Supporting Evidence: recent Office Planning and Review report
2. Specific Strength: New Student Programs does a good job of helping students get connected to the campus through PREVIEW (summer orientation), fall orientation programs, the Peer Mentor program, and the regular “FYE-mails.”
 - Supporting Evidence: program evaluations; response to e-mails for personal attention or campus information
3. Specific Strength: New Student Programs has been effective in its promotion of the New Student Seminar as a positive means of connecting students with faculty and staff.
 - Supporting Evidence: increasing enrollments in the course, as well as a better cross section of teachers from across the campus; student feedback

Concerns

19. List and prioritize no more than three primary concerns that have emerged in your unit's efforts to meet its mission, goals, or objectives. To identify these concerns, you may wish to consider: What could be improved? What is done poorly? What do we, as a unit, avoid doing, even though we know it's important?

After identifying each concern, specify supporting evidence that suggests that the statement is true. This may include data/information gathered relevant to unit performance, trend data, information gathered from audits or external agencies visit, etc.

Finally, identify one or more recommended actions to address the area of concern. This may include actions that your unit has already begun, actions being planned, or preliminary thinking about how to address the area of concern.

1. Specific Concern: We need to do more to connect transfer students, commuters, and returning adult learners to the campus. We need to more assessment of their needs and retention.
 - Supporting Evidence: There really is no research being conducted in this area. We are really proceeding without a sound basis.
 - Recommended Actions: Develop the tools to assess their needs; take a look at retention among these specific groups
2. Specific Concern: We have been concerned about the number of underrepresented students who apply for leadership positions within our office.

- Supporting Evidence: [applications and hiring information](#)
 - Recommended Actions: [Along with several other offices, New Student Programs has made a concerted effort to reach out to the underrepresented students through faculty and staff who work with them, through their student organizations, and through individual contacts. Results should be improved this semester.](#)
3. Specific Concern: [New Student Programs is not always aware of the initiatives for first year students that are being developed by other offices on campus.](#)
- Supporting Evidence: [current OPR report](#)
 - Recommended Actions: [Both the FYE Committee and coordinated assessment efforts with other offices would improve this communication, eliminate some repetition for students \(particularly with assessment\), and utilize resources more effectively.](#)