

**Fourth Annual Assessment Report
1997-1998
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point**

1997-1998 Assessment Subcommittee

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Assessment Activities

Assessment Subcommittee

The subcommittee hosted an assessment workshop--Alverno College and UWSP Working Together to Improve Student Learning--in January. Over 30 administrators, faculty, staff and students attended.

The subcommittee selected Wellness as the general education component to be assessed during the 97-98 academic year. Graduates are expected to leave UWSP with an understanding of the concept of wellness and the ability to apply it to their personal lifestyle. The subcommittee concluded that it would be difficult to measure wellness knowledge because courses that satisfy the Wellness General Degree Requirement cover a wide variety of topics and do not include a common set of information. The subcommittee decided to focus on the behavioral component of wellness and use the Lifestyle Assessment Questionnaire (LAQ) as the assessment tool. Sixty-six seniors in Sociology 270; Communication 369; Psychology 452; Paper Science 495; Theatre 452; and, 11 seniors and recent graduates in health promotion/wellness completed the LAQ.

The subcommittee decided to use the Environmental Survey from the Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education to assess environmental literacy fall 1998. It also decided to assess the three remaining GDR components in 98-99: respect and understand the pluralistic nature of American society; understand the foundations of American democracy; and, appreciate the histories of societies and cultures and their interrelationships. The goal is to assess all fourteen skills and knowledges at least once before the Assessment Plan is formally evaluated in the fall of 1999

The subcommittee approved a plan to survey employers fall 1998. Surveys will be sent to a stratified random sample of 1200 businesses in Marathon, Portage, Wood, and Waupaca and Waushara counties.

The subcommittee reviewed all department assessment reports and provided each department with a written response.

Academic Departments

The subcommittee received thirty-two program reports. Four program assessment plans are being revised and no data were collected in 96-97. Departments used a variety of assessment methods including:

- Local tests
- Portfolios
- Exhibits
- Program evaluation surveys
- MFATs
- Exit interviews
- Self-evaluations
- Peer evaluations
- Client appraisals
- Self-reported competencies
- Written assignments
- Oral exams
- Projects
- Personal interviews
- National certification exam
- Placement rates
- Skills evaluations
- Job interview feedback
- Evaluation of resumes
- Faculty survey

Student Development Office

A "Profile of the Freshman Class" and "Stated Wellness Needs of the Freshman Class" were completed for fall 1997 freshmen.

University Housing distributed a "Perception Survey" to 2500 residents (1292 were returned) February 1998 to determine students' satisfaction with their residence hall experience. A "Residential Needs Survey" was given to 2800 residents (850 were returned) May 1998 to ascertain student use of residence hall facilities.

Office of Institutional Research

A Student Satisfaction Survey was conducted during the spring semester. Questionnaires were inserted in every seventh spring 1998 registration packet and students were asked to return the questionnaires when they registered for their classes. Questionnaires and self-addressed business return envelopes were inserted in all

graduation packets mailed to graduating seniors. Questionnaires were also made available to December graduating seniors during senior hospitality day in the University Center. Eight hundred and fifty seven questionnaires were returned.

An Alumni Satisfaction Survey was mailed to 1278 undergraduates who graduated in 1994. Alumni were asked to express their satisfaction with the contributions their general degree requirement courses made to their personal development with respect to the 14 skills and knowledges. Second, alumni were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with contributions their overall and major program made to their career development with respect to 12 job-related competencies.

English and Mathematics Placement Tests were given to samples of second semester sophomores and first semester juniors to assess their verbal and quantitative skills. Two hundred students were randomly selected from among 620 eligible students and invited to re-take the English Placement Test--25 took the exam. One hundred fifty five students were randomly selected from 196 eligible students who had not taken any math at UWSP. All 98 eligible students who had passed four credits of math were invited to re-take the mathematics tests. Thirteen students who had taken no mathematics classes and four students who had passed four or more credits took the test.

What We Learned about UWSP Students

General Education

Chart 1 displays the wellness assessment results for a sample of 1998 seniors and compares them to a sample of three hundred and ninety 1990 freshmen. Seniors have higher wellness scores than freshmen on ten of the eleven sub-scales: physical exercise, nutrition, self-care, vehicle safety, social/environmental, emotional awareness and acceptance, emotional management, intellectual, occupational, and spiritual. The differences in scores range from +3 for vehicle safety and emotional awareness and acceptance to +17 for physical exercise. Seniors scored 1 point lower than freshmen on the drug usage and awareness sub-scale. Overall, senior wellness scores exceed freshmen scores by 8 points.

Chart 1

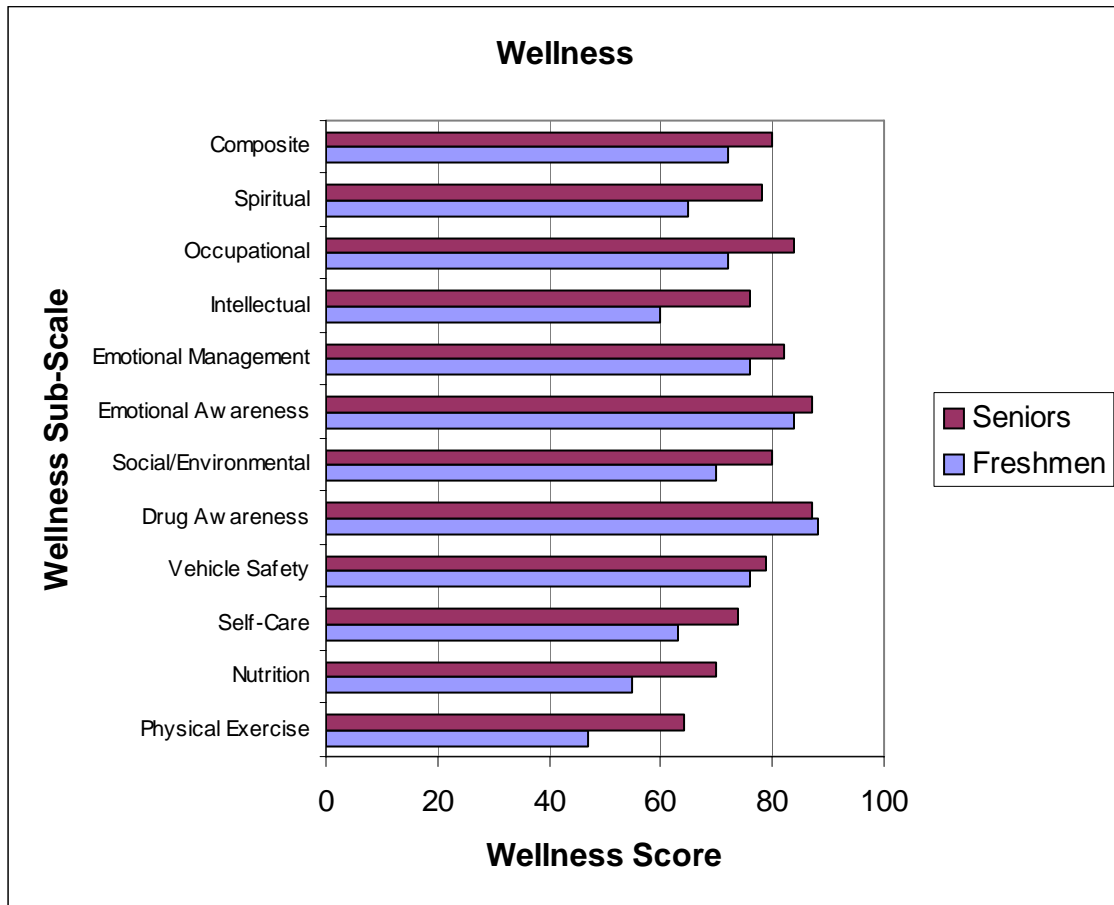
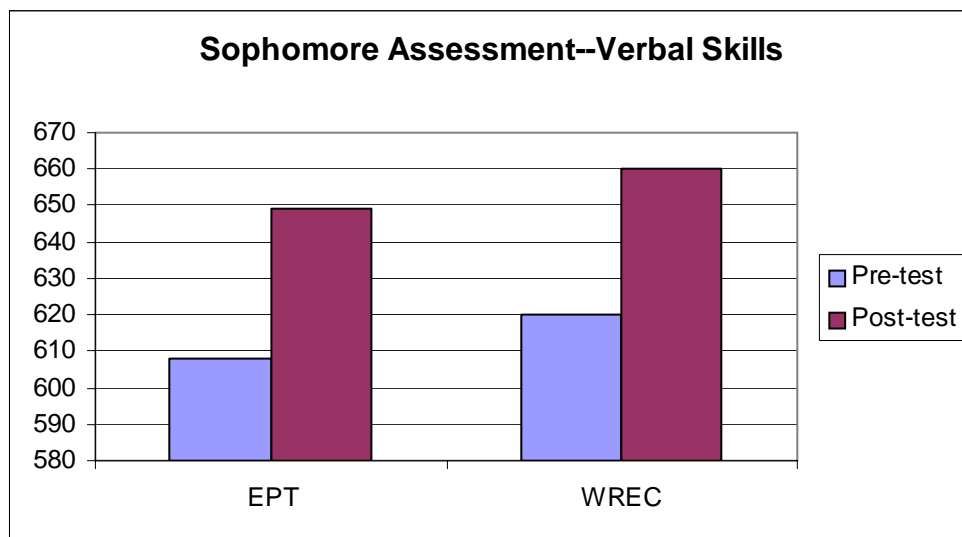


Chart 2 displays the sophomore assessment verbal skills results. There is a statistically significant improvement in verbal skills. Students score 40 points higher as sophomores than they did as freshmen. The EPT measures grammar, usage, sentence correction, and reading comprehension and the WREC tests reading comprehension.

Chart 2



Students who had passed four or more credits of mathematics improved their math scores on the re-test while those who had not taken any mathematics classes obtained lower scores. These results, while consistent with previous assessment results, cannot be generalized due to the small samples of students.

Program-Specific Information

In general, departments continue to find strengths in their programs. National tests and local procedures generally show that students are succeeding in their majors. Surveys of student and alumni satisfaction with programs are generally very positive.

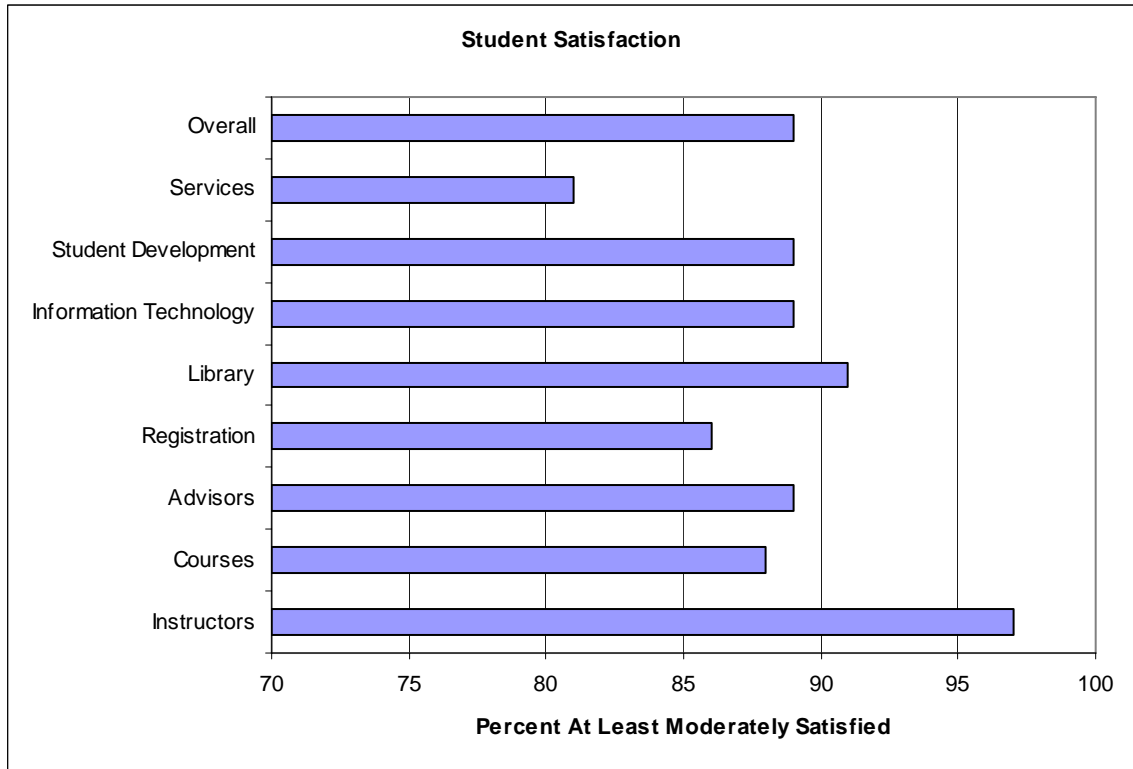
Student Development

University Housing reports that "most residents agree that living in the residence halls has been a positive experience." Generally, residents are more satisfied with their experience than in 1997.

Institutional Results

Chart 3 displays the results of the student satisfaction survey by item category. Students report high levels of satisfaction with UWSP. Over 80% of the respondents are at least moderately satisfied with each item category. Overall, 89% are at least moderately satisfied.

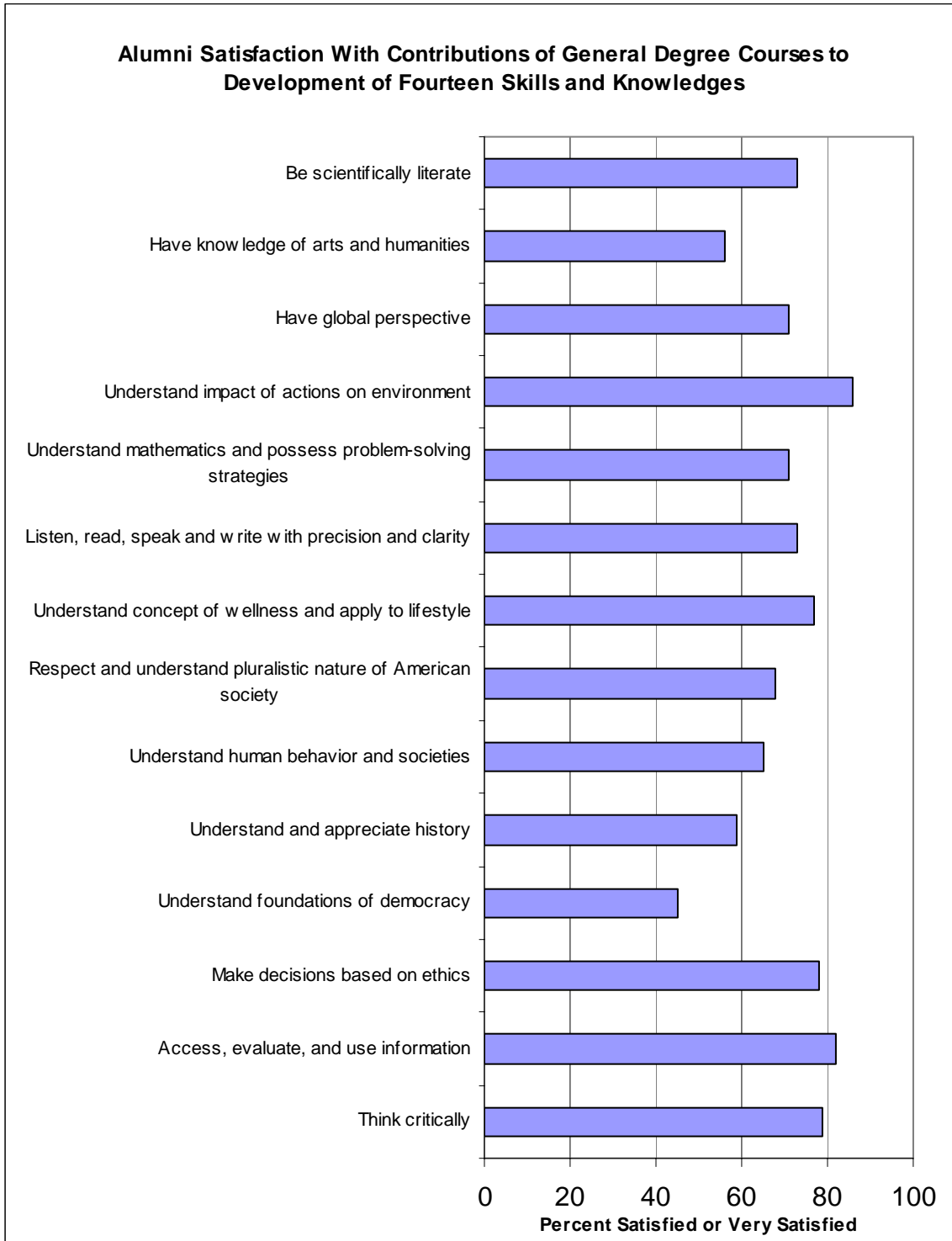
Chart 3



The top five survey items students are most satisfied with are the University Child Learning and Care Center; adequacy of Internet services; availability of advisors for scheduled office hours; helpfulness and friendliness of faculty; and, access to faculty outside of class. The five items students are least satisfied with are training in how to use the library; drop/add process; adequacy of representation by campus student leadership; access to computing resources in campus computing labs; and, Parking Services.

Chart 4 displays alumni satisfaction with the contributions their general degree courses made to their personal development with respect to the 14 skills and knowledges. Generally, alumni are satisfied with the contributions made to each skill and knowledge. Overall, 71% of the respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied.

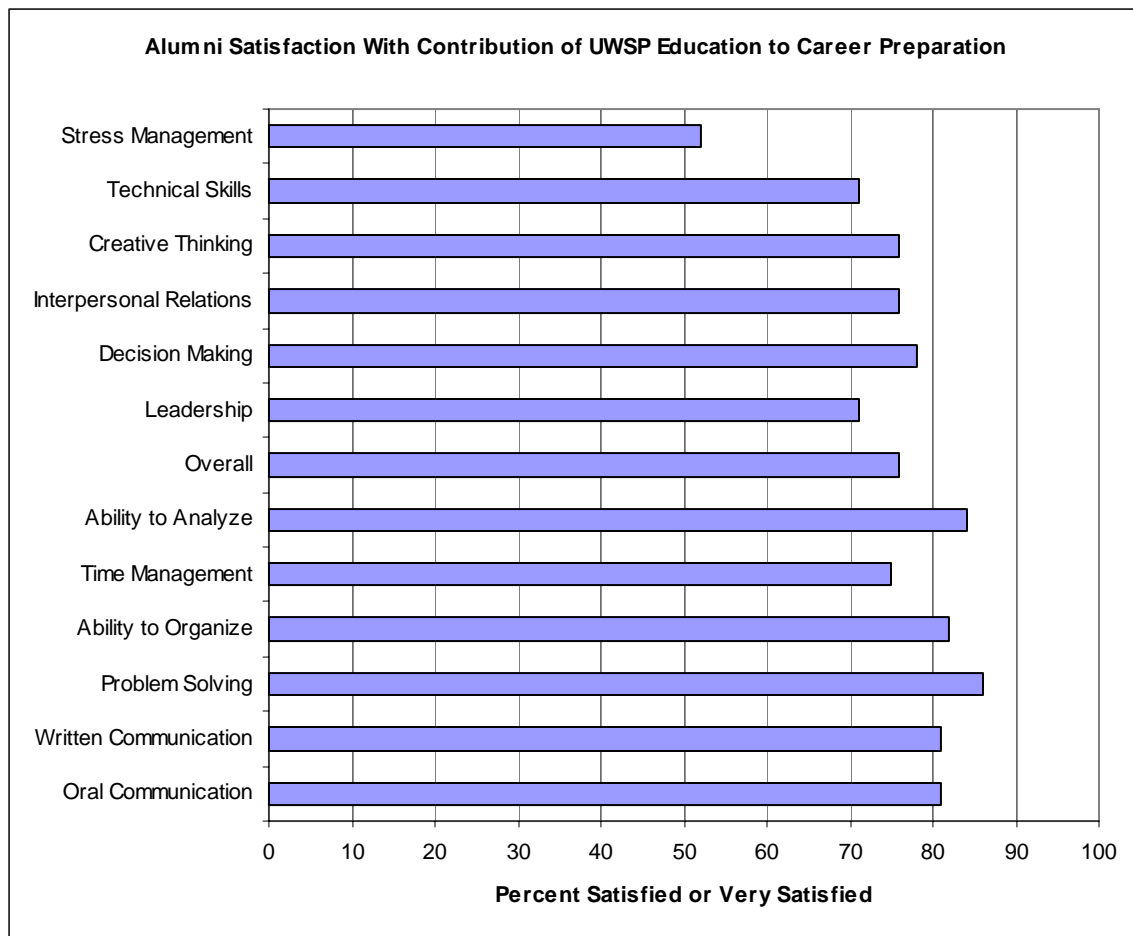
Chart 4



Over 80% of the alumni reported being satisfied or very satisfied with respect to being information literate--access, evaluate and use information-and understand impact of actions on the environment. Less than 60% reported being satisfied or very satisfied with respect to "have knowledge of the arts and humanities" and understand the foundations of American democracy. The "have knowledge of the arts and humanities" is composed of two survey items: 1) "communicate non-verbally using music, dance, or visual arts" and 2) "understand and appreciate arts and humanities." The relatively low satisfaction with "knowledge of the arts and humanities" is partially explained by the fact that UWSP does not have any required course-work in "communicating non-verbally using music, dance, or visual arts." While many students may take courses that cover "American democracy" because of particular program requirements, there is no university wide requirement that they do so. Over 70% were satisfied or very satisfied with the contributions their general degree courses made to 8 of the 14 skills and knowledges.

Chart 5 shows that alumni are generally satisfied with the contributions their overall program of study and major makes to their career development. Overall, 76% are either satisfied or very satisfied.

Chart 5



Alumni report being most satisfied with the contribution their education makes to their problem solving abilities. With the exception of one competency, over 70% of the respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the contributions their education makes to their career development. Their highest levels of dissatisfaction are with two competencies: technical skills and stress management.

How We Responded to the Assessment Information

Assessment Subcommittee

The assessment subcommittee continues to conduct workshops and distribute information to help departments better understand assessment and how it fits with department, college, university and UW System missions. The subcommittee continues to work with departments and the institution to develop ways to use assessment results to improve programs.

The subcommittee distributed information to departments on instructional activities that offer increased opportunities for students to develop and apply skills related to doing tasks that comprise the ACT-COMP test. A packet of assessment information was provided to department chairs along with the subcommittee's written reviews of department program assessment reports.

Academic Departments

Departments plan to use assessment results to make the following program changes:

- Add required course to major
- Improve linkage among core courses
- Increase consultation with students on what to include in portfolio
- Provide students with more career information
- Add one faculty member
- Revise capstone course
- Reorganize introductory course sequence
- Revise course content
- Expand student mentoring program
- Collect exit portfolios from seniors
- Expand use of computer technology in courses
- Construct dedicated laboratory
- Add assessment of writing skills
- Relate class assignments to program objectives
- Apply for lab modernization grant

Student Development

University Housing notes that 1998 "...questions that received lower scores than in 1997 may warrant extra study."

Institutional

The Vice Chancellor and Provost has submitted a "plan to clarify the general degree requirements and articulate assessable objectives" to the Academic Affairs Committee. As noted in the proposal, "[w]e cannot effectively respond to NCA's challenge without making sure that each general degree requirement has a clear purpose and assessable objectives..."

What We Learned About Assessment

The assessment plan approved by the Faculty Senate in 1995 continues to be appropriate for our purposes. Departments are generally doing acceptable assessments. Some departments still need to sharpen their mission statements, goals and objectives. There continues to be a need for more emphasis on cognitive and behavioral measures of skills and knowledges as opposed to self reported gains or attitudinal surveys.

Our experience with assessing Wellness suggests once again that we need to be more definitive in determining objectives for the GDRs and skills and knowledges and more attentive to the relationship between course content and the objectives. The Alumni Satisfaction Survey also demonstrates what happens when we expect students to be able to "communicate non-verbally using music, dance, or visual arts" but do not universally require any related course-work. The same conclusion holds for "American democracy." And, these results are consistent with our experience in assessing Global Awareness.

The instructions to the Alumni Satisfaction Survey specifically asked respondents "to indicate their level of satisfaction with the contributions their general degree requirement courses at UWSP made to their personal development with respect to each of the skills and knowledges. Future senior level assessment instruments should reference the contributions the student's total education at UWSP makes to their personal development with respect to each of the 14 skills and knowledges. As stated in UWSP's Assessment Plan " . . . general education should not be equated solely with the General Degree Requirements . . . general education is a result of the entire learning process at UWSP, in both GDR courses and the major fields."

Goals and objectives need to be articulated for each GDR and skill and knowledge. Outcomes must be precisely defined and operationalized. And, reliable and valid measurement tools must be developed. Course content must be related to the goals and objectives of the appropriate GDR and skills and knowledges.

Assessment results need to be more fully used to make institutional adjustments--improve programs, improve general education curriculum, reallocate institutional resources, etc. The NCA report states "the results from reliable and valid assessment of student outcomes must be integrated into institutional-wide planning including allocation of resources, strategic planning, curriculum revision and General Degree Requirements/general education requirements." Before assessment results can be integrated into institutional-wide planning, they must be evaluated with respect to agreed upon expectations or standards. An acceptable level of quality or proficiency needs to be specified. For example, 1998 seniors scored 64 out of 100 on the physical exercise section of the LAQ and they scored 17 points higher than 1990 freshmen. However, since no standards have been established, these results cannot be evaluated, except in a *post hoc* manner. We don't know whether a score of 64 or a gain of possibly 17 points is acceptable or not. Likewise, with the satisfaction surveys, no standards for satisfaction have been set. For example, 14% of the students are dissatisfied with the availability of GDR courses. Is this an acceptable level of dissatisfaction? Once again, since no standards have been set, the results cannot be evaluated except in a *post hoc* fashion. Additionally, institutional wide planning implies establishing priorities. For example, is it more important to allocate resources to the wellness area so students will achieve higher scores on the physical exercise section of the LAQ or to allocate more resources to the provision of GDR courses so that students will be less dissatisfied on this item. Before the loop can be closed, standards for quality or proficiency need to be set and priorities established.