



University of Nebraska Kearney
Focused Visit April 28-29, 2008
Self-Study

Respectfully submitted to
The Higher Learning Commission
North Central Association of Colleges & Schools
by the
University of Nebraska at Kearney

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Introduction

In March of 2004, a team from The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools visited the UNK campus to conduct a comprehensive evaluation. At that time, the team recommended that a focused visit be scheduled for 2008 with nine areas related to assessment identified for review. These areas included:

1. Infrastructure to Support Assessment
2. Faculty Commitment to Assessment
3. Recognition of Exemplary Assessment
4. Assessment Process Sustainability
5. Cultural Diversity (CD) Program Assessment
6. Distance Education (eCampus) Program Assessment
7. General Studies (GS) Program Assessment
8. Graduate Programs Assessment
9. Writing Intensive (WI) Program Assessment

Since 2004, significant progress has been made in all of the nine areas. The following information highlights the accomplishments of the UNK faculty, staff, administration, and students in meeting the requirements outlined in the 2004 NCA feedback report. The section also provides an overview of the entire self-study, which addresses each area in greater detail.

1. Infrastructure to Support Assessment:

- a. The Office of Assessment was established in the spring of 2004 with a Director of Assessment, a Coordinator of Assessment, an Administrative Assistant, and a website manager.
- b. A budget was established for the Office of Assessment in the fall of 2004.
- c. A governance document was developed in the fall of 2004 outlining the responsibilities of all of the stakeholders in the assessment process at UNK.
- d. In the fall of 2004, the Faculty Senate Assessment Committee was changed from an oversight committee to an advisory committee, providing faculty representation and input to the assessment process at UNK.
- e. In the fall of 2004, the Office of Assessment set up a website to provide information about student outcomes assessment at UNK.
<http://unk.edu/assessment>.
- f. In the fall of 2004, the Office of Assessment started an online assessment newsletter, *Outcomes*, which is published electronically three times a year and can be found on the assessment website.
- g. A Student Assessment Committee was established in 2005 to allow for student input into the assessment process at UNK.
- h. In April of 2005, UNK held the first Platte Valley Assessment Conference, a regional assessment conference organized by the UNK Office of Assessment. The conference was held again in April of 2007.

- i. A strategic plan for assessment was completed in the spring of 2006 to provide direction for assessment through 2008 and was updated in the fall of 2007.
- j. Since the fall of 2004, the Office of Assessment has conducted annual meetings with the deans of each college, chairs of each department, and one-on-one meetings with each departmental assessment representative to provide feedback on the assessment report and process.
- k. Since the fall of 2004, the Director of Assessment has provided status reports on an annual basis to the Faculty Senate, Student Senate, Faculty Senate Executive Retreat, and the Executive Council.
- l. Since May 2004, the Director of Assessment has reported directly to the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Student Life (SVCAASL) and meets on a monthly basis with him to provide information on the status of assessment at UNK and address any issues related to student outcomes assessment.
- m. Since 2005, the Director of Assessment has prepared an annual report on the status of assessment at the university.

2. Faculty Commitment to Assessment

- a. Since the fall of 2004, the Office of Assessment has collected data on the number of faculty members attending assessment conferences, publishing research on assessment, and presenting at assessment conferences--including the Platte Valley Assessment Conference held at UNK in 2005 and 2007.
- b. Since 2004, the number of faculty members actively involved in assessment at UNK has increased significantly. Faculty members in all academic departments are involved in collecting and reporting data on overall departmental assessment, GS, WI and CD assessment.
- c. Since the fall of 2004, faculty members from all colleges have attended events related to assessment sponsored by the Center for Teaching Excellence.
- d. In the spring of 2007, the Office of Assessment conducted the Assessment Climate Survey to determine the attitudes of the faculty toward assessment at UNK. One hundred twenty-three faculty members, representing all four colleges, responded to the survey.

3. Recognition of Exemplary Assessment

- a. In February of 2005, the Office of Assessment held the first Assessment Awards Luncheon to recognize departments, programs and individual faculty members who have contributed to assessment at UNK and have developed exemplary assessment programs. This luncheon is a yearly event at UNK.
- b. Faculty members involved in collecting data and preparing the annual assessment reports in their departments or programs have received \$500 stipends for their work in assessment. In 2005, faculty members involved in GS assessment received the stipend. In 2006, faculty members conducting Distance Education assessment received the stipend, and in 2007, individuals involved in WI assessment received stipends for attending a workshop on writing in the discipline.

- c. Since 2005, faculty members attending conferences, presenting papers, or conducting research on assessment can receive stipends to support their efforts.

4. Assessment Process Sustainability

- a. In the spring of 2004, the Office of Assessment was established to oversee the assessment process at UNK. The office assumed responsibility for assisting departments and programs in developing their assessment process while the SVCAASL and the deans assumed responsibility for ensuring compliance.
- b. In 2004, an assessment process was established in which annual assessment reports are submitted to the Office of Assessment, feedback is provided, and reports are posted on the assessment website.
- c. In the fall of 2004, approximately 74% of the departments and programs on campus submitted annual assessment reports. By the fall of 2006 and again in 2007, 100% of the programs and departments on campus submitted reports.
- d. The 2006 strategic plan for assessment was updated in the fall of 2007 to reflect changes in the process and to provide guidance through 2012.
- e. In the fall of 2007, the Office of Assessment began implementing WEAVEonline as the assessment and accreditation management system for the university. This application allows departments/programs to complete assessment reporting online and provides decision makers with assessment information from the course and program level to the university strategic planning level.
- f. Campus-wide assessment includes the administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Critical Thinking and Writing portions of the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP), senior exit surveys, the Cultural Diversity Survey, and surveys of other areas that have a direct impact on student outcomes assessment.
- g. To ensure transparency of assessment of student outcomes and to provide all stakeholders with data related to student performance at UNK, in the fall of 2007 the university began participating in the NSSE-USA Today initiative. This website will provide stakeholders with an analysis of UNK's ranking on student engagement compared to other institutions.
- h. In January 2008, UNK began participating in the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) to provide additional data with which to compare educational opportunities at UNK with those at other institutions.

5. Cultural Diversity (CD) Program Assessment

- a. In 2004, oversight for the WI/CD programs was moved from the GS Council to a new WI/CD Committee to ensure the establishment of an assessment process for both programs.
- b. In 2005, the WI/CD Committee conducted a student and faculty survey of the perceptions of the CD program.
- c. In 2005, the WI/CD Committee collected and analyzed data related to cultural diversity from the 2002-2004 NSSE.
- d. In the spring of 2007, the oversight of WI/CD assessment was moved from the committee to the Office of Assessment.

- e. In the fall of 2007, the Office of Assessment conducted a survey of students at UNK to determine students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to issues of cultural diversity.
- f. In the fall of 2007, the Office of Assessment developed an assessment plan and report for the CD program.
- g. In the fall of 2007, student outcomes data from selected courses in departments who offer CD courses as part of their curriculum were reported as part of CD assessment.

6. Distance Education (eCampus) Program Assessment

- a. In the fall of 2005, the Office of Assessment worked with the Director of eCampus to design and develop an approach to assessment for both program level and department level data collection.
- b. In October of 2006, all academic departments offering degree programs online submitted assessment plans and reports to the Office of Assessment.
- c. In October of 2007, eCampus submitted a detailed report evaluating their program services and outlining overall student outcomes data related to indicators of success, such as the total number of online students, student retention, and student feedback on the online programs.

7. General Studies (GS) Program Assessment

- a. In 2005, the Office of Assessment worked with the Director of General Studies to design and develop an approach to assessment for both program level and department level data collection.
- b. In the spring of 2005, all departments offering GS courses submitted their GS assessment plans.
- c. In 2005 and again in 2006, a survey was conducted by the Student Assessment Committee to determine the attitudes of the UNK student body towards the General Studies program.
- d. In the spring of 2007, the Director of General Studies and the Office of Assessment conducted a pilot test of a direct measure of student performance on the overall GS objectives.
- e. In October of both 2006 and 2007, all academic departments offering GS courses submitted assessment reports to the Director of General Studies.
- f. In October of both 2006 and 2007, the Director of General Studies submitted a program-level assessment report including NSSE data from 2002-2004 and 2007, senior exit survey data, and the pilot test data.
- g. In the fall of 2007, General Studies administered the CAAP Writing and Critical Thinking tests, which provided direct, normed measures of student outcomes.

8. Graduate Programs Assessment

- a. In the fall of 2005, all graduate programs began submitting annual assessment reports to the Office of Assessment.
- b. In the fall of 2005, a process was established in which graduate programs with small numbers of majors would collect data every year, but would only submit reports every two to three years when they had sufficient data to conduct meaningful analyses.
- c. In 2005, the assessment website was revised to provide a separate listing of graduate programs with their assessment plans, reports, and instruments clearly displayed.
- d. Since 2005, prior to approval by the Graduate Council, new graduate programs are required to have an assessment plan in place that has been approved by the Office of Assessment.

9. Writing Intensive (WI) Program Assessment

- a. In 2004, oversight for the WI/CD programs was moved from the General Studies Council to a new WI/CD Committee.
- b. In 2005, the WI/CD Committee conducted a student and faculty survey of the perceptions of the WI program for both groups. As a result of the surveys, changes were made to the WI program, reducing the total number of hours, moving the WI program into departments, and changing the focus to writing in the discipline.
- c. In 2005, the WI/CD Committee collected and analyzed data from the 2002-2004 NSSE and senior exit surveys related to WI.
- d. During the 2005-2006 academic year, the WI/CD Committee developed an assessment approach for collecting department-level data on student's writing performance.
- e. In the fall of 2006, departments submitted assessment plans for their WI courses focusing on writing in the discipline, and the WI/CD Committee provided feedback.
- f. In the spring of 2007, the oversight of WI assessment was moved from the WI/CD Committee to the Office of Assessment.
- g. In May of 2007, faculty members responsible for WI courses were given a \$500 stipend to attend a one-week workshop on developing and assessing WI courses.
- h. In the fall of 2007, the Director of General Studies and the Office of Assessment administered the CAAP Essay Writing and Critical Thinking tests, which provided direct, normed measures of student outcomes.
- i. In the fall of 2007, the Office of Assessment developed an assessment plan and report for the WI program.
- j. In the fall of 2007, departments implemented their assessment plans and began collecting data, which will be reported in October of 2008.

In cooperation with the Office of Assessment, the faculty and staff of UNK have implemented significant assessment initiatives and activities since the spring of 2004, addressing each of the nine areas identified in the 2004 NCA Report. The self-study will

describe these nine areas in greater detail - providing specific information related to the feedback provided in the 2004 NCA report, the status of each component at the time of the 2004 visit, how the requirements for the 2008 focused visit were addressed in each area, and future initiatives that will ensure continuation of a dynamic process of student outcomes assessment in all academic areas at UNK.

I. Infrastructure to Support Assessment

2004 NCA Feedback

At the time of the 2004 NCA accreditation visit, the team recommended that one of the areas for review in the 2008 focused visit would be the infrastructure required to support assessment at UNK. In the [2004 NCA Report](#), the accreditation team stated that, *“The administrative leadership for a viable assessment program has not fully developed. Faculty see this emerging administrative oversight as an important factor for nurturing assessment and imbedding it into the institutional culture. While many pieces of assessment already exist at the university, coherence and sustainability have yet to be developed”* (Assurance Section 15). *“A stable infrastructure to support assessment is not in place although the institution has been engaged in assessment for more than 10 years. At the time of the team visit a recommendation regarding basic infrastructure to support assessment was circulating through channels for discussion and input—evidence of belated attention”* (Assurance Section 19). *“At the time of the focused visit, the campus should be able to demonstrate that it has developed stable administrative oversight for assessment with clearly defined responsibilities, authority, accountability, and an appropriate operating budget”* (Assurance Section 19). *“The Infrastructure needed to support a developing and maturing assessment program has yet to be implemented and tested at the university. UNK is encouraged to move forward and fully implement an administrative office for assessment...and clarify the level of responsibilities in all academic areas for assessment. Internal accountability and regular reporting by the faculty is an important part of the infrastructure. For the long term it is important to document those instances where assessment results have provided feedback and insights that lead to changes in instruction, content of courses, or structure of programs”* (Advancement Section 3). *“An operating budget for the assessment office is appropriate to encourage and provide incentives for a developing and maturing assessment program at the University. Such funding can be used to: (1) encourage experimentation by the faculty (perhaps via mini-grants), (2) travel to assessment conferences to learn new methodologies or present scholarly papers on assessment activities and results at UNK, and (3) support venues of recognition for faculty and departments that are exemplary in regard to their assessment activities and annual reporting”* (Advancement Section 4).

In addressing the issues raised in the [2004 NCA Report](#) related to the need for an assessment infrastructure, this section of the self-study will provide:

1. A description of the infrastructure to support assessment that existed at the time of the 2004 NCA visit.
2. A description of activities since 2004 that address the issues identified in the visit and bring this component of assessment into compliance with NCA requirements.
3. Future initiatives planned to support and develop the infrastructure for assessment at UNK.

1. 2004 Infrastructure to Support Assessment

From 1994-2001, the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (SVCAA) had oversight and responsibility for ensuring that assessment was taking place on the UNK campus. A Coordinator of Assessment was appointed to collect assessment reports submitted by departments and programs and to post those on a website. The Coordinator was not charged with providing feedback on assessment reporting, nor did she have the authority to enforce the requirement for assessment that the 1994 NCA accreditation team had indicated would have to be in place by the 2004 visit. As a result there was no enforcement of assessment requirements during the period of 1994-2002. However, in anticipation of the NCA visit in 2004, the SVCAA initiated a [strategic plan](#) for assessment in 2001.

During the period from 1994 to 2002, 20 academic departments collected data and reported annually on their assessment processes. However, after an initial flurry of activity in 1994-1995, the other departments on campus had not implemented a consistent assessment process in their departments or programs. As a result, in 2002, an ad hoc Faculty Senate Assessment Committee was formed with representatives from each college. This committee was given the responsibility for setting up an assessment process on campus that would ensure that all academic departments and programs were collecting assessment data and submitting an annual report. This was done in preparation for the 2004 NCA visit. Despite the efforts of the committee, without authority to “make assessment happen,” they were unable to get compliance from all departments. By the fall of 2003, approximately 74% of the academic departments and programs were collecting and reporting assessment data. This was the status of assessment reporting when the NCA team came in the spring of 2004. As a result of their visit and feedback provided, it was recognized that a new approach was needed if a consistent, campus-wide assessment process was to be established at UNK.

By the beginning of 2004, the assessment program was staffed by an interim director and the Assessment Coordinator who had been in that position for a number of years. The ad hoc Faculty Senate Assessment Committee was charged with completing its tasks and developing guidelines for governance that included a permanent Director of Assessment, Coordinator of Assessment, and a new Assessment Committee that was to be formed after the North Central Association's accreditation team visit. The Assessment Coordinator's position was being restructured and advertised in a national search. As part of the restructuring of the position, a Web Site Manager position was also created.

2. Addressing Requirements for the 2008 NCA Focused Visit

Office of Assessment Established and Staffed

In May of 2004, the Office of Assessment was established, and office space was allocated in Founders Hall 2113. Staffing was completed during the time period of the first of April through the month of May, 2004. Following a national search, a new Coordinator of Assessment, [Dr. Jeanne Butler](#), was hired effective April 1st. Ms. Jeanne Cutler was then

reassigned from her previous position as Assessment Coordinator to the position of Web Site Manager. [Dr. Glen Powell](#) was appointed to the position of Faculty Assistant to the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Student Life (SVCAASL), which included the responsibilities of the Director of Assessment. A graduate assistant was employed to assist Ms. Jeanne Cutler with her position as Coordinator of Academic Publications and duties as Web Site Manager, and an Administrative Assistant was appointed to support the Director and Coordinator of Assessment. The Faculty Senate ad hoc [Assessment Committee](#) became a standing committee responsible to the SVCAASL after the North Central Association accreditation visit in April. In the spring of 2005 the [Student Assessment Committee](#) was formed to represent the assessment concerns of the student body.

Since May of 2004 there have been several changes in personnel assigned to the [Office of Assessment](#). In 2006, the Web Site Manager retired and was replaced by the former GA, [Kimberly Elliott](#). In May of 2006, the Director of Assessment, Glen Powell, resigned and returned to his faculty position in the College of Education. Jeanne Butler, the Coordinator of Assessment, assumed the duties of Director of Assessment. She continues to report directly to the SVCAASL. In October of 2006 a new Coordinator of Assessment, [Dr. Sarah von Schrader](#), was hired. In the fall of 2007 a Graduate Assistant, [Jessy Hansen](#) was hired to assist in preparation for the NCA visit. Despite changes in personnel, there continues to be a clear focus and commitment to continued development of the assessment process at UNK.

Office of Assessment Budget

Following the 2004 NCA visit, the SVCAASL established a budget for the Office of Assessment to support the activities related to assessment at UNK. Table I.1 provides an overview of specific items from the Office of Assessment budget, outlining how funding is allocated to encourage faculty involvement in the assessment process and to provide funding to faculty members for scholarly work and personal development in the field of assessment. The items also indicate expenditures for resources such as books and training materials, and for software purchases to support the assessment processes in colleges and across the campus.

Table I.1 Office of Assessment Budget Items 2004-2008

Budget Categories	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Total budget	\$65,464	\$71,596	\$113,255	\$113,750
Faculty stipends for reporting	\$12,390	\$2,010	\$9,080	\$6,500
Committee member stipends	0	\$1,200	0	0
Faculty conference stipends	\$6,957	\$9,291	\$6,500	\$6,000
Faculty research stipends	\$1,500	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$1,500
Faculty workshops/training	0	0	\$9,000	\$7,500
Assessment software	\$2,895	\$35	\$48	\$8,202
Resource materials	\$1,685	\$1,011	\$935	\$1,200
Salaries/benefits	\$37,744	\$44,491	\$70,377	\$87,998
UNK Assessment Conference	\$1,175	0	\$1,201	0

Governance of Assessment at UNK

Following the 2004 NCA visit and establishment of the Office of Assessment, a [Governance Document](#) was developed to provide clear lines of responsibility for oversight of the assessment process at UNK and enforcement of assessment guidelines, deadlines, and other requirements. The Governance Document outlines particular personnel responsibilities.

Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Student Life (SVCAASL)

The SVCAASL has the responsibility for oversight of assessment at UNK. This includes the development of a university-wide strategic plan that includes assessment-related initiatives. The SVCAASL supervises the work of the Director of Assessment. The data collected from assessment will be used in strategic planning and resource allocation to improve instruction and programs at the university.

Deans

The deans of the colleges, or units, have responsibility for oversight of assessment within their respective area of responsibility. The data collected from assessment will be used in college strategic planning and resource allocation to improve instruction and programs. The deans will use the annual reviews of assessment developed by the Office of Assessment to provide feedback to departments within the college regarding the status of their respective assessment plans.

Chairs

The chairs, or directors, of programs have responsibility for oversight of assessment within their respective areas as well as being responsible for its utilization in planning initiatives. Data collected and analyzed during the cycle between APRs will be included in the APR Self Study.

Assessment of interdisciplinary programs will be the shared responsibility of the program director and department chairs.

Faculty/Staff

The faculty and staff members of each program have responsibility for interpreting the guidelines for assessment identified by the Office of Assessment. Faculty members will develop and implement an assessment plan for evaluating student outcomes at the department/program level. The faculty and staff members have the responsibility for analyzing and interpreting the assessment data in order to make decisions regarding instructional or program change.

Faculty Assessment Committee

The Assessment Committee is responsible for providing guidance and oversight in meeting the goals of the assessment program at UNK. The committee, made up of representatives from each college, also provides representation and advocates for the faculty in issues related to the assessment process.

Student Assessment Committee

The Student Assessment Committee represents the interests of UNK students in the assessment process. The committee provides a voice for student concerns and issues and collects and reports data on specific assessment issues that directly impact students.

Director of Assessment

The Director of Assessment is responsible for:

- chairing the Assessment Committee and implementing the assessment guidelines and directives
- working with the SVCAASL to develop and implement assessment initiatives outlined in the university strategic plan
- presenting the annual reports of assessment to the SVCAASL, deans, Faculty Senate, and departments
- assisting the SVCAASL and deans with assessment planning and implementation
- including deans in the communication loop when working with departments
- serving on the Strategic Planning Council to ensure assessment data is disseminated to the group
- disseminating assessment data to appropriate groups on campus

Coordinator of Assessment

The Coordinator of Assessment is responsible for

- assisting departments with assessment planning
- providing guidelines and assisting with the development of annual reports

- providing feedback to departments on their annual reports
- interpreting and reporting on university-level assessment data
- assisting the director of assessment in developing future assessment initiatives and in strategic planning
- developing faculty initiatives to encourage a culture of assessment

Web Site Manager

The Web Site Manager is responsible for developing and maintaining the assessment/NCA focused visit website for assessment.

Strategic Plan for Assessment

In preparation for the 1994 NCA visit, [assessment guidelines](#) were developed by the Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate. These guidelines were part of the Faculty Handbook. The [first strategic plan for assessment was developed in 2001](#) under the direction of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (SVCAA), Dr. James Roark. That strategic plan was used to guide efforts in developing the assessment processes in place for the 2004 NCA visit. It was comprehensive and provided a model for the revisions of the strategic plan in [2005](#) and in December of [2007](#).

At the Director of Assessment's request in January of 2005, a subcommittee of the UNK Assessment Committee reviewed the 2001 strategic plan and compared it to the developments in assessment from 2001 to 2005. The subcommittee's purpose was to update the plan to reflect current and future assessment priorities for UNK. The subcommittee began its work by reviewing the North Central Association's criteria related to assessment and program development that became effective January 1, 2005, to determine how closely the current assessment program reflected the new criteria. The subcommittee then analyzed the 2001 strategic plan for assessment to determine accomplishments and continued needs. In November of 2005, the UNK Assessment Committee adopted a [new strategic plan for guiding assessment at UNK for 2006-08](#).

In the fall of 2007, the Office of Assessment staff updated the strategic plan to reflect new priorities and initiatives for the period from [2008-2010](#). This updated Strategic Plan is outlined below.

1. *Use effective assessment practices to evaluate and optimize student learning in all settings as an essential aspect of a vibrant university seeking to meet the needs of the 21st century student.*

The first priority identifies the necessity of continuing to emphasize principles of assessment "best practice". The collection of valid and reliable data for decision-making purposes is dependent on the development and implementation of effective assessment tools and procedures. This priority reflects the importance of systematically reviewing assessment practices being implemented so that the most

accurate data about student learning is obtained.

2. *Use a continuous systematic assessment to enhance student learning and to assist in the establishment of priorities, facilitate planning, and align resources to improve programs.*

The second priority focuses on the importance of using the assessment data in making decisions about the curriculum. These include establishing instructional priorities, facilitating planning, and aligning resources to foster enhanced instruction and learning.

3. *Implement benchmarking standards to define, measure, and enhance student learning.*

The third priority focuses on utilizing benchmarking standards as a methodology for defining quality of student work and establishing targets for successfully meeting program outcomes. Adoption of this strategy enables faculty members to clearly define their own success levels and facilitate planning.

4. *Implement an assessment reporting system to simplify and enrich the assessment process.*

The fourth priority identifies the need to establish and maintain a system that allows for the documentation of assessment of student learning at various levels of the university including at the course section level, course level, department/program level, college level, and institution level. This system should allow the hierarchical linking of outcomes so that assessment at one level can support outcomes at a higher level. This should allow us to systematically document the relationship between assessment of and improvement in student learning as they relate to the outcomes at the various levels.

5. *Maintain a public reporting system of student learning outcomes to be accountable to stakeholders.*

In response to calls for universities to become more transparent about student learning outcomes, UNK will post assessment plans, reports and instruments at the departmental/program level. University-wide assessment results - such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) - and uses of this data will be publicly available. Every effort will be made to ensure that assessment data is available and easy to find for stakeholders such as the faculty, students, parents, and administration.

These priorities will guide implementation of initiatives during the next two years. The intent is to further promote the relevance and utility of assessment.

Action Initiatives

1. Develop a unified approach for systematically assessing student learning in all settings.
2. Support implementation of effective assessment practice at all levels (campus-wide to individual courses).
3. Promote continuous systematic assessment and utilization of data that assists with strategic planning processes.
4. Develop benchmarks linked to student outcomes which enhance program development and student learning.
5. Implement and maintain WEAVEonline, an assessment reporting application.
6. Continuously improve our assessment website to allow for easy access to assessment materials (e.g. reports, data, and resources) for all stakeholders.
7. Encourage and provide support to faculty members who engage in assessment focused on a particular area of interest/concern.

Communication Infrastructure

Assessment Website

Following the 2004 NCA visit and the establishment of the Office of Assessment, major revisions were made to the assessment website. At the time of the NCA visit, the main purpose of the website was to serve as a repository for annual assessment reports. In the fall of 2004, the website was changed to serve as a source of information about assessment at UNK, resources for the faculty related to assessment, best practices in assessment, department/program assessment plans and reports, university-wide assessment (NSSE, CAAP, etc.), and a way for stakeholders to get the latest information on activities related to assessment at UNK. The website has continued to change over the last three years as the requirement for greater transparency in assessment has increased. In the fall of 2007, the website went through a major revision in preparation for the NCA focused visit in the spring of 2008. The decision was made to use the assessment website as the repository for all information required for the focused visit. We based the revisions on websites we reviewed from other institutions. As a result, the current [UNK assessment website](#) provides detailed information about all areas of assessment at UNK that will be reviewed in the 2008 focused visit.

Assessment Newsletter

The other communication tool developed by the Office of Assessment following the 2004 NCA visit is the [assessment newsletter, *Outcomes*](#). The newsletter is electronic and is published three times a year. It is an excellent source of information about assessment initiatives and activities on the UNK campus, best practices in assessment, and resources for the faculty. A synopsis of the newsletter is also sent out to all faculty members as a two-page flyer through campus mail. This is to make sure that all faculty members are aware that a newsletter is being published by the Office of Assessment.

3. Future Initiatives to Maintain the Infrastructure to Support Assessment

Since the fall of 2006 when the new Director and Coordinator of Assessment assumed their roles in the Office of Assessment, the office has had a stable staffing structure and has been able to further develop and refine many of the initiatives in campus-wide assessment at UNK. The current staff will continue in their roles for the foreseeable future to maintain continuity and focus.

A major initiative that is underway at the current time, which will assure continued campus-wide assessment at UNK, is the implementation of an Assessment/Accreditation software application. The Office of Assessment has purchased and is in the process of implementing [WEAVEonline](#). This application provides an infrastructure for assessment reporting that will streamline the current annual report-based process. With WEAVEonline, departments can document all of their assessment efforts online and can update and improve their reporting process whenever they choose, rather than waiting for the yearly reporting periods. The Office of Assessment has input mission, objectives and instruments for all departments and programs. In the fall of 2008 all departments and programs will begin entering and submitting their assessment data, results, and recommendations for change in WEAVEonline. This allows departments to track assessment data from the course level to the university strategic planning level. As a result, university administrators will be able to identify how department goals and objectives support the overall university mission and goals. Implementation of this application takes UNK to the next level of student outcomes assessment tracking and reporting and ensures sustainability of the process.

II. Faculty Commitment to Assessment

2004 NCA Feedback

At the time of the 2004 NCA accreditation visit, the team recommended that one of the areas for review in the 2008 focused visit should be the level of commitment of the faculty to assessment at UNK. In the [2004 NCA Report](#), the accreditation team stated that, *“The team noted a lack of enthusiasm among the faculty for the assessment of student learning. ...there is a lack of faculty ownership for the assessment of general studies, and the themes of cultural diversity and intensive writing which are graduation requirements at the university”* (Assurance Section 15). *“Faculty ownership of assessment in academic programs has not developed across the campus to the level that constitutes a commitment to assessment. Faculty commitment to assessment in graduate programs and distance learning is just emerging”* (Assurance Section 18). *“While many components of assessment are being used at UNK, the visiting team found a notable lack of enthusiasm among the faculty for the role that assessment could play in improving student learning in courses and programs at the institution. In developing sound assessment programs it is important to encourage a spirit of experimentation and applied scholarship in developing or identifying valid assessment measures that yield information for enhancing student learning. Such a spirit would be consistent with UNK’s stated mission. Assessment must be seen and accepted as an integral part of faculty work, not just additional work, that plays a valuable role in increasing student learning”* (Advancement Section 3). *“Faculty teaching the courses in General Studies seem to have ownership of the courses, but they appear reluctant to develop assessments linked to the learning outcomes for the program. Faculty responsibility for recommending, implementing, perusing, and reporting the results of General Studies assessments is an appropriate level of involvement”* (Advancement Section 4).

In addressing the issues raised in the [2004 NCA Report](#) related to the need for faculty commitment to assessment, this section of the self-study will provide:

1. A description of the level of faculty commitment to assessment that existed at the time of the 2004 NCA visit.
2. A description of what has been done since 2004 to address the issues identified in the visit and to bring this component of assessment into compliance with NCA requirements.
3. Evidence of increased faculty commitment to assessment.
4. Future initiatives planned to continue current levels of faculty commitment and expand to greater commitment and involvement of the faculty in the assessment process at UNK.

1. 2004 Level of Faculty Commitment to Assessment

During the 1994 NCA accreditation visit, the team indicated that UNK needed to develop a consistent process of student outcomes assessment and be able to demonstrate this

process as part of the accreditation visit in 2004. During the period from 1994 to 2002, twenty academic departments consistently collected data and reported annually on their assessment process. However, after an initial flurry of activity in 1994-1995, the other departments on campus did not implement a consistent assessment process in their departments or programs. Assessment was not an integral part of the teaching/learning process at UNK and had mixed support from faculty members. As a result, in 2002, an ad hoc Faculty Senate Assessment Committee was formed with representatives from each college. This committee was given the responsibility for setting up an assessment process on campus to ensure that all academic departments and programs were collecting assessment data and submitting an annual report. Despite the efforts of the committee, without authority to “make assessment happen,” they were unable to get compliance from all departments. By the fall of 2003, only 74% of the departments and programs on campus had submitted their assessment report. As a result of the approach used to force compliance, an environment of hostility and resistance built up around the assessment efforts. This was reflected in the comments of faculty members to the NCA team in the spring of 2004.

2. Addressing Requirements for the 2008 NCA Focused Visit

In response to the identified issues related to faculty commitment to assessment, a Coordinator of Assessment was hired in April of 2004 to develop a “culture of assessment” at UNK. The Coordinator’s efforts focused on change management activities to increase faculty buy-in of student outcomes assessment at UNK. The activities focused on developing a collaborative environment around assessment, increasing communication about assessment requirements, providing essential training, and recognizing/rewarding outstanding assessment activities. Implementation of these activities began in the fall of 2004 and is a continuing process at UNK.

Collaborative Environment

When faculty members and students are directly involved in the assessment process and have the opportunity to work with Office of Assessment personnel in developing and refining assessment practices, they tend to have a more positive and supportive attitude. The activities carried out at UNK to encourage collaboration are now an integral part of the activities of the Office of Assessment and include:

- Providing [feedback reports](#) and consulting sessions with each department and academic program to discuss their annual report and assessment process.
- Working with the [Assessment Committee](#), made up of faculty representatives from each college, to obtain input on decisions related to assessment practices on campus.
- Working with the [Student Assessment Committee](#), with representatives from each college, who provide input to the assessment process and conduct one to two student surveys a year related to student outcomes issues ([General Studies Survey](#), [Academic Advising Survey](#), [Student Engagement Survey](#)).

- Working directly with departments and programs in implementing the current [assessment guidelines](#) that change the focus of assessment activities from data collection and reporting to using the data to bring about change and evaluating those changes.
- Moving the compliance responsibilities from the Office of Assessment to the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Student Life (SVCAASL), the college deans, and the department chairs to change the perception of the role of the Office of Assessment from enforcement to support.

Increased Communication

When the faculty, staff, and administrators are kept informed about assessment activities and processes, they are more receptive to meeting assessment requirements relevant to their area. The Office of Assessment ensures that everyone on campus is aware of assessment and the activities going on related to assessment. Communication tools and approaches were put in place beginning in the fall of 2004 and are an ongoing part of the assessment process. These communication tools include:

- The [assessment newsletter](#), *Outcomes*, is sent out electronically to everyone on campus three times a year.
- The [assessment website](#) contains all assessment information, requirements, annual reports, and resources for the UNK campus.
- Monthly meetings with the SVCAASL provide him with an update on assessment initiatives to support the university's strategic plan and goals.
- [Yearly meetings](#) with deans and department chairs provide opportunities to discuss assessment practices in each college and department.
- [Yearly meetings](#) with each department provide opportunities to discuss their assessment process.
- A meeting each semester with Faculty Senate to provide a status report raises awareness of current work in assessment.
- A meeting each year with Student Senate raises awareness of current work in assessment and provides an opportunity to recruit members for the Student Assessment Committee.

Training

Faculty members are more likely to be open to and participate in assessment if they understand the concepts and know how to do it effectively. Training provides them with the expertise and the confidence to carry out assessment projects and to meet requirements within their departments. It also generates interest and enthusiasm for what assessment can do for them and for their departments in providing data for decision making. The types of assessment-related training opportunities provided to faculty members at UNK include:

- [UNK Center for Teaching Excellence](#) (CTE) provides at least 2 sessions a semester on assessment that are available to all faculty members.

- [Professional development funds](#) are provided for faculty members to attend conferences on assessment or conferences in their field that provide sessions on assessment.
- [Training resources](#) are provided on the assessment website.
- Webinars and teleconferences on assessment are sponsored by CTE and by the Office of Assessment for anyone on campus who chooses to participate.
- Assessment sessions are provided as podcasts from the [CTE website](#).
- The Office of Assessment sponsors the [Platte Valley Assessment Conference](#), a regional conference, every other year to provide faculty members with opportunities to present their assessment research and projects and for faculty members to see what others are doing at UNK and at other universities in the area.
- Workshops are run at UNK during the summer for special assessment areas and faculty members are provided a stipend to attend (Writing in the Discipline—May of 2007, Incorporating Cultural Diversity in the Curriculum—May of 2008).

Recognition and Rewards

Recognizing and rewarding the faculty members who participate in assessment and do it well encourages them and others to make a greater effort in this area. The Office of Assessment provides several opportunities for recognition/rewards to faculty members including:

- An [Assessment Awards Luncheon](#) is held every year to recognize the departments and individuals who have done outstanding work in assessment during the previous academic year.
- [Faculty Development](#) funds are provided for faculty members who are presenting at assessment conferences.
- [Faculty Research](#) grants are available for faculty members doing research on assessment.
- Each year stipends are provided to faculty members who are working on specific assessment projects on campus—General Studies, Graduate Programs, Distance Education, Writing Intensive (WI), Cultural Diversity (CD).

3. Evidence of Increased Faculty Commitment to Assessment

Since the fall of 2004, the Office of Assessment has collected data to provide evidence of increased faculty commitment to assessment at UNK. The data that has been collected includes attendance at training sessions, funds spent on faculty development and research, faculty attendance and presentations at assessment related conferences, faculty publications on assessment, faculty responses on the Assessment Culture Survey, and willingness to support administration of the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) in their classrooms.

Training Session Attendance and Survey

Since the fall of 2004, the Office of Assessment, with support from the Center for Teaching Excellence, has sponsored at least two assessment training sessions every semester. Faculty members have shown their support for these sessions as evidenced through the [attendance data](#) collected from the sessions. Faculty members also completed an [Assessment Training Survey](#) in the fall of 2004, which indicated their support for and interest in training on various aspects of assessment.

Funding of Faculty Development and Research

Table II.1 outlines the amount of Office of Assessment funds that have been allocated to support faculty development to attend conferences and training sessions on assessment. The table also provides information on the funds allocated each year to support faculty research projects on assessment.

Table II.1 Faculty Stipends Awarded by the Office of Assessment 2004-2008

Category	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Conferences	\$6,957	\$9,291	\$6,500	\$6,000
Research	\$1,500	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$1,500
Workshops			\$9,000	\$7,500
Total	\$8,457	\$10,291	\$17,000	\$15,000

Conference Presentations and Publications

The Office of Assessment encourages faculty members to present at assessment conferences and to do scholarly research on assessment. Since 2004, increasing numbers of faculty members are getting involved in both these areas. The [list](#) of conference presentations, publications, and attendance at assessment conferences is extensive and clearly demonstrates increased interest and support for assessment activities at UNK.

Assessment Culture Survey

In the spring of 2007, the Office of Assessment developed and administered an [electronic survey](#) to determine the current assessment culture at the university. 123 faculty members completed the survey and the [results of the survey](#) indicate that:

- Over 80% of the respondents are involved in assessment activities in their departments.
- Approximately 80% of respondents indicated that their department discusses assessment results anywhere from once a semester to once a month.
- 85% indicated that assessment is an institutional priority at UNK.

- Over 50% of respondents rated themselves as interested, willing, and cooperative related to assessment; while over 30% indicated they were engaged and enthusiastic enough to take the lead in assessment in their departments.
- Less than 1% of respondents indicated that they were strongly and vocally opposed to assessment.
- 78% felt that their department's assessment process is more efficient than in the past.

Support for Administration of CAAP

In October of 2007, General Studies administered the Writing and Critical Thinking tests of the CAAP in over forty General Studies classes. Thirty-seven faculty members recognized the importance of the data collection, were involved in the administration process, and were willing to give up at least one class period during the semester to accomplish this important assessment requirement. In the past, it would have been very difficult to get this level of agreement and support. These faculty members were recognized for their contribution to assessment at a [luncheon in December of 2007](#).

4. Future Initiatives to Maintain Increase Faculty Commitment to Assessment

Our assessment program at UNK has made great strides since our NCA accreditation visit in 2004. Every academic department and program has an active assessment process in place and reports annually. As described earlier in our self study, we have worked hard to create a "culture of assessment" at UNK through faculty training, recognition of exemplary assessment, our biannual assessment conference, newsletter, faculty funding for professional development and research, etc. Our Assessment Climate Survey indicated that the vast majority of the faculty at UNK are involved in the assessment process. Most faculty members reported very positive attitudes towards the value of assessment. We have identified specific activities to keep the momentum going.

Most of our departments and programs have a stable system of assessment in place after spending several years refining their process. Currently, each department/program evaluates student learning as it relates to their objectives. In our next assessment cycle, we hope to encourage departments/programs to develop one or more focused assessment question to address. As an example of focused assessment, one department compared the outcomes (final test scores) of two sections of a single course -- one that used group-work and experiential learning opportunities to another that used a more traditional lecture format to determine whether more experiential learning should be used in their classes. In conducting more focused assessment of student outcomes, we hope that faculty members will see even more value in the assessment process as they collect and report relevant data that can be used to support specific decisions related to student learning.

Currently, the most common complaint from faculty members is that departments are required to submit several assessment reports each October, i.e. a General Studies report,

a major/minor report, a Writing Intensive (WI) report. To address this concern and to also take our assessment process to the next level, beginning with the next reporting cycle departmental and program assessment reporting will be done using WEAVEonline. We will use WEAVEonline to streamline the assessment process at UNK and eliminate the submittal of multiple assessment reports by each academic department and program.

Based on feedback from our last Platte Valley Assessment Conference, we will continue this regional biannual assessment conference but plan to change the format considerably. We will still bring in a nationally recognized expert in the field of assessment, but we plan to incorporate a wider range of faculty presentations/posters demonstrating best practices and/or innovative practices in assessment that will have a wider appeal.

III. Recognition of Exemplary Assessment

2004 NCA Feedback

At the time of the 2004 NCA accreditation visit, the team recommended that one of the areas for review in the 2008 focused visit should be the recognition of exemplary assessment practices. In the [2004 NCA Report](#), the accreditation team stated that, *“There appear to be no methods or mechanism for providing recognition for exemplary assessment practices”* (Assurance Section 19). *“An operating budget for the assessment office is appropriate to encourage and provide incentives for a developing and maturing assessment program at the University. Such funding can be used to (1) encourage experimentation by the faculty (perhaps via mini-grants), (2) travel to assessment conferences to learn new methodologies or present scholarly papers on assessment activities and results at UNK, and (3) support venues of recognition for faculty and departments that are exemplary in regard to their assessment activities and annual reporting”* (Advancement Section 4).

In addressing the issues raised in the [2004 NCA Report](#) related to the recognition of exemplary assessment practices, this section of the self-study will provide:

1. A description of what has been done since 2004 to address the issues identified in the visit and to bring this component of assessment into compliance with NCA requirements.
2. Future initiatives planned to recognize exemplary assessment practices at UNK.

1. Addressing Requirements for the 2008 NCA Focused Visit

At the time of the 2004 NCA visit, twenty departments on campus had consistently collected data and reported annually on their assessment process. However, there was no feedback provided to these departments and no recognition of their efforts. Following the 2004 NCA visit, in order to address the issue of lack of recognition for exemplary assessment practices at UNK, several initiatives were identified and implemented.

Awards Luncheons

In 2005, the Office of Assessment developed the idea of hosting an annual assessment luncheon to honor departments, programs, and individuals who have had a positive impact on the assessment process at UNK and who demonstrate excellence in assessment reporting. These luncheons are held on a yearly basis at the beginning of the spring semester after all departmental/program assessment reports have been submitted and reviewed. A faculty representative from each department/program is invited to the annual luncheon, usually the person who develops the department’s assessment report. In addition, the deans of each college and the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Student Life (SVCAASL) are invited to attend. Each year, the SVCAASL speaks about the importance and status of assessment at UNK. The Director and Coordinator of

the Office of Assessment and the Director of General Studies recognize and present certificates of achievement to assessment leaders on campus. The format has remained fairly consistent over the years based on the positive feedback we have received from faculty members who attend.

We held our [first Assessment Awards Luncheon](#) in February of 2005. Awards were presented to those departments who were leaders in assessment at UNK from the period of 1994 to 2001. During those years, twenty departments/programs had active assessment processes and reported regularly. In addition, awards were given for General Studies Assessment, Aligning Assessment and Accreditation, and Exemplary Contributions to Assessment. An Award of Appreciation was given to the assessment coordinator who had recently retired.

Our [second annual Assessment Awards Luncheon](#) was in March of 2006. Awards were presented for General Studies Assessment, Research on Assessment, Support of Assessment at UNK, Exemplary Contributions to Assessment, and a “Rapid Response Award” (for the college who had 100% submittal of assessment reports by the October 1st deadline).

Our [third annual Assessment Awards Luncheon](#) was held in February of 2007. We celebrated the first year that all departments and programs on campus submitted an assessment report. We also recognized departments/programs that had used assessment data for improving student learning. Several programs documented in their reports not only data collection but highlighted how they used the data for program improvement. In addition to awards for use of assessment data, we presented awards for Research on Assessment, Most Improved Assessment Reporting, Rapid Response Award, Exemplary Contributions to Assessment, and General Studies Assessment.

In December of 2007, the SVCAASL held a [luncheon](#) to thank faculty members who gave up one or more of their class periods so the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Progress (CAAP) could be administered in their classes. Courses were randomly selected to participate in the CAAP assessment. Faculty members had very little time to adjust their schedules, but nearly all were willing to participate in this critical data collection. To recognize their contribution to this important General Studies (GS)/Writing Intensive (WI) assessment initiative, each faculty member was presented with a certificate of appreciation at the luncheon.

Our [fourth annual Assessment Awards Luncheon](#) was held February 21, 2008. Again we recognized those departments and individuals who have contributed to the culture of assessment at UNK and have excelled in the assessment procedures in their departments. The luncheon provided the opportunity to recognize the first Director of Assessment, Glen Powell, for his work beginning in 2004 to establish assessment at UNK. We also recognized a faculty member who in 2006-2007 published eight assessment articles in professional journals and presented on assessment at nine academic conferences.

Faculty Stipends

The Office of Assessment provides faculty stipends for assessment work, for assessment research and for training/development. Table III.1 outlines the funding provided to faculty members over the last four years.

Table III.1 Faculty Stipends Awarded by the Office of Assessment 2004-2008

Category	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Reporting	\$12,390	\$2,010	\$9,080	\$6,500
Conferences	\$6,957	\$9,291	\$6,500	\$6,000
Research	\$1,500	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$1,500
Workshops			\$9,000	\$7,500
Total	\$20,847	12,301	\$26,080	\$21,500

During the [2004-2005](#) academic year, faculty members (one per department) who developed General Studies assessment plans were awarded \$500 each. The following year, we awarded a \$500 stipend to faculty members of graduate programs and distance education programs that collected and reported assessment data.

During May of 2007, faculty members were invited to participate in a four-day workshop held at UNK that was designed to help faculty members develop, enhance, and assess WI courses. The Office of Assessment invited a well-respected and innovative instructor from the University of Missouri writing center to run the workshop. Each faculty member who participated was given a \$500 stipend for participation in the workshop.

Faculty members who present or attend conferences related to assessment can apply for [travel funding](#) for up to \$500 from the Office of Assessment. In addition, faculty members who engage in [scholarly research](#) on assessment can receive up to \$500 to support their work. The following table gives total expenditures each year since 2004 for faculty stipends.

2. Future Initiatives to Recognize Exemplary Assessment

During the summer of 2008, we plan to hold a workshop to help faculty members design/enhance and assess a Cultural Diversity (CD) course, similar to the Writing Intensive (WI) workshop offered in 2007. We will again provide a \$500 stipend to faculty members who participate in the workshop.

During the 2008-2009 academic year, we will be giving a stipend to faculty members who engage in assessment data collection and reporting for the WI program.

We plan to introduce a grant proposal process in 2008-2009 for departments who are interested in implementing a focused assessment. We hope to offer \$1000 grants to

departments and programs that plan, collect, and use data from a focused assessment for program improvement. We will ask departments to present their assessment work on campus at an assessment seminar/workshop.

Stipends for conferences, presentations, and research are on-going. We have publicized these funding opportunities in our newsletter and at new faculty orientation and have had more applications each year.

We will continue our annual awards luncheon, as this is an effective way to recognize the contributions of the faculty to assessment at UNK. It also allows us to recognize exemplary assessment being conducted on campus.

IV. Assessment Process Sustainability

2004 NCA Feedback

At the time of the 2004 NCA accreditation visit, the team recommended that one of the areas for review in the 2008 focused visit would be the annual campus-wide assessment process at UNK. In the [2004 NCA Report](#), the accreditation team stated that, *“Since 1994 the campus has made only limited progress in the assessment of student learning outcomes. The Self-Study Report accurately notes that from 1994 to 2000, the ‘implementation and annual reporting of assessment results had become uneven.’ The scheduling of and preparation for the NCA team visit in April 2004 had prompted renewed attention to the subject of assessment”* (Assurance Section 14). *“While many pieces of assessment already exist at the university, coherence and sustainability have yet to be developed (Assurance Section 15). “ At the time of the focused visit...the campus should be able to demonstrate that student learning outcomes are being assessed in its undergraduate and graduate programs, including general studies, and that assessment results are being used to improve programs and increase student learning”* (Assurance Section 19). *“Internal accountability and regular reporting by the faculty is an important part of the infrastructure. For the long term it is important to document those instances where assessment results have provided feedback and insights that lead to changes in instruction, content of courses, or structure of programs. Assessment activities (and results) need to be clearly and tightly linked to program review, planning, and budgeting at the highest levels of the university. As assessment results begin to impact decision making, this will be strong evidence that a cultural shift is occurring within the university. ...Therefore, it is important for the campus to get underway immediately in order to accomplish what needs to be done in order to show a successful track record in assessment by the time of the focused visit recommended for 2008”* (Advancement Section 4).

In addressing the issues raised in the [2004 NCA Report](#) related to the need for a consistent, campus-wide assessment process at UNK, this section of the self-study will provide:

1. A description of the status of campus-wide assessment that existed at the time of the 2004 NCA visit.
2. A description of what has been done since 2004 to address the issues identified in the visit and to bring this component of assessment into compliance with NCA requirements.
3. Future initiatives planned to support and develop a consistent, campus-wide assessment process at UNK.

1. 2004 Status of Assessment of Student Outcomes at UNK

From 1994-2001 the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (SVCAA) had oversight and responsibility for ensuring that assessment was taking place on the UNK campus. A Coordinator of Assessment was appointed to collect assessment reports

submitted by departments and programs and to post those on a website. The Coordinator was not charged with providing feedback on assessment reporting, nor did she have the authority to enforce the requirement for assessment that the 1994 NCA accreditation team had indicated would have to be in place by the 2004 visit. The SVCAA during the period of 1994-2002 chose not to enforce the requirement for campus-wide student learning outcomes assessment. However, in anticipation of the NCA visit in 2004, he did develop the [first strategic plan for assessment](#) in 2001. The strategic plan was used to guide efforts in developing the assessment processes at UNK. It was comprehensive and provided a good model for guiding the development of assessment to meet the 2004 North Central Association's accreditation criteria. In preparation for the 2004 NCA visit, [assessment guidelines](#) were also developed by the Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate. These guidelines were part of the [Faculty Handbook](#). The strategic plan for assessment has been updated twice since then—first in [2005](#) and again in December of [2007](#). These revisions were made to reflect changes in the NCA criteria and also to reflect changes in the strategic plan for UNK and in the culture at the university.

During the period from 1994 to 2002, twenty academic departments consistently collected data and reported annually on their assessment processes (these departments were recognized for their efforts at the [first Assessment Awards Luncheon in 2005](#)). However, after an initial flurry of activity in 1994-1995, the other departments on campus had not implemented a consistent assessment process in their departments or programs. As a result, in 2002, an ad hoc Faculty Senate Assessment Committee was formed with representatives from each college. This committee was given the responsibility for setting up an assessment process on campus that would ensure that all academic departments and programs were collecting assessment data and submitting an annual report. This was done in preparation for the 2004 NCA visit. Despite the efforts of the committee, without authority to “make assessment happen,” they were unable to get compliance from all departments. By the fall of 2003, approximately 74% of the academic departments and programs were collecting and reporting assessment data. This was the state of assessment reporting when the NCA team came in the spring of 2004. As a result of their visit and feedback provided, it was recognized that a new approach was needed if a consistent, campus-wide assessment process was to be established at UNK.

2. Addressing Requirements for the 2008 NCA Focused Visit

Annual Department/Program Assessment Reporting

Each department and program on campus is required to submit an [annual assessment report](#) in October. From 2004 to the present, Office of Assessment staff members have actively [worked with faculty](#) members to provide support in assessment planning and reporting. Since the 2004 NCA visit, the [percentage of departments reporting](#) has increased each year. In 2006 and 2007, every department and program at UNK submitted an assessment report.

Most departments have a sustainable and useful assessment process in place, although we encourage departments to continually look for ways to improve their process. [Assessment reporting guidelines](#) are sent to faculty members to help guide the preparation of assessment reports. When reports are received in October, the Coordinator of Assessment reads and provides feedback. The [reports](#) are then posted on the assessment website. If departments make changes to their assessment plans for the following academic year, we ask that they submit a new plan by May.

While the current assessment process has been successful, we felt that the process could be much more efficient and consistent with the implementation of an assessment management product. After a comprehensive review of products available, we purchased [WEAVEonline](#) in the fall of 2007. We are in the process of setting up the system and inputting department/program assessment data. Beginning in the fall of 2008, all departments can document their assessment efforts online and can update and improve their assessment process whenever they choose, rather than waiting for the yearly reporting periods. Departments can track assessment data from the course level to the university strategic planning level. University administrators can identify how department goals and objectives support the overall university mission and goals. Implementation of this application takes UNK to the next level of student outcomes assessment tracking and reporting.

Campus Level Assessment

In addition to department level assessment, UNK has several university-wide assessment initiatives. During 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2007, the [National Survey of Student Engagement \(NSSE\)](#) was administered to first-year and senior students at UNK. While data was collected in 2002-2004, little use was made of the data. A current priority is to [disseminate and use the NSSE data](#) for decision making at UNK.

In the fall of 2007, UNK participated in the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency ([CAAP](#)) Writing and Critical Thinking tests. Courses were randomly selected and a total of 400 seniors and 400 first-year students took portions of the CAAP. The data collected was used to inform decision making in the General Studies program and the Writing Intensive (WI) program.

The Office of Assessment has conducted [several surveys](#) designed to provide university-wide data for decision making. These include a [Cultural Diversity Survey](#) and an [Assessment Climate Survey](#). The Student Assessment Committee has conducted [additional surveys](#) that ask students to provide input on important issues on campus, such as the General Studies program, academic advising, and student involvement. Campus-wide [Writing Intensive \(WI\)](#) and [Cultural Diversity \(CD\)](#) surveys have also been implemented by the WI/CD Committee to help inform program changes

UNK is committed to making all of our assessment results available publicly to all stakeholders. In keeping with our goal of transparency of assessment results, we participated in the [USA-Today](#) initiative that allowed the comparison of NSSE results

from universities nation-wide. Similarly, we are participating in the [Voluntary System of Accountability](#) (VSA), which communicates information (including assessment data) about undergraduate programs using a common web reporting template.

3. Future Initiatives to Ensure a Sustainable Assessment Process

We are in the process of transferring our departmental/program assessment data into [WEAVEonline](#). Not only is WEAVEonline making the reporting process at the department/program level easier and more consistent, but also allows us to document student learning across levels of the university including the section level, course level, department/program level, college level, and institution level. This system allows the hierarchical linking of outcomes so that assessment at one level can support outcomes at a higher level. We are able to systematically document the relationship between assessment of and improvement in student learning as it relates to the outcomes at the various levels. The most common complaint is that departments are required to submit several assessment reports each October, i.e. a General Studies report, a major/minor report, a Writing Intensive (WI) report. With departments submitting their assessment data online, the process will be streamlined and multiple, paper-based reporting will be eliminated for each academic department and program. The move to online reporting and management of university-wide assessment ensures greater sustainability over time.

We will continue to participate in the [Voluntary System of Accountability](#) (VSA) and the [USA-Today](#) initiative. We will also continue to make every effort to ensure that assessment data is available and easy to find on our assessment website for stakeholders such as the faculty, students, parents, and administrators.

Most of our departments and programs have a stable system of assessment in place after spending several years refining their processes. Currently, each department/program evaluates student learning as it relates to their objectives. For the fall of 2008, the Office of Assessment will be offering incentives for departments and programs to develop focused assessment questions as part of their overall assessment process. Departments and programs can complete and submit the [Focused Assessment Proposal](#) and be awarded \$1000 to support their work in collecting and analyzing appropriate data to answer their focused assessment question. As an example of focused assessment, one department has compared the outcomes (final test scores) of two sections of a single course -- one that used group-work and experiential learning opportunities to another that used a more traditional lecture format to determine whether to provide more experiential learning. Several departments have had very good experiences with this type of focused assessment. We hope that other departments/programs will see even more value in the assessment process when they collect and report relevant data that can be used to support specific decisions related to student learning.

V. Cultural Diversity (CD) Program Assessment

2004 NCA Feedback

At the time of the 2004 NCA accreditation visit, the team recommended that one of the areas for review in the 2008 focused visit would be the assessment of the Cultural Diversity (CD) program. In the [2004 NCA Report](#), the accreditation team stated that, *“The curricular requirements for cultural diversity should be systematically reviewed and evaluated and strengthened. A student can meet the diversity requirement by transferring courses from another university. There does not seem to be any assurance that the ‘inherently CD courses’ are appropriate, e.g., American history. The criteria established for inclusion do not appear to address a focus on oppression experienced by persons of color in the U.S. There needs to be a campus-wide commitment to improving campus climate with a strong focus on current and new faculty” (Advancement Section 5). “Also, there is a lack of faculty ownership for the assessment of general studies, and the themes of cultural diversity and intensive writing which are graduation requirements at the university” (Assurance Section 15). “Assessment for the cultural diversity and writing intensive themes of the undergraduate experience have not been established at this point (Assurance Section 19).”*

In addressing the issues raised in the [2004 NCA Report](#) related to assessment of the CD program, this section of the self-study will provide:

1. A historical perspective of the formation of the CD program and evolving oversight of the program.
2. A description of what has been done since 2004 to address the issues identified in the visit and to bring this component of assessment into compliance with NCA requirements.
3. Future assessment initiatives planned for the CD program.

1. History of the Cultural Diversity Program

Cultural Diversity (CD) as a thematic program required for graduation was mandated in 1994. Students were required to take 6 hours of CD designated courses. This addition to the curriculum was initiated by faculty members and was based on their observations of students' need for coursework and experiences in cultural diversity as part of their general education learning. The General Studies program was undergoing major revision in 1994, so the CD requirement became part of the changes implemented in general education at UNK.

Governance of the courses was assigned to the UNK General Studies Council and the Director of General Studies in 1994. It was their task to develop criteria for courses designated as CD, as well as manage the implementation of the courses. The criteria and process for obtaining approval for a CD designated course is located on the [CD website](#).

It should be noted that the CD courses were not inherent components of the General Studies program. Management of the CD offerings was given to the General Studies Council as a task in addition to the governance of the General Studies program. The Council also developed a policy related to transfer students and the acceptance of CD credits from other institutions. The policy allows other institutions, typically community colleges, to submit their CD guidelines to UNK for approval. Once the guidelines are approved, any class that is noted on the transcript as CD from that institution can be accepted to meet the UNK requirements. To date, Mid-Plains and Central Community Colleges have submitted their guidelines and have received approval. Students who transfer to UNK from these institutions and who have taken a class designated on the transcript as CD will have those credits recognized automatically to fulfill all or part of their CD requirement. Students transferring from other institutions will not have courses automatically accepted for CD credit. They must write an appeal to the registrar for any course they wish to be accepted, and the registrar will determine the acceptability of the course in question on a case-by-case basis.

After the NCA visit in March of 2004, members of the General Studies Council recognized that they had a tremendous task in addressing General Studies program Assessment issues raised by the visit. It was decided that it no longer made sense to have the General Studies Council manage an initiative (CD) that was not part of the General Studies program. A proposal was submitted by the Director of General Studies to the Faculty Senate in November of 2004 to transfer governance of CD courses from the General Studies Council to a newly created committee. The proposal asked the Faculty Senate to create an ad hoc WI/CD Committee for the broad purposes of managing the program and developing the assessment process. The proposal was adopted with the provision that the committee would complete its work by January of 2007 and cease operations in May of 2007. At that time (May of 2007), the WI/CD Committee officially turned over responsibility for managing the assessment process to the Office of Assessment. However, the committee decided to continue their oversight of the approval process for CD designated courses to ensure compliance with the requirements. The committee also maintains their responsibility for reviewing the CD assessment data and determining changes to the program based on the results. A [detailed history of the CD program](#) is available on the CD website.

2. Addressing Requirements for the 2008 NCA Focused Visit

At the time of the 2004 NCA visit, no assessment of the (Cultural Diversity) CD courses or program had been conducted since its inception in 1994. To address this critical issue, several initiatives were identified and implemented following the 2004 accreditation visit. Table V.1 outlines the process developed and implemented to ensure that program and department level student outcomes data are collected and reported for the CD program. The matrix provides a description of the initiative, the level at which the initiative occurs within the organization, the process followed, the entity or individuals responsible for the initiative, and the timeframe in which the initiative was accomplished.

Table V.1 Matrix of Assessment Initiatives for the CD Program

Initiative	Level	Process	Responsibility	Timeframe
Establish Governance of the CD Program	Program	Governance is moved from General Studies Council to a Faculty Senate WI/CD Committee	General Studies Council and Faculty Senate	Begin process in 9/04 Complete process by 1/05
Establish CD Assessment Requirements	Program	Establish a process for beginning to collect and report program and department level data	WI/CD Committee	Spring 2005
Collect Student and Faculty Data on CD Program	Program	Develop and administer a survey for faculty and students on their perceptions of the CD program	WI/CD Committee	1/05 to 5/05
Analyze Data and Make Program Recommendations	Program	Analyze data from the student and faculty survey administered in spring 2005 and from NSSE administered in 2002-2004 Develop recommendations for assessment of CD program	WI/CD Committee	August retreat 2005 Fall 2005- Spring 2006
Move Assessment Oversight to Office of Assessment	Program	Oversight of assessment of CD moved to Office of Assessment with WI/CD Committee retaining responsibility for program changes based on data	Office of Assessment	5/07
Update CD Mission Statement and Learning Objectives	Program	Review existing CD mission and goals and update these to reflect current focus of the CD program	Office of Assessment	Fall 2007
Administer a CD Student Survey	Program	CD student attitude survey developed and administered	Office of Assessment	Fall 2007
Analyze the 2007 NSSE Data	Program	Analyze 2007 NSSE results for CD relevant items	Office of Assessment	Fall 2007
Submit CD Program Assessment Report	Program	Office of Assessment collects and reports on program level assessment data	Office of Assessment	Begin 10/07 and continue yearly

Establish Governance of the CD Program

In the fall of 2004, the Director of General Studies submitted a proposal to the Faculty Senate to transfer governance of CD courses from the General Studies Council to another group. The proposal asked the Faculty Senate to create an ad hoc WI/CD Committee for the broad purposes of managing the program and developing the assessment process. The proposal was adopted, and the WI/CD Committee began meeting in January of 2005. Faculty Senate charged the committee with the following responsibilities related to CD governance and assessment:

1. Assume the governance of WI/CD courses with respect to the approval of WI and CD courses and departmental issues concerning scheduling of WI and CD courses.
2. Promote multiculturalism and international experience as core values for all UNK students and faculty members and encourage programmatic activities supporting these values in all programs at UNK.
3. With the assistance of the Director of Assessment, review assessment data, including student outcomes data, concerning CD courses. (Some of the assessment data will be collected by other units, such as departments and General Studies.)
4. Based in part on the assessment data, make specific written recommendations to the Faculty Senate concerning the structure of the CD requirements and the governance of those courses by January of 2007.

Establish CD Assessment Requirements

In the spring of 2005, one of the first priorities of the WI/CD Committee was to address the issue of assessment of the CD program and courses. The committee began by identifying assessment approaches based on best practices from other institutions. As a result of their research, the committee developed the general assessment framework outlined in the first four initiatives in Table 5.1. This framework was submitted to Faculty Senate for approval.

Collect Student and Faculty Data on the CD Program

During the spring of 2005, the WI/CD Committee developed a survey of [faculty](#) and [student](#) perceptions of the existing CD program. It was provided online to all UNK faculty members and students with the hope that data would be collected from a large number of respondents. 113 faculty members and 763 students responded to the survey.

Analyze Data and Make Program Recommendations

In the summer of 2005, a subcommittee of the WI/CD Committee members analyzed the CD survey data and prepared a report of the results for review by the overall committee.

Results from the CD surveys indicated that both [faculty](#) members and [students](#) felt there was a need for a CD program at UNK and that overall the CD program contributed to the educational needs of UNK students. Both groups also indicated that no major changes were needed in the number of hours required or in the basic structure of the program. However, some students indicated that courses they had taken were not meeting their needs or supporting the goals of the program.

The team also collected results from the [National Survey of Student Engagement](#) (NSSE) relevant to cultural diversity and prepared a summary for the committee's review.

[Results from the 2002-2004 NSSE items relevant to the CD program](#) indicated that, generally, means on the selected items were lower (indicated by a negative effect size) at UNK than at our peer institutions. There were consistent negative differences between UNK and our peer institutions on items that asked students if they had interactions or conversations with people different from themselves. The relatively low scores for UNK students as compared to students at peer institutions may reflect the fact that UNK has a less diverse campus than many of our peer institutions. Some of the largest effect sizes were found on items that asked whether students planned to do foreign language coursework or study abroad. The foreign language coursework item may be somewhat difficult to compare across institutions as requirements vary. However, it is clear that UNK students are less likely to take advantage of study abroad programs. The item rating students' perceptions that the institution has contributed to their understanding of different racial and ethnic groups showed greater similarity between UNK and its peer institutions.

The WI/CD Committee planned a retreat for August of 2005 to review the existing data and make decisions about the CD program based on the available information. The committee reached several decisions related to the CD program and assessment.

1. Make no major changes to the CD course requirements or the structure of the program based on the survey data, which indicates a general satisfaction of the faculty and students with the current program.
2. Based on the survey data, increase efforts to enhance student understanding of how CD designated courses contribute to personal development by recognizing the value of diversity.
3. Continue oversight of CD courses to ensure that courses designated CD meet the guidelines and criteria for the program, based on student survey input that some courses do not meet their needs or the goals of the program.
4. Continue to encourage students to learn about and interact with persons who differ from themselves in order to improve the NSSE comparisons of UNK with peer institutions.
5. Use the NSSE to collect CD program assessment data related to students' engagement in CD related courses and settings.

In the fall of 2005, the full WI/CD Committee reviewed recommendations from the August retreat and further developed CD program recommendations for inclusion in the program proposal sent to the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Student Life (SVCAASL), deans, Faculty Senate, and College Academic Policy Committee

In the spring of 2006, the Faculty Senate approved the CD program proposal in February. The WI/CD Committee determined that their initial focus would be on WI assessment and began developing a process for collecting departmental assessment data on WI course offerings. The committee decided that NSSE data would be used for assessment of the CD program until additional methods/instruments were developed and that further CD assessment be delayed until the WI assessment process was established.

Move Assessment Oversight to Office of Assessment

In May of 2007, the WI/CD Committee transferred responsibility for CD assessment to the Office of Assessment. This change was based on the realization of the committee that they could not meet all the requirements for assessment of CD for the April 2008 NCA visit. The committee will continue to review assessment data collected by the Office of Assessment and recommend changes to the program based on that data. The Office of Assessment will provide the framework and collect required data for assessing the CD program and courses. The immediate focus of the Office of Assessment was to:

1. Update the CD mission statement and learning objectives.
2. Collect assessment data on selected CD courses designated as both General Studies and CD, since CD related objectives are already being assessed as part of the GS assessment process.
3. Develop and administer a survey of the current UNK cultural diversity climate as an indirect measure of CD.
4. Develop and administer a set of items as a direct measure of CD knowledge.
5. Analyze the 2007 NSSE results and compare to 2002-2004.
6. Develop an Assessment Report for the CD program.

Update the CD Mission Statement and Learning Objectives

In the fall of 2007, the Office of Assessment completed a review of CD program documentation and developed [a revised mission statement and learning objectives](#) to reflect the current focus of the CD program. The revised mission statement and objectives were approved by the WI/CD Committee.

Administer a CD Student Survey

In the fall of 2007, the Office of Assessment developed and administered an [online survey of students' attitudes toward issues of diversity](#) in order to gauge the impact of CD programs (and the UNK experience) on student knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to cultural diversity. The survey was sent electronically to all undergraduate students at UNK. It was hoped that upper division students would 1) possess more knowledge about diversity; 2) have more positive attitudes about individuals who differ from themselves, rejecting any hierarchical conceptions of diversity (i.e. that one group is superior to another); and 3) seek information about issues of diversity and interaction with persons of different backgrounds than would freshman.

Nearly 850 students responded to the survey. Three scales were created from the items on the survey: an interaction scale, a perceived knowledge scale, and an attitude scale. In addition, a total score was calculated across six items designed to be a direct measure of CD knowledge. These items were part of a GS pilot assessment, so the score is called the General Studies Pilot Score.

[Analysis of the data](#) supported the hypothesis that students who have completed the CD requirement 1) have more perceived knowledge, 2) interact with others who differ from themselves more frequently, and 3) have more positive attitudes related to CD issues. Those who completed the CD requirement did not score significantly higher on the GS pilot items in the regression analysis; however, grade level was a significant predictor of success on these items with seniors scoring significantly higher than freshmen.

Analyze the 2007 NSSE Data

[The analysis of the 2007 NSSE items](#) relevant to CD showed marked improvement over the results from 2002-2004 in several areas. In 2002-2004, some of the largest effect sizes were found on items that asked whether students planned to do foreign language coursework or study abroad. However, these differences from our peer institutions were smaller (or not statistically significant) by 2007. The relatively high proportion of seniors in 2007 (as compared to previous years) who reported completing foreign language coursework is encouraging.

Effect sizes for seniors tended to be larger in magnitude (more negative) than for first-year students in 2002-2004. This was not the case in the 2007 NSSE results, in which seniors at UNK more frequently “included diverse perspectives in class discussions or writing assignments.” While the effect size was small, perhaps this is at least in part a result of the requirement that students take at least two CD courses. In 2007, the mean scores for UNK seniors increased from previous years on every item, again an encouraging sign.

2007 results indicate students at UNK do not differ much from our peer institutions in terms of how they feel the institution has contributed to their experiences regarding diversity.

Submit CD Program Assessment Report

The Office of Assessment began collecting CD program assessment data in the fall of 2007 and developed an [assessment report for the CD program](#). The report was reviewed by the WI/CD Committee at their December 2007 meeting. The committee approved the report and discussed recommendations for changes to the program and to the assessment process, based on the results of the data collections.

3. Future Initiatives to Assess the Cultural Diversity Program

Both the Office of Assessment and the WI/CD Committee feel it would be advantageous to have a standardized Cultural Diversity (CD) survey, rather than the current, locally developed survey. This would give UNK the opportunity to compare data collected from our students to student data from other institutions and provide an instrument that might have greater reliability and validity.

This year the CD survey was administered online across the UNK campus. Those students choosing to respond provided data for the assessment process. In the future, a better representation of the entire UNK student body could be provided by implementing the administration of a survey in the required CD courses. To obtain freshman with no experience in CD courses, the survey could be given in freshman General Studies courses currently designated as CD. In the future, the survey might be administered as part of the proposed General Studies Portal course, which all freshman would be required to take during their first year at UNK, if the new GS program is adopted.

It would also be helpful to expand the departmental reporting of student outcomes from the CD courses, so more departments are assessing and reporting on their CD courses. This would provide greater assurance that the faculty members teaching the courses are continuing to follow the criteria and requirements for a CD designated course. It would also be possible to identify courses in which students are not meeting the CD learning outcomes and require the department(s) to revise or enhance the course offering to improve learning outcomes. The Office of Assessment and the WI/CD Committee will consider a process of having 1/3 of the departments that deliver CD courses assess student outcomes in those courses every third year. This would not place an undue burden on departments, but would allow both the committee and the departments to oversee the quality of the CD courses and determine whether the courses are effectively teaching CD objectives.

In the fall of 2008, the Office of Assessment will post results from General Studies (GS) departmental reports that included courses designated as both GS and CD. Those selected GS Reports from 2006-2008 reviewed that included data on the CD learning objectives would provide a basis for the department level CD assessment.

The WI/CD committee will continue to review all new course syllabi and CVs of faculty members teaching courses to ensure new offerings meet the WI criteria. The committee will also be conducting a review of existing WI courses to ensure continued compliance with WI criteria. This review process will be in place by May of 2008.

VI. Distance Education (eCampus) Program Assessment

2004 NCA Feedback

At the time of the 2004 NCA accreditation visit, the team recommended that one of the areas for review in the 2008 focused visit would be the assessment of the online programs at UNK (which are now called eCampus). In the [2004 NCA Report](#), the accreditation team stated that, *“when viewed as a whole the university’s online offerings constitute a major and recent move into challenging educational territory—with challenges in funding and staffing and in providing an appropriate level of student services. Therefore, the university should proceed cautiously and take time to evaluate its progress”* (Assurance Section 18). The team recommended a focused visit to *“evaluate progress in assessment of student learning outcomes, including assessment in distance-learning programs”* (Assurance Section 18). The team felt that *“Faculty commitment to assessment in graduate programs and distance learning is just emerging”* (Assurance Section 18).

In addressing the issues raised in the [2004 NCA Report](#) related to assessment of the online programs, this section of the self-study will provide:

1. A description of the status of assessment of online programs that existed at the time of the 2004 NCA visit.
2. A description of what has been done since 2004 to address the issues identified in the visit and to bring this component of assessment into compliance with NCA requirements.
3. Future assessment initiatives planned for eCampus.

1. 2004 Status of Online Program Assessment

UNK’s off-campus programs have been meeting the educational and service needs of place bound, nontraditional, working adults throughout Nebraska for more than three decades. In the early years, those services included face-to-face instruction at various locations throughout the state of Nebraska with major learning centers in Grand Island, North Platte, Columbus, McCook, and Broken Bow. As distance learning technology evolved in the early 1990s, more students were taking advantage of the synchronous video technology. In the spring of 2000, UNK entered the online arena by offering four courses and enrolling 34 students. In March of 2004, when the Evaluation Team from North Central Higher Learning Commission conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the institution’s request for approval to offer online degree programs the team identified four challenges for UNK, including assessing the educational effectiveness of online degree programs. At the time of the visit no assessment data were available for distance online programs at UNK, and no plans were in place to begin the process of collecting assessment data. By the fall of 2007, eCampus was providing seven online degree programs and 80 online courses with an enrollment of nearly 1500. It is apparent that the future for distance education at UNK is in the eCampus online programs.

2. Addressing Requirements for the 2008 NCA Focused Visit

In the fall of 2005 the Coordinator of Assessment and the Director of eCampus developed a process for assessing the educational effectiveness of online degree programs at UNK. Table VI.1 outlines the process they developed and implemented.

Table VI.1 Process for Assessing Student Outcomes in Online Programs

Initiative	Level	Process	Responsibility	Timeline
Assess students in online degree programs	Course/ Program	Online programs collect student performance data	Online degree programs	Began collecting data fall 2006
Collect student evaluations of online programs	Program	Online programs collect survey data from students completing the program.	Online degree programs	Began collecting data fall 2006
Establish course development requirements	Course	Course Development Form completed by faculty members for each online course developed and funded	eCampus	Established in fall 2005
Provide Course Development Checklist	Course	Checklist of elements that need to be included in the development of any online course	eCampus	Implemented fall 2005
Collect online course retention data	Course/ Program	Collect data on retention rates for all courses with summary for entire online program	eCampus	Began in fall 2005
Compare online to traditional courses	Course/ Program	Collect data comparing online to traditional courses	Online degree programs	Began in fall 2006
Collect Student Survey data	eCampus	Collect data on all online student's reactions to online delivery of courses	eCampus	Began collecting data in fall 2005
Collect Faculty Survey data	eCampus	Collect data from all online faculty members about their reactions to teaching online courses	eCampus	Began collecting data in spring 2006
Submit Online Program Assessment Plans	Programs	Develop a plan for collecting and reporting all required data for the online degree program	Online degree programs	Plans submitted Spring 2006
Submit Online Program Assessment Reports	Programs	Develop a report of the data collection results, recommendations based on results, actions taken, and assessment of the assessment process.	Online degree programs	Reports submitted fall 2007
Submit eCampus Assessment Plan	eCampus	Develop a plan for collecting and reporting all required data for the eCampus program	eCampus	10/1/05
Submit Assmt. Report	eCampus	Report results of all eCampus assessment activities	eCampus	Submitted fall 2007

Assess Students in Online Degree Programs

The Coordinator of Assessment and the Director of eCampus met with all departments offering online degree programs in October of 2005 to discuss assessment requirements. Collection and reporting of student outcomes data were needed to assess student performance in the online programs. All departments offering online degrees developed assessment plans, collected student outcomes data, and submitted [Assessment reports](#) in 2006 and 2007.

Collect Students Evaluations of Online Programs

The Coordinator of Assessment and the Director of eCampus determined that student feedback on the online programs should also be an integral part of the assessment process. As a result, all departments offering online degrees included this information in their Assessment reports in 2006 and 2007.

Establish Course Development Requirements

All faculty members who teach online have the opportunity to apply for the “Approval for Remuneration for the Initial Preparation of a Distance Education Course” stipend. [The application form](#) requires the faculty member to include a copy of the course objectives, a syllabus draft, and a description of their proposed course. The stipend application form is announced three times a year via email when colleges are preparing for the upcoming semester. The maximum amount granted for a 3-credit hour course is \$1,500. Since 2004, 115 faculty members have been granted stipends for online course development totaling \$205,125.

Provide Course Development Checklist

The [Online Course Development Checklist](#) was developed following the Higher Learning Commission’s “Best Practices of Electronically Delivered Programs” guidelines. After reviewing these practices, as well as others, a unique set of guidelines was developed to accommodate faculty members at different levels of instruction. The checklist is broken into three parts which cover initial development and two distinct revisions. They are: 1) Form A: Online Course Development Checklist for the Initial Preparation of an Online Course, 2) Form B: Online Course Development Checklist for the First Revision of an Online Course, and 3) Form C: Online Course Development Checklist for the Second Revision of an Online Course. According to ARTICLE XV, Section 2(e) of the UNK Collective Bargaining Agreement, faculty members are to adhere to these best practice guidelines on the checklist as they are developing their courses.

The checklist is made available to the faculty by several methods. When faculty members are granted distance education stipends, they receive an acceptance letter with the Online Course Development Checklist attached. The checklist is also made available

on the eCampus website under the Faculty Resources section and is also sent to faculty members by email and distributed at various events hosted by eCampus.

Collect Online Course Retention Data

Retention data is collected every fall semester from the Office of the Registrar for the previous academic year for all online courses. For the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 academic years, the retention rates in online courses averaged 92%, which is well above the national average.

Compare Online to Traditional Courses

Specific questions on the Student Survey (see below) ask students to compare online courses to traditional face-to-face courses. For the past two years, over 70% of the students indicated they learned more through online courses than traditional courses, 72% said they preferred online courses to traditional courses, and 64% felt more involved in online courses than traditional courses. In addition to the above data, the Psychology Department conducted research in 2006 comparing student knowledge retention between the traditional Human Development course and the online Human Development course. The data indicated that there were no significant differences between the two types of delivery when it comes to student knowledge retention. This type of comparison could be done in other programs with equivalent online and face-to-face courses.

Collect Student Survey Data

[Student surveys](#) are administered to students enrolled in online courses in the fall and spring semesters, as well as the summer sessions. This survey evaluates the students' level of satisfaction with online learning, as well as the support services provided by eCampus and other relevant units on campus. In the fall semester, the survey is distributed to all students enrolled in an online course. For the remaining semesters, the survey is sent to only those students who did not receive the survey earlier that year. The students respond anonymously. To date, 2,151 student surveys have been sent out with 649 online students responding, resulting in a 30% response rate. Results of the survey are included in the eCampus [Assessment Report](#).

Collect Faculty Survey Data

A [faculty survey](#) is administered in the spring semester to all faculty members who have taught online courses during the year. The survey evaluates the faculty member's level of satisfaction with online learning, as well as their use and satisfaction with support services provided by eCampus and other relevant units on campus. An electronic version of the survey is emailed to every faculty member. The faculty members respond anonymously. To date, 125 online faculty members have been invited to respond to the survey with 54 responding, resulting in a 43% response rate. The results of the Faculty Survey are summarized in the [eCampus Assessment Report](#). eCampus also posts the results on its home page under the "Assessment" link.

Submit Online Program Assessment Plans

When the Coordinator of Assessment and the Director of eCampus met with all departments offering online programs in October of 2005 to discuss assessment needs, a goal was established to have every department offering online degrees develop [assessment plans](#) for collecting and reporting all required data for the distance education program by May of 2006. The goal was actually met by the end of October of 2005. These plans are posted on the assessment website and linked to the eCampus website and are updated as changes occur in the assessment process of an online program.

Submit Online Program Assessment Reports

Every department offering online degree programs is required to develop [reports](#) of the data collection results, recommendations based on results, actions taken, and assessment of the assessment process. These reports are submitted annually to the Office of Assessment.

Submit eCampus Assessment Plan

A [plan](#) of all assessment activities for eCampus has been developed describing the collection and reporting of all required data. The eCampus Office submitted the overall plan for online learning in May of 2006 and began data collection in the spring and summer of 2006.

Submit eCampus Assessment Report

A [report](#) of the eCampus assessment data collection results, recommendations based on results, actions taken, and assessment of the assessment process is completed every year. The report is submitted to the Office of Assessment every October and is posted on the assessment website.

3. Future Initiatives to Assess the eCampus Program

Over the next two years, eCampus will be considering new assessment initiatives. They will identify a method of expanding the model used in the Psychology Department of comparing face-to-face courses with online courses. Programs that offer equivalent courses in both face-to-face and online formats will be identified to apply the approach used by the Psychology Department in assessing equivalency of course outcomes. eCampus also plans to examine the student course evaluation response rate for online courses, and compare it to the course evaluations for face-to-face courses. If there is a significant difference between the two response rates, they will identify methods of increasing the student online course evaluation response rate. Finally, eCampus plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the Course Requirement Checklist by surveying faculty members who have used the checklist in developing their online courses.

VII. General Studies (GS) Program Assessment

2004 NCA Feedback

In March of 2004, a team from The Higher Learning Commission from the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools visited the UNK campus to conduct a comprehensive evaluation. At that time, the team recommended that a focused visit be scheduled for 2008 with one of the areas for review being assessment of the General Studies (GS) program. In the [2004 NCA Report](#), the accreditation team stated that, *“There is a lack of faculty ownership for the assessment of General Studies...which [is a] graduation requirement at the university”* (Assurance Section 15). *“Faculty ownership of assessment in academic programs has not developed across the campus to the level that constitutes a commitment to assessment”* (Assurance Section 18). *“Assessment in the General Studies program had not been clearly defined at the time of the visit. The assessment responsibilities of faculty teaching General Studies course were still being negotiated and clarified”* (Assurance Section 19). *“At the time of the focused visit...the campus should be able to demonstrate that student learning outcomes are being assessed...including General Studies, and that assessment results are being used to improve programs and increase student learning”* (Assurance Section 19).

In addressing the issues raised in the [2004 NCA Report](#) related to the General Studies program assessment, this section of the self-study will provide:

1. A historical perspective of the scope of the GS program since its inception, including responsibility for oversight of the program.
2. A description of what has been done since 2004 to address the issues identified in the visit and to bring this component of assessment into compliance with NCA requirements.
3. Future assessment initiatives planned for the GS program.

1. History and Scope of the General Studies Program

Program Inception

The General Studies program has been in existence since 1970, when Kearney State College reorganized its academic programs from divisions to schools and departments. The basic categories for the program included Communications, Humanities, Natural Science, Social Science, and Electives. Those basic categories with minor changes (e.g., moving Mathematics from Natural Science to a separate category and changing the name of the electives category to personal development) have continued as the core structural framework for General Studies distribution requirements since that time.

Until the time that Kearney State College entered the university system as the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK), a standing committee of the Faculty Senate, the General

Studies Committee, was responsible for the revisions and additions to the program. In the mid-1980s, the administration conducted its first formal Academic Program Review of General Studies during the tenure of Professor Stan Dart as Chair of the General Studies Committee. The Faculty Assistant to the Provost, Dr. Bob Rycek, was also instrumental in this review. Several recommendations were implemented or were under review, when the institution was absorbed into the University of Nebraska system in 1990.

In 1992, Vice Chancellor Gene Koepke instituted a major review of the program conducted by a faculty committee and subsequently reviewed by the colleges. As a result of this review, several important changes to the program and its governance were instituted:

- The Faculty Senate General Studies Committee was replaced by the General Studies Council, which reported action to the Faculty Senate and operated under the purview of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (SVCAA).
- A half-time administrative position, the Director of General Studies, was established in order to provide more support for the institution's largest academic program.
- Writing Intensive (WI) and Cultural Diversity (CD) courses were instituted in order to address particular skills, knowledge, and values within the General Studies program.

In 1994, the current General Studies program came into existence. In the current program, all UNK students are required to complete the GS curriculum: 45 hours of General Studies designated courses that students select from an extensive list of offerings in the humanities, the fine arts, mathematics, and the natural, social, and behavioral sciences. The GS curriculum offers a combination of courses listed under eight different categories:

- English Language
- Foreign Language
- Humanities
- Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science
- Natural Sciences
- Social and Behavioral Sciences
- Personal Development
- Capstone Course

The current General Studies program was designed to help students develop the skills needed to succeed in any career path they might choose. It exposes students to a variety of fields to help them make choices about their course of study at UNK and their profession following college. Both the GS philosophy and the learning objectives of the program support this focus.

Governance

In 1994, governance of the current program was given to the GS Council and to the Director of GS. The GS Council reports to the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Student Life (SVCAASL), who maintains oversight of all actions of the council relating to the GS curriculum. Among other duties, the charge of the GS Council is to develop procedures for evaluating GS courses, approve proposed GS courses ([Course Submission Procedure](#)), enforce the articulation agreements with community colleges whose students frequently transfer to UNK, plan and implement assessment of student learning outcomes and other aspects of the GS program, and regularly review the GS program structure and objectives.

Program Renewal

Over the years, the General Studies program has gone through limited changes and renewals. The current General Studies program at UNK has had two [Academic Program Reviews](#) since 2000. The [2001 APR](#) evaluated the status of the program since the 1994 program revisions, and the [2007 APR](#) provided valuable data that have been used in the GS renewal process currently underway.

In 2005, the Faculty Senate, with the support of the SVCAASL initiated a campus-wide discussion about the rationale, objectives, and structure of the current general education requirements. The first round of campus-wide discussions was initiated while the Director of GS and the GS Council were establishing the assessment process. The GS Director resigned in May, and the Faculty Assistant to the SVCAASL became the interim director, eventually being appointed as Director in August of 2005. This individual was also serving as Director of Assessment for UNK.

In May of 2006, The Director of General Studies resigned from his positions as Director, Director of Assessment, and Faculty Assistant to the SVCAASL and a new Director was appointed. In the fall of 2005, the UNK Faculty Senate President facilitated a [Roundtable discussion](#) of the current GS program objectives and structure. This Phase I Roundtable group completed a review of GS program objectives and created a proposed set of objectives for a renewed GS program. GS data collected at the department and program level, as well as previously collected data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) items linked to the GS program were used in Phase II of the campus-wide Roundtable discussions. The [GS objectives](#) identified in Phase I served as the basis for the work of the Phase II Roundtable, which began in the 2006-2007 academic year and continues to the present.

Phase II created a proposal for a new GS program. Data collected by the General Studies Council, the Office of Assessment, and the Office of the Registrar were considered in the development of the proposal. Phase II of the Roundtables is complete. The [proposed GS program](#) that emerged from Phase II of the Roundtable has been forwarded to the Faculty Senate for discussion. Once it is approved by that body, it will then be forwarded to the

General Studies Council for consideration, reworking, and eventual approval. Members of Phase I and II of the Roundtable were selected by Faculty Senate and approved by the SVCAASL, and represent a cross section of the faculty from different disciplines, academic ranks, and years of seniority. Several members of the General Studies Council are also on the Roundtable, including the Director of GS as *ex officio*. The campus is optimistic about the anticipated renewal of the GS program which is a direct result of assessment of the program since 2004.

2. Addressing Requirements for the 2008 NCA Focused Visit

At the time of the 2004 NCA accreditation visit, no assessment of the General Studies program had been done. In the past four years, the GS program has implemented a full range of assessment procedures and practices, which are detailed in this section of the self-study.

To address the critical issue of GS assessment, various initiatives were identified and implemented following the 2004 accreditation visit. Table VII.1 outlines the initiatives designed to ensure that program and department level student learning data are collected and reported for the GS program. The table provides a description of the major initiatives, the level of the organization impacted, the process followed, the entity or individuals responsible for carrying out the initiative, and the timeframe in which the initiative is to be completed. Following the table is a detailed description of the initiatives and the outcomes.

Table VII.1 GS Assessment Initiatives since 2004

Initiative	Level	Process	Responsibility	Timeframe
Revise the Governance Structure	Program	Develop a proposal for restructuring governance and gain approval	GS Director and Council	2004-2005
Implement Assessment Strategies for GS	Program	Design and implement an assessment process for program and department level collection and reporting of data	Coordinator of Assessment, GS Director and Council	Adopted Fall 2004
Establish timeline for collecting and reporting GS Assessment data	Program and Department	Assess all six categories of GS yearly	Departments, General Studies Director and Council	Academic year 2005-2006 and ongoing
Assess GS Courses	Departments	Use direct and indirect measures to collect assessment data and report the data annually	Departments	Assessment data collected and reported annually since 2006
Administer GS Pilot Test	Program	Administer test of GS-related academic skills	GS Director and Council	Spring 2007
Administer Nationally-Normed Test	Program	Administer CAAP to sample of freshmen and seniors	GS Director and Council and Office of Assessment	Reviewed instruments in 2005-2006 and administered

				CAAP fall 2007
Survey Faculty and Students for Perceptions of GS Program	Program	All faculty and a sample of students were surveyed to obtain their perceptions of the GS program	Office of Assessment, Student Assessment Committee, GS Director and Council	Faculty 2005 Students 2005 and 2006
Collect and Analyze Graduating Senior Exit Survey Data	Program	Collect and Analyze graduating senior exit survey data related to GS	Registrar's Office, GS Director and Council	Yearly since 2005
Analyze NSSE data	Program	Analyze data from NSSE administered in 2002-2004 and 2007	Office of Assessment and GS Director and Council	Began in 2004 and continued in 2007
Conduct Academic Program Review of GS Program	Program	External reviewer and internal team of reviewers analyze strengths and areas for improvement	External reviewer, internal review team, GS Director and Council	2001 and 2007
Use Assessment Results to Improve the Program and Enhance Student Learning	Program	Use assessment data to improve GS program (current GS program renewal process), and to enhance student learning (departments improve their instructional practices)	Departments, GS Director and Council	Yearly since 2005
Make GS Assessment Information Available to All Stakeholders	Program	Disseminate GS assessment through GS website, Voluntary System of Accountability, NSSE-USA Today website	Departments, GS Director and Council	Ongoing since 2004
Offer GS Assessment Training to Faculty	Program	Faculty stipends for work on assessment, travel to conferences on GS assessment, CTE training on assessment	GS Director and Council, Center for Teaching Excellence	Ongoing since 2004
Make Assessment Fundamental to GS Course Proposals		All GS course proposals address how student learning will be measured and enhanced	Departments, GS Director and Council	Ongoing since 2005

Revise the Governance Structure

In April and May of 2004, the Faculty Assistant to the SVCAASL, who also served as the new Director of Assessment met with the Director of General Studies to analyze issues in the governance structure. Two major issues emerged from this analysis, the first being that the GS program was also charged with governance and management of the Writing Intensive (WI) and Cultural Diversity (CD) theme courses for the campus. Much of the director's and council's time was spent with managing those programs instead of on their central task of managing the General Studies program.

A second structural issue was the steady turnover of directors between 1994 and 2004. During this period, the average tenure of the GS Directors has been about two years. To address both the workload of the director and council, as well as help to solve the problem of turnover in program directors, in May of 2004, the Director of GS and the GS Council proposed that responsibility for the WI and C D courses be transferred to another group. The Faculty Senate and the SVCAASL reviewed the proposal. They adopted it in August, and it took effect in 2005.

Implement Assessment Strategies for GS

During the summer of 2004, the Director of Assessment and the Coordinator of Assessment reviewed the assessment efforts of the Director of GS and the GS Council up to the 2004 NCA visit. The coordinator was charged with reviewing assessment programs at other institutions and then to work with the Director of General Studies to develop a proposal for a GS assessment process to be approved by the council. A proposed assessment process was presented to the council in September. The broad concepts were accepted in October. The focus of the plan was a category-based assessment process embedded in the GS course offerings. Under the plan, each department would have responsibility for its course offerings and the Director of GS and the GS Council would have responsibility for assessment at the program level. The plan incorporated collecting and reporting of assessment data using multiple direct and indirect measures of student learning outcomes for GS courses and the GS program. Responsibilities were established and communicated, and follow-up has been constant.

In the fall of 2004, the Coordinator of Assessment and the Director of GS met with all departments offering General Studies courses to provide guidelines for the departmental assessment of their GS courses. The departments were charged with developing GS plans by May of 2005, collecting data in GS courses in the fall of 2005 and the spring of 2006, and submitting annual GS assessment reports beginning in October of 2006. The Director of GS and the GS Council have reviewed and updated the assessment strategy regularly since its creation and modified it when necessary.

Establish Timeline for Collection and Reporting of GS Assessment Data

When assessment goals were established in 2004, an ambitious two-year timeline was set to collect and report GS assessment data. Out of 25 departments offering GS courses, six developed their plan and collected data to assess their GS courses in the first cycle (2004-2005). By the next year, all 24 departments had developed plans, collected data, and submitted assessment reports. This 100% assessment rate continued in the 2006-2007 academic year.

Assess GS Courses

Beginning in the 2005-2006 academic year, all departments offering GS courses were required to have an approved plan and to assess those courses each academic year. Their

assessment plan is updated annually before the start of the fall semester, and their assessment report for the previous academic year is due October 1st. Departments must assess for learning outcomes based on the GS objectives relevant to their courses, and they must assess using direct measures. Further assessment using indirect measures (such as student surveys) is also encouraged and widely practiced by departments on campus. These departmental [GS assessment plans, reports, and instruments](#) are on the assessment website with links from the GS website.

Administer GS Pilot Test

Beginning in the spring of 2005, the GS Council studied various standardized assessment instruments to find an appropriate one for measuring GS learning outcomes. The council considered the College Basic Academic Subjects Exam (CBASE), Academic Profile, Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), and Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP). By the spring of 2007, the Council opted to create an in-house instrument for a pilot administration. [An instrument](#) was developed locally with test questions addressing the [four overall objectives](#) of the GS program. The instrument was administered to a sample of 288 students in a pilot study. [The results](#) showed a significant ($p < .05$) correlation between the number of hours completed in the GS program and the total score on the test ($r = .236$). Analyses of the test data suggested that some revision of test items should be done prior to another administration of the test. While parts of the instrument showed promise as an assessment tool, the council felt that for logistical reasons it would be more appropriate to use a nationally-normed instrument.

Administer Nationally-Normed Test

In the fall of 2007, the GS program and Office of Assessment administered the [CAAP](#) Writing and Critical Thinking tests to a sample of 756 freshmen and seniors. [UNK's Institutional Summaries Reports](#) for the CAAP are available on the assessment website. It is not possible to make value-added statements based on the CAAP data because we did not have the same (or matched) students taking the tests in their freshman and senior years. Also, the sampling of students for CAAP testing was not random. It was done by selecting classrooms using random methods, a widely practiced sampling technique in educational research. Although this method was not ideal, the demographic characteristics of our sample did accurately reflect UNK freshmen and seniors.

Mean scores on both the writing and critical thinking tests increased from freshman to senior year. As mentioned above, it is probably not appropriate to make value-added statements regarding the course of the students' college careers. Instead, it is more appropriate to look at freshmen and seniors groups individually in comparison to the national norm group.

On the critical thinking test, 42% of UNK freshmen scored at or below the 25th percentile nationally. The national percentile ranks are based on college students in general, not just freshmen. So the relatively large size of this lowest achieving group may be deceiving. The results for seniors presented next show improvement with only 24% of UNK seniors

scoring at or below the 25th percentile. The proportion of students who scored above the 50th percentile nationally increased from 35% to 56% from freshman to senior year.

The CAAP results do not allow for a direct, value-added interpretation, but mean scores for seniors were higher than for freshman on the two essays administered to assess writing. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of freshmen scored above the 50th percentile nationally, while 67% of seniors did. The CAAP results reflect favorably on the initiatives in place to improve student writing, such as the WI program, required composition courses, and the emphasis on writing as one of the four objectives of the General Studies program. One area for concern is the high proportion of UNK students who fall into the lowest quartile nationally--37% of UNK freshmen and 28% of UNK seniors. In making recommended changes to the current programs that focus on writing, it will be important to consider how to improve the performance of these lowest achieving students.

Survey Faculty and Student Perceptions of GS Program

Faculty Survey

In the spring of 2005, a [survey](#) was administered to the faculty with 102 (about 1/3 of total faculty) responding. The results showed that many faculty members believed the GS program has strong support from students, faculty members, graduates, trustees, and employers (mean=3.43 out of 5). However, it also showed that faculty members were less confident that they understood the rationale of the program (mean=2.87). In order to help both faculty members and students understand the rationale of the program, the GS Council created and distributed print materials (bookmarks and brochures) and developed the mission/objectives/purpose section of the GS website. Since the fall of 2006, the print materials have been distributed to all potential students during recruitment or campus visits and to all new students at orientation sessions.

Student Survey

In the [spring of 2005](#) and in the [fall of 2006](#), students were surveyed to determine their perceptions of the GS program (n=768). In the spring of 2005, students tended to see the GS program as an obstacle to finishing their education. 61.33% of students agreed or strongly agreed that fundamental changes should be made to the GS program. The results from 2006 were similar. This data reemphasized what was revealed in NSSE and the Survey of Faculty Perceptions regarding the lack of clarity and cohesiveness of the existing program. Data from the student surveys were presented at numerous meetings on campus, including the two all-campus forums for the faculty and staff explaining the need for renewal of the program

Collect and Analyze Graduating Senior Exit Survey Data

Each semester, the Office of the Registrar collects data in an [exit survey](#) for graduating seniors concerning their educational experience at UNK. Beginning in the summer of

2005, the survey included questions specific to the students' perceived learning experience in GS courses. Between the summer of 2005 and the summer of 2006, 51% of graduates self-selected to participate (n=866). In the fall of 2006 and the spring of 2007 administrations of the exit survey (n=195 and 143 respectively), students perceived that their GS courses helped them develop skills in communication, critical thinking, and gathering information (three of the four general objectives of the GS program). Students perceived that their GS courses were somewhat less useful in meeting the fourth general GS objective: understanding under-represented cultures (mean=3.55 in the fall of 2006, mean=3.46 in the spring of 2007). This data was considered in the GS renewal process of the Roundtable and in the GS Council. Consequently, the current Roundtable proposal includes coursework and objectives that strengthen this area of the curriculum. Further, this piece of data informed the GS Council's formulation of new objectives for the GS Capstone Course, which therefore now includes a strong interdisciplinary/intercultural component.

Analyze NSSE Data

UNK administered the NSSE in 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2007 as an indirect measure of the effectiveness of instruction and learning in GS courses. The next administration of NSSE will be in 2010. The GS Council met twice in two-day retreats in the summer of 2005 for the purpose of [aligning NSSE data with the GS learning objectives](#).

In the summer of 2007, with four years of baseline NSSE data established, the GS Council met in another two-day retreat and created viable objectives for the Capstone Course – a category of GS that had never been opened to course proposals since inception of the program in 1994. The new objectives were approved, and Capstone Course offerings will begin in the fall of 2008. NSSE data were used in formulating the new set of objectives because they had revealed that UNK seniors fall significantly ($p < 0.05$) below seniors at masters institutions in putting together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments; solving complex real-world problems; synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships; and applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations. These areas of weakness for UNK students (as identified by NSSE data) were built into the new objectives for the GS Capstone Course. [NSSE data](#) helped the GS Council and the Roundtable make the case with the faculty that the GS program needed renewal. The data showed that UNK students were significantly below means of students at master's institutions in several areas that link directly to the GS objectives.

The current Roundtable discussions were largely informed by NSSE data as presented at two all-campus forums in the spring of 2007. Further, the GS Council used NSSE data to identify teaching practices that result in "deep learning." The council is currently creating academic standards for all GS courses based on the NSSE related student engagement practices. These standards are anticipated to be approved in the spring of 2008 and will then apply to all courses designated as GS.

Conduct Academic Program Review (APR) of GS Program

In the spring of 2007, a [comprehensive Academic Program Review of the GS program](#) was conducted. The review team consisted of nine UNK faculty members from across campus and one student representative. They were led by a head reviewer from another institution. The review team held open discussion time with deans, chairs, and general faculty members. The review team was aware of the renewal effort, which was then already well-developed, and they framed their observations with both the existing and the potential renewed GS programs in mind. The review pointed out gaps in the current program, especially where there were not clear linkages between GS objectives and the objectives of specific GS courses. Further, the review recommended that outcomes for each course be made transparent and that there be greater coherence in the program format (i.e. “portal course(s)” followed by courses in core disciplines followed by a culminating or “Capstone” experience). There were some eighteen recommendations in the APR, which the GS Council considered.

To date, the GS Council has considered all of the recommendations and acted on nine of them: requiring English 101/102 in the first year, limiting class sizes, including upper division courses, making linkages between program objectives and specific courses, clarifying the Personal Development category of GS, requiring that objectives be placed on syllabi of GS courses, making the program distinctive to Nebraska, shifting the focus from teaching to learning outcomes, and assisting in faculty development in assessment strategies. The Roundtable has also considered several of the recommendations and chosen to act on four of them in creating their renewal proposal: bringing foreign language into the mainstream of the program, renaming the program, assessing with pre- and post-testing, and ensuring that the renewal effort is transparent and well communicated.

Use Assessment Results to Improve the Program and Enhance Student Learning

Phase I of the GS Roundtable met regularly throughout the 2005-2006 academic year and produced the proposed [Mission Statement and Student Outcomes](#) for a renewed GS program. [The development](#) of the proposed Mission Statement and Learning Outcomes is documented on the GS website.

Assessment data collected by departments and the GS Council, as well as previously collected data from NSSE items linked to the GS program were used in the Phase II Roundtable discussions in 2006-2007. The Phase I and Phase II Roundtable discussions have created a proposal for creating a renewed GS program. This proposal is complete and was sent to the Faculty Senate in the spring of 2008 for discussion.

In two all-campus forums during the spring of 2007, the GS director made the case for the need to renew the GS program to the faculty and professional staff. At these forums, assessment data were presented which showed weaknesses in the existing program.

[NSSE data from 2002-2004](#) were shared, showing that UNK students' academic engagement activities were significantly lower than the national means for masters institutions. Data were also presented from [surveys of students](#), which showed that most students believe the program lacks coherence and clarity of purpose and that 54% of students believe there should be "major changes" to the curriculum.

Results of the [GS Academic Program Reviews](#) from 2001 and 2007 were also shared at the forums. Both of these review teams (headed by an external reviewer) called for the GS program to have a clearer, more comprehensive rationale.

Finally, since the 2005-2006 academic year, departments have been required to show how they have used their assessment data to guide improvements in student learning in [annual assessment reports](#). [A rubric](#) is used by the General Studies program to ensure that all departments regularly include this crucial component in their assessment practices.

Make GS Assessment Information Available to All Stakeholders

The establishment of the [website for the GS program](#) in 2004 helped make the GS assessment plan widely available to the campus community. All agendas of GS Council meetings are distributed by email to all faculty and staff members in advance, and [minutes of all meetings](#) are sent to the Faculty Senate and are also kept on the website. [Minutes and documents of the Roundtable](#) are also housed on the website. General Studies assessment plans and reports are also available on the assessment website, and many departments on campus have links from their homepages to assessment data for their GS courses and other programs. UNK is also participating in the [NSSE-USA Today](#) initiative and in the [Voluntary System of Accountability](#) that will provide all stakeholders access to UNK assessment data, including data on General Studies.

Offer GS Assessment Training to Faculty

A budget was requested and approved for [faculty stipends](#) for work on GS assessment in 2005, the year the first GS assessment plans and reports were due. \$11,000 in stipends was paid to departments that year to develop GS assessment reports. Beginning in 2006, travel support was made available for faculty members to attend conferences on assessment of general education programs. Members of the GS Council as well as other faculty members have been sent to conferences of the AAC&U, NCA/Higher Learning Commission, IUPUI Assessment Conference, and the NSSE Institute. The Center for Teaching Excellence at UNK also provides seminars and other faculty development activities related to assessment.

Make Assessment Fundamental to GS Course Proposals

Since 2005, [course proposals](#) for the GS program must address specifically how student learning will be measured and enhanced in the proposed course.

3. Future Assessment Initiatives

The current efforts at UNK to renew the GS program are being informed by assessment data collected from a variety of sources, as detailed above. Currently, new category objectives have been approved for the Capstone Course, and objectives will soon be approved for the Foreign Language category, which has never had a set of objectives. Further, the GS Council will continue discussions, started during the summer 2007 retreat, of new objectives for the Personal Development category of GS. No matter what form the future GS program takes, the council is committed to making it a program that provides students with a common grounding in general education. To that end, the GS Council is creating academic standards to apply universally to all GS courses. These standards are designed to ensure that students in GS courses are intellectually challenged and engaged, as defined by best practices for student engagement. The Council has also created procedures for a three-year review of the program, whereby 1/3 of all GS courses will be reviewed each year to determine how well the course is meeting the GS objectives. The review of each course will consider direct measure assessment data, perceptions of students in that course, and the content of the course syllabus. Courses that do not “pass” the review could appeal but thereafter would have to reapply for status as a GS course.

UNK has acquired [WEAVEonline](#), which will be used by departments to track student outcomes for GS objectives. Beginning in the fall of 2008, GS objectives will be linked from the course level all the way to the university’s strategic plan. This will ensure continued annual reporting of assessment activities from all departments that teach GS courses. In addition, UNK is participating in the [Voluntary System of Accountability](#) (VSA), which will provide peer comparisons of General Studies learning outcomes and will ensure the transparency of GS assessment.

VIII. Graduate Programs Assessment

2004 NCA Feedback

At the time of the 2004 NCA accreditation visit, the team recommended that one of the areas for review in the 2008 focused visit would be assessment of the graduate programs at UNK. In the [2004 NCA Report](#), the accreditation team stated that, “*Faculty commitment to assessment in graduate programs and distance learning is just emerging*” (Assurance Section 18). “*At the time of the focused visit, the campus should be able to demonstrate that student learning outcomes are being assessed in its undergraduate and graduate programs, including general studies, and that assessment results are being used to improve programs and increase student learning*” (Assurance Section 19).”

In addressing the issues raised in the [2004 NCA Report](#) related to graduate program assessment, this section of the self-study will provide:

1. A historical perspective of what had been done in graduate program assessment prior to the 2004 visit.
2. A description of what has been done since 2004 to address the issues identified in the visit and to bring graduate program assessment into compliance with NCA requirements.
3. Future assessment initiatives planned for the graduate programs.

1. History of Graduate Programs Assessment

In addressing the issues raised in the 2004 NCA Team Report, the following history of graduate program assessment outlines what had been done prior to the 2004 visit. The historical review indicates that departments with graduate education as their primary responsibility have been in compliance with assessment requirements. The major area of concern was departments that have undergraduate education as a main area of focus, but also have small graduate programs.

1994-2000

The College of Business and Technology has offered the Master of Business Administration degree for a number of years. The archival records indicate that this graduate program submitted assessment reports each year during the period (1994-2000).

The College of Education offered graduate programs in the following departments: Communication Disorders; Counseling and School Psychology; Educational Administration; Elementary/Early Childhood Education; Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Leisure Studies; Professional Teacher Education; and Special Education. The following departments submitted assessment reports each year during this period: Counseling and School Psychology; Educational Administration; and Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Leisure Studies. The Department of Elementary/Early Childhood Education submitted reports from 1993-98. The Special Education and

Communication Disorders departments were combined and then separated during this period. They did not consistently report student outcomes assessment during this time period.

The College of Fine Arts and Humanities offered graduate programs in the following departments: Art and Art History; English; Modern Languages; and Music and Performing Arts. Each of these departments submitted yearly assessment reports for the years in which they had graduate students.

The College of Natural and Social Sciences offered graduate programs in the following departments: History; Mathematics and Statistics. The History Department submitted assessment reports each year. The Mathematics and Statistics Department did not have sufficient numbers of graduate students to submit a yearly report.

2000-2002

The UNK ad hoc Assessment Committee began its work on revising the assessment process to reflect an emphasis on student outcomes-based assessment. During this period of time, departments were not asked to submit reports. Efforts were expended on developing new assessment plans for each program.

2002-2003

Assessment reports utilizing the new assessment format were to be submitted beginning with data collection during the 2002-2003 academic year. It should be noted that some programs were still developing assessment plans during that year. The following departments (or programs) submitted graduate assessment reports for 2002-2003:

- Biology MS
- Communication Disorders
- Counseling and School Psychology
- Educational Administration
- Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Leisure Studies
- Master of Business Administration
- Reading MA (from Teacher Education)

The following departments submitted a report stating that they did not have students to evaluate at that point in time:

- Modern Languages
- Music

The History Department only had one student eligible for assessment and was in the process of collecting data on that student.

The Art and Art History Department had placed assessment plan development on hold while deciding whether or not to keep the program.

The Biology Department has two degrees. The Master of Science in Biology was reported. However, the Master of Science in Education was not reported. The assessment plan on file makes no distinction between the two programs.

2003-2004

Based on the requirements of the Assessment Committee, all departments submitted assessment reports in the fall of 2004. The following departments submitted graduate program assessment reports for the 2003-2004 academic year, which were available for review by the NCA accreditation team in March of 2004:

- Communication Disorders
- Counseling and School Psychology
- Educational Administration
- Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Leisure Studies
- MBA Program
- Modern Languages
- Reading (from Teacher Education)

In 2004, it was clear that those departments or programs that were exclusively graduate level in nature had a track record of long-term assessment reporting from 1994 to 2004. When there were problems of consistent assessment being implemented, they occurred in departments that had a split undergraduate and graduate program offering. Also, some departments did not have a consistent record of assessment because they had very few students on a regular basis. Other departments focused on assessment of undergraduates for accreditation purposes rather than upon assessment of their graduate students.

2. Addressing Requirements for the 2008 NCA Focused Visit

To address the issue of graduate programs that do not consistently collect and report student outcomes data, several initiatives were identified and implemented following the 2004 accreditation visit. These included:

1. *Require departments with undergraduate and graduate programs to be more consistently engaged in the assessment of their graduate programs, to include developing an assessment plan and submitting yearly assessment reports of their graduate majors. Since the fall of 2005, all graduate programs have submitted a [yearly assessment report of student outcomes](#).*
2. *Address the problem that a number of programs simply do not have sufficient numbers of students enrolled to effectively assess them. In the fall of 2004, a three-year assessment cycle was set up for these departments. This allows them to collect data every year but only report it every three years when sufficient data*

is available to effectively assess students in their programs. In off-years, the departments provide a report indicating the number of graduates, which is not sufficient for data analysis. This provides a yearly record that they are collecting data but not reporting it on a yearly basis. Programs that fall in this category include: English; History; Modern Languages; and Music.

3. *Revise the assessment website to clearly identify and report assessment results for graduate programs.* Since 2006, graduate program assessment has been clearly identified on the assessment website, and a single webpage displays [graduate program assessment documents](#). A link to this webpage is also provided from the homepage for [Graduate Studies and Research](#) so students, the faculty, and other stakeholders can easily access assessment information for all graduate programs at UNK. In addition, graduate program assessment information is also accessible from the [departmental list of assessment reports](#), so both the undergraduate assessment documents and the graduate documents for departments are listed together.
4. *Require that any new graduate programs have an assessment plan that has been approved by the Coordinator and Director of Assessment prior to approval action by the Graduate Council.* Since 2005, a critical step in obtaining approval for a new graduate program has been the development and submittal of an assessment plan to the Office of Assessment. Approval of this plan is required for final approval of the new program.

3. Future Initiatives to Assess Graduate Programs

In an effort to include all areas of the university in the assessment/evaluation process, the UNK administration made the decision in late 2006 to require all units outside of academic programs to participate in the Academic Program Review (APR) process. The review for many units, including the Office of Graduate Studies and Research, will be an Administrative Program Review. The process will follow the UNK APR guidelines for preparing a self study, organizing a review team, conducting a site visit, and writing a final report. The first APR for the Office of Graduate Studies and Research has been scheduled for the fall of 2009. The office has identified and is in the process of implementing the following initiatives:

The Office of Graduate Studies and Research will develop and implement an assessment plan. Development of an assessment plan will include a revision of the Office of Graduate Studies and Research mission and objectives, as well as development of assessment measures. The current mission statement and objectives were last reviewed in 1992, and many changes have occurred since that time. A first draft of the document has been written and circulated for review. Plans are to finalize the document by the end of the 2008 spring semester or soon after.

A graduate student survey has been developed in order to obtain information about student satisfaction with graduate student services provided by the office. In addition, the

survey has been designed to provide data regarding course format (face-to-face, online, etc.), future educational endeavors, financial information, etc. The information from the surveys will be used to improve services, opportunities, and support for graduate students and graduate education. The survey is administered at the end of each semester (since the spring of 2007) to all graduate students who have completed their degree requirements.

The Office of Graduate Studies and Research is in the process of developing a graduate/research assistant survey to assess the benefit and effectiveness of the graduate assistant experience. These surveys will be administered each year to current graduate/research assistants and to the faculty members who supervise them.

The Office of Graduate Studies and Research will develop a strategic plan. This process will include an analysis of the current situation, utilizing the previous plan (spanning 1995-2005) as a starting point. Short-term and long-range plans will be identified and prioritized.

The Office of Graduate Studies and Research will continue to explore ways to maximize the impact of existing resources. This will include reappraisal of current activities and budgets.

IX. Writing Intensive (WI) Program Assessment

2004 NCA Feedback

At the time of the 2004 NCA accreditation visit, the team recommended that one of the areas for review in the 2008 focused visit would be assessment of the Writing Intensive (WI) program. In the [2004 NCA Report](#), the accreditation team stated, *“Also, there is a lack of faculty ownership for the assessment of general studies, and the themes of cultural diversity and intensive writing which are graduation requirements at the university” (Assurance Section 15). “Assessment for the cultural diversity and writing intensive themes of the undergraduate experience have not been established at this point (Assurance Section 19).”*

In addressing the issues raised in the [2004 NCA Report](#) related to the assessment of the WI program, this section of the self-study will provide:

1. A historical perspective of the formation of the WI program and evolving oversight of the program.
2. A description of what has been done since 2004 to address the issues identified in the visit and to bring this component of assessment into compliance with NCA requirements.
3. Future assessment initiatives planned for the WI program.

1. History of the Writing Intensive Program

Writing Intensive (WI) as a thematic program required for graduation was mandated in 1994. Students were required to take 12 hours of WI designated courses. This change was initiated by faculty members and was based on their observations of students' need for additional coursework to further develop their writing skills as part of their general education learning. The General Studies program was undergoing major revision in 1994, so the WI requirement became part of the changes implemented in general education at UNK.

Governance of the courses was assigned to the UNK General Studies Council and the Director of General Studies in 1994. It was their task to develop criteria for courses designated as WI, as well as manage the implementation of the courses. The criteria and a description of the process for obtaining approval for a WI designated course are located on the [WI website](#). It should be noted that WI courses were not inherent components of the General Studies program. Management of the WI offerings was given to the General Studies Council as a task in addition to the governance of the General Studies program.

After the NCA visit in March of 2004, members of the General Studies Council recognized that they had a tremendous task in addressing General Studies program Assessment issues raised by the visit. It was decided that it no longer made sense to have

the General Studies Council manage an initiative (WI) that was not part of the General Studies program. A proposal was submitted by the Director of General Studies to the Faculty Senate in November of 2004 to transfer governance of WI courses from the General Studies Council to a newly created committee. The proposal asked the Faculty Senate to create an ad hoc WI/CD Committee for the broad purposes of managing the program and developing the assessment process. The proposal was adopted with the provision that the committee would complete its work by January of 2007 and cease operations in May of 2007. At that time (May of 2007), the WI/CD Committee officially turned over responsibility for managing the assessment process to the Office of Assessment. However, the committee decided to continue their oversight of the approval process for WI designated courses to ensure compliance with the requirements. The committee also maintained their responsibility for reviewing the WI assessment data and determining changes to the program based on the results. A detailed account of the [history of the WI/CD Committee](#) is available on the WI website.

2. Addressing Requirements for the 2008 NCA Focused Visit

At the time of the 2004 NCA visit, no assessment of the Writing Intensive (WI) courses or program had been conducted since its inception in 1994. To address this critical issue, several initiatives were identified and implemented following the 2004 accreditation visit. Table IX.1 outlines the process developed and implemented to ensure that the program and department level student outcomes data are collected and reported for the WI program. The matrix provides a description of the initiative, the level at which the initiative occurs within the organization, the process followed, the entity or individuals responsible for the initiative, and the timeframe in which the initiative was accomplished.

Table IX.1 Matrix of Assessment Components for the Writing Intensive Program

Initiative	Level	Process	Responsibility	Timeframe
Establish Governance of the WI Program	Program	Governance is moved from General Studies Council to a Faculty Senate WI/CD Committee	General Studies Council and Faculty Senate	Begin process in 9/04 Complete process by 1/05
Establish WI Assessment Requirements	Program	Establish a process for beginning to collect and report program and department level data	WI/CD Committee	Spring 2005
Collect and Analyze Student and Faculty Data on WI Program	Program	Develop and administer a survey for faculty and students on their perceptions of the WI program and analyze the data	WI/CD Committee	1/05 to 5/05
Analyze Existing NSSE data	Program	Analyze data from NSSE administered in 2002-2004	WI/CD Committee	August retreat 2005
Change WI Course Requirements and Focus	Program	Data from the surveys indicate that WI course requirements should change from 12 hours to 6 hours	WI/CD Committee Faculty Senate	Fall 2005

		Focus should change from writing across the curriculum to writing in the discipline		
Establish Criteria for WI Courses and for Assessment of the Courses	Program	WI/CD Committee established criteria and provided sample rubrics for departments' WI assessment reporting	WI/CD Committee	Spring 2006
Develop and Implement the WI Assessment Plans	Departments	Departments collect WI course-level assessment data and submit an assessment report based on the data	Departments with WI courses	Begin Fall 2006 Submit plans Spring 2007, collect data and submit reports by 10/08
Move Assessment Oversight to Office of Assessment	Program	Oversight of assessment of WI moved to Office of Assessment with WI/CD Committee retaining responsibility for program changes based on data	Office of Assessment	5/07
Update WI Mission Statement and Learning Objectives	Program	Review existing WI mission and goals and update these to reflect current focus of the WI program	Office of Assessment	Fall 2007
Collect Data Using CAAP and Analyze Results	Program	CAAP Writing and Critical Thinking tests administered	General Studies and Office of Assessment	Administered in October 2007
Analyze the 2007 NSSE Data	Program	Analyze 2007 NSSE results for CD relevant items	Office of Assessment	Fall 2007
Submit WI Program Assessment Report	Program	Office of Assessment collects and reports on program level assessment data	Office of Assessment	Begin 10/07 and continue yearly

Establish Governance of the WI Program

In the fall of 2004, the Director of General Studies submitted a proposal to the Faculty Senate to transfer governance of WI courses from the General Studies Council to another group. The proposal asked the Faculty Senate to create an ad hoc WI/CD Committee for the broad purposes of managing the program and developing the assessment process. The proposal was adopted, and the WI/CD Committee began meeting in January of 2005. Faculty Senate charged the committee with the following responsibilities related to WI governance and assessment:

1. Assume the governance of WI and CD courses with respect to the approval of WI and CD courses and departmental issues concerning scheduling of WI and CD courses.
2. Promote writing as an important skill for all UNK students to possess and promote writing as a core pedagogical tool in all programs at UNK.

3. With the assistance of the Director of Assessment, review assessment data, including student outcome data concerning WI courses.
4. Based in part on the assessment data, make specific written recommendations to the Faculty Senate concerning the structure of the WI requirements and the governance of those courses by January of 2007.

Establish WI Assessment Requirements

In the spring of 2005, one of the first priorities of the WI/CD Committee was to address the issue of assessment of the WI program and courses. The committee began by identifying assessment approaches based on best practices from other institutions. As a result of their research, the committee developed the general assessment framework outlined in the first seven initiatives in Table IX. This framework was submitted to Faculty Senate for approval.

Collect and Analyze Student and Faculty Data on the WI Program

During the spring of 2005, the committee developed a survey of [faculty](#) and [student](#) perceptions of the existing WI program. It was provided online to all UNK faculty members and students with the hope that data would be collected from a large number of respondents. 113 faculty members and 763 students responded to the survey.

In the summer of 2005, a subcommittee of the WI/CD Committee members analyzed the WI survey data and prepared a report of the results for review by the overall committee. [Results from the faculty WI survey](#) indicated that a majority of the faculty feel that WI classes improve the education of students. [Results from the student WI survey](#) indicated that students were less likely to see the value of the WI courses outside their discipline. They did think WI courses within their major helped them communicate better and increased their understanding of the writing style and requirements of their discipline. Both faculty members and students felt there was a need for change in the WI program at UNK. Faculty members indicated that the number of WI hours required for graduation should be decreased. They also felt that it would be beneficial to have WI courses in a student's major/minor (writing within the discipline) rather than having students take any WI designated course to meet the requirement (writing across the curriculum). Students also wanted to see a reduction in the course requirements for WI and indicated that two courses (6 hours) would be better than the current four-course (12-hour) requirement.

Analyze Existing NSSE Data

The team also reviewed results from the 2002-2004 [National Survey of Student Engagement](#) (NSSE) relevant to WI and prepared a summary for the committee's review.

In their [responses on the NSSE](#), UNK freshman indicated they had prepared fewer drafts of papers, had fewer assigned readings, and had written fewer papers than the peer group or the overall NSSE group. Seniors were closer in their ratings on these items to the peer group and NSSE ratings. Seniors at UNK wrote more 5- to 19-page papers and more

papers less than five pages than the comparison groups. Both freshman and seniors at UNK spent less time preparing for classes than the comparison groups.

Change WI Course Requirements and Focus

In the fall of 2005, as a result of the WI survey and the NSSE data, the WI subcommittee recommended major changes to the WI program. They recommended that WI requirements be reduced to two courses (6 hours) and that at least one of those courses (3 hours) be within a student's major. The recommendation went to the full committee who approved it and sent it on to the Faculty Senate for approval. Faculty Senate endorsed these changes in WI. The committee also decided that their first assessment priority was to begin assessment of WI at the program and department level.

Establish Criteria for the WI Courses and for Assessment of the Courses

In the spring of 2006, with the changes in the WI program and the committee's shift in focus to assessment of WI, the committee began the process of establishing criteria for the development of departmental WI courses as well as a process for assessing those courses. The criteria included the development of a writing rubric to assess students' writing ability and to determine student outcomes in the new writing in the discipline program. It also included guidelines for developing the assessment plans for the courses. The [criteria and rubric requirements](#) are available on the WI website.

Develop and Implement the WI Assessment Plans

After providing the departments with criteria for developing and implementing their WI courses and an assessment of those courses, the WI/CD Committee set a deadline of November of 2006 to submit plans for how the WI courses would be assessed in each of the departments. The plans were submitted to the committee, and representatives from each college reviewed and provided feedback on each of the assessment plans. Feedback was given to each department, and final revisions of the plans were made. The completed [WI Assessment Plans](#) are posted online.

The departments began implementation of the plans in the fall of 2007 with the expectation that all departments would collect and analyze data from their WI courses in the fall of 2007 and the spring of 2008. Assessment Reports, detailing the results of the data analyses and actions to be taken based on the data, will be submitted to the Office of Assessment on October 1, 2008.

Move Assessment Oversight to Office of Assessment

In May of 2007, the WI/CD Committee transferred responsibility for WI assessment to the Office of Assessment. This change was based on the realization of the committee that they could not meet all the requirements for assessment of WI for the April 2008 NCA visit. The committee will continue to review assessment data collected by the Office of Assessment and recommend changes to the program based on that data. The Office of

Assessment will collect required data for assessing the WI program and will review and post the departments' assessments of their WI courses. The immediate focus of the Office of Assessment was to:

1. Update the WI mission statement and learning objectives.
2. Help administer the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Progress (CAAP).
3. Analyze the 2007 NSSE results and compare to 2002-2004.
4. Develop an Assessment Report for the WI program.

Update WI Mission Statement and Learning Objectives

In the fall of 2007, the Office of Assessment completed a review of the WI program documentation and developed a [revised mission statement and learning objectives](#) to reflect the changes that have occurred in the program.

Collect Data Using CAAP and Analyze Results

In the fall of 2007, the Office of Assessment assisted in the administration of the [Collegiate Assessment of Academic Progress](#) (CAAP) Writing and Critical Thinking tests. This was done in conjunction with the General Studies program since both GS and WI needed a direct measure of program level objectives.

The [CAAP results](#) do not allow for a direct, value-added interpretation, but mean scores for seniors were higher than for freshman on the two essays administered to assess writing. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of freshmen scored above the 50th percentile nationally, while 67% of seniors did. The CAAP results reflect favorably on the initiatives in place to improve student writing, such as the WI program. One area for concern is the high proportion of UNK students who fall into the lowest quartile nationally--37% of UNK freshmen and 28% of UNK seniors. In making recommended changes to the current WI program, it will be important to consider how to improve the performance of these lowest achieving students.

Analyze the 2007 NSSE Data

In the fall of 2007, the Office of Assessment completed [data analyses of the 2007 NSSE on items](#) directly related to WI. Generally, in 2007, first-year students at UNK had lower mean values on the selected items than students at our peer institutions. First-year students at UNK made fewer revisions, which is an important part of developing writing skills. Students also rated UNK lower than students at peer institutions for the item that asked how their institution contributed to their development in writing clearly and effectively.

In 2007, UNK senior means for the most part did not differ significantly from our peer institutions. UNK seniors wrote more papers fewer than five pages, but fewer papers that were 20 pages or more. The mean on the item that asked how the institution had contributed to their development in writing clearly and effectively increased quite a bit

from 2002 to 2007. The results were shared with the WI/CD Committee to provide information for their decision making process.

Submit WI Program Assessment Report

The Office of Assessment began collecting WI program assessment data in the fall of 2007 and developed an [assessment report](#) for the program. The report was reviewed by the WI/CD Committee at their February 2008 meeting. The committee reviewed and accepted the report and discussed recommendations for changes to the program and to the assessment process, based on the results of the data collections.

3. Future Initiatives to Assess the Writing Intensive Program

UNK departments are collecting WI course data during the 2007-2008 academic year. Assessment reports providing this data and actions to be taken will be submitted October 1, 2008. The Office of Assessment will provide feedback to departments to ensure that the data being collected and reported on is useful in making decisions about the effectiveness of their WI courses. Each department will continue to submit assessment reports for their WI courses every year thereafter.

The WI/CD committee will continue to review all new course syllabi and CVs of faculty members teaching courses to ensure new offerings meet the WI criteria. The committee will also be conducting a review of existing WI courses to ensure continued compliance with WI criteria. This review process will be in place by May of 2008.

The CAAP Writing and Critical Thinking tests will be administered every three years as a direct measure of the WI program outcomes.

In the spring of 2009, the Office of Assessment will develop and administer an online survey for faculty members and students to share their perceptions of the new 6-hour writing in the discipline program. This will provide useful feedback about how well the new program is working.

X. Summary of NCA Compliance

The final section of the UNK self-study provides a summary of the issues raised by the evaluation team in the 2004 NCA Report. The specific UNK initiatives and actions taken to ensure compliance in the nine areas identified for the focused visit are provided. Table X.1 outlines the UNK compliance initiatives matched to the appropriate NCA issue and includes the date when the initiative or activity was first implemented.

Table X.1 Summary of UNK Compliance with Issues Raised in the 2004 NCA Report

Issues raised by NCA team	Compliance Initiatives
Infrastructure to Support Assessment	
Administrative leadership	Appointed Director and Coordinator of Assessment (2004) Established Office of Assessment (2004) Developed Governance document (2004) Moved compliance responsibilities to Deans and SVCAASL (2004)
Stable infrastructure to support assessment	Established Office of Assessment (2004) Funded annual Assessment budget (2004) Established annual Assessment cycle (2004) Set up Faculty Assessment Committee (2004) Developed online Newsletter (2004) Set up Assessment Website (2004) Revised Assessment Strategic Plan (2005, 2007) Set up Student Assessment Committee (2005) Implement assessment software (2008)
Responsibility for assessment at all levels	Developed Governance document (2004) Developed guidelines for assessment reporting (2004)
Internal accountability and regular assessment reporting	Established annual assessment cycle (2004) Set report deadlines (2004) Provide Office of Assessment feedback on reports (2004) Moved compliance responsibilities to Deans and SVCAASL (2004)
Budget to provide faculty incentives	Funded annual Assessment budget (2004) Provide faculty development stipends (2004) Provide faculty research stipends (2004) Provide stipends for assessment projects (2004)
Faculty Commitment to Assessment	
Lack of faculty enthusiasm for assessment	Provide timely feedback on reports (2004) Consult with report preparers (2004) Work with Faculty Advisory Committee (2004) Provide clear guidelines for assessment

	<p>reporting (2004) Provide assessment training (2004) Provide professional development funds (2004) Sponsor summer workshops (2007) Sponsor Platte Valley Assessment Conference (2005, 2007) Recognize outstanding assessment practices at awards luncheon (2005) Solicit faculty input in climate survey (2007)</p>
Faculty ownership of assessment	<p>Provide faculty reporting stipends (2004) Provide faculty research stipends (2004) Provide resources to faculty members for annual assessment data collection and reporting (2004) Encourage participation on the Faculty Assessment Committee (2004) Achieved 100% reporting rate (2006) Solicit faculty input in climate survey (2007)</p>
Resources for faculty experimentation and scholarship	<p>Provide faculty conference stipends (2004) Provide faculty research stipends (2004) Provide faculty reporting stipends (2004) Recognize faculty members at annual Awards Luncheon (2005)</p>
Assessment accepted as integral part of faculty work	<p>Assessed using climate survey (2007)</p>
Recognition of Exemplary Assessment	
Recognition for exemplary assessment practices	<p>Hold an annual Awards Luncheon (2005) Held a CAAP appreciation luncheon (2007)</p>
Budget to encourage exemplary assessment	<p>Funded the annual Office of Assessment budget (2004) Provide faculty reporting stipends (2004) Provide faculty conference stipends (2004) Provide faculty research stipends (2004)</p>
Assessment Process Sustainability	
Coherence and sustainability of assessment	<p>Established annual department/program reporting process (2004) Consult regularly with faculty members (2004) Established reporting guidelines (2004) Collect and use campus-wide data--NSSE, CAAP, student and faculty surveys (2004) Make assessment results available to stakeholders--website, USA-Today, VSA (2004) Implement assessment software (2008)</p>
Assessment of undergraduate, graduate and General Studies	<p>Require annual department/program reporting (2004) Achieved 100% reporting rate (2006) Implement assessment software (2008)</p>

Assessment results used for improvement/change	Required in guidelines for assessment reporting (2004) Require section on “uses of data” in annual reports (2005) Use NSSE data for program changes (2004) Provide faculty awards for “use of data” (2006)
Successful track record in assessment	Demonstrated on website with annual assessment reports (2004) Demonstrated through numerous assessment activities and initiatives documented on the website (2004) Collect and use campus-wide data --NSSE, CAAP, student and faculty surveys (2004) Recognized at annual Assessment Awards Luncheon (2005) Achieved 100% reporting rate (2006)
Cultural Diversity (CD) Program Assessment	
Systematic review/evaluation of CD curricular requirements	Established WI/CD oversight committee (2005) Revised criteria for CD courses (2005) Established approval process for CD course offerings (2005) Collect and report CD assessment data (2005)
Process for transfer credits	Established articulation agreement with specific institutions (2000) Established process for approval of CD courses from other institutions (2000)
Assurance that CD courses are appropriate	Revised criteria for CD courses (2005) Established approval process for CD course offerings (2005) Conducted faculty and student survey of CD (2005)
Campus-wide commitment to improving CD climate	Built into Strategic Plan (2007) Conducted CD survey (2007)
Lack of faculty ownership of CD assessment	Conducted faculty and student surveys on CD program (2005) Use assessment data for decision making (2005) Consult with WI/CD committee on assessment planning (2006) Conducted CD survey (2007) Prepare and distribute an annual assessment report (2007)
Establish assessment process for CD	Use NSSE data related to CD (2004) Conducted faculty and student surveys on CD program (2005) Use assessment data for decision making (2005) Consult with WI/CD committee on assessment

	<p>planning (2006) Conducted CD survey (2007) Transferred assessment responsibility to Office of Assessment (2007) Prepare and distribute an annual assessment report (2007)</p>
Distance Education (eCampus) Assessment	
Evaluate progress in online programs	<p>Established assessment process (2005) Report department level assessment data (2006) Report program level assessment data (2006) Conducted student survey of eCampus (2006) Conducted faculty survey of eCampus (2006)</p>
Faculty commitment to assessment	<p>Provide faculty remuneration for course preparation (2005) Provide training specific to online courses (2005) Consult with faculty members on assessment (2005) Require annual assessment reporting (2006) Conducted climate survey (2007)</p>
General Studies (GS) Program Assessment	
Lack of Faculty ownership	<p>Revised governance structure (2004) Provide training on GS assessment (2004) Provide funding to attend GS conferences (2005) Recognize exemplary GS assessment (2005) Conducted faculty survey of GS (2005) Require annual assessment reporting (2006) Involve faculty members in renewal process (2006) Provide GS assessment results on website (2006) Involve faculty members in APR (2007)</p>
Clarify assessment responsibilities of the faculty	<p>Provide guidelines for assessment planning and annual reporting (2005) Clarify and revise objectives (2005) Participation in CAAP (2007)</p>
GS assessment process in place and results used	<p>Administer and use NSSE, CAAP, GS pilot, and student and faculty survey data (2005) Report annually on assessment data collection (2006) Require annual reports to include “uses of data” (2006)</p>
Graduate Program Assessment	
Faculty commitment to assessment	<p>Require annual assessment reporting (2005) Involve faculty members on Faculty Assessment</p>

	<p>Committee (2005) Consult with faculty members on preparation of assessment reports (2005) Conducted climate survey (2007)</p>
Graduate assessment process in place and results used	<p>Require assessment planning and annual reporting (2005) Require annual reports to include “uses of data” (2005) Require assessment plan as part of new program approval (2005)</p>
Writing Intensive (WI) Program Assessment	
Lack of faculty ownership of assessment	<p>Conducted faculty and student surveys on WI program (2005) Use assessment data for decision making (2005) Prepare and distribute an annual assessment report (2007) Consult with WI/CD committee on assessment planning (2006) Participated in CAAP (2007)</p>
Establish assessment process for WI	<p>Use NSSE data related to WI (2004) Conducted faculty and student surveys on WI program (2005) Use assessment data for decision making (2005) Consult with WI/CD committee on assessment planning (2006) Transferred assessment responsibility to Office of Assessment (2007) Prepare and distribute an annual assessment report (2007) Participated in CAAP (2007)</p>