

CRITERION THREE

# Student Learning and Effective Teaching

Nate Splett runs through  
an assignment in one of his  
agri-business courses.





*An education isn't how much you have committed to memory, or even how much you know. It's being able to differentiate between what you do know and what you don't.*

— Anatole France

# Student Learning and Effective Teaching

- *The University of Wisconsin-River Falls provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.*

The UW-River Falls mission statement clearly declares student learning as our primary concern. We value our history of commitment to teaching and learning, and we understand the importance of being able to demonstrate that our students are learning.

UWRF has long prided itself as an institution committed to teaching excellence. For almost 20 years, we have been developing processes to document that we are an institution that can demonstrate learning through effective assessment procedures. We recognize that this is an ongoing process that will require continuing focused attention. Since the 1997 self-study we have:

*We value our history of commitment to teaching and learning; it is our primary focus.*

- Developed a new general education program that is grounded on assessable goals and reportable outcomes



- Sponsored faculty workshops on assessment, both by supporting attendance at conferences off campus and by bringing experts to campus
- Instituted a series of assessment fairs to share information about assessment on campus
- Established and implemented an annual assessment report process
- Emphasized the need for effective assessment planning in our program review process
- Solidified the assessment coordinator position
- Documented the work of departments to utilize assessment data to make curricular change

While we have moved to institutionalize assessment practices throughout the campus, there is much more to do. Policies and practices are in place, but we have only begun to collect campus-wide data that will demonstrate our effectiveness.

**Teacher education professor David Pepi specializes in science education. He was UWRF's 1998 Distinguished Teacher.**





## CORE COMPONENT 3A

- The University of Wisconsin-River Falls' goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

UWRF has worked hard to develop a culture of assessment as a basis for improving student learning. Each program on campus has submitted an [assessment plan](#), which has been analyzed by the [Faculty Senate Assessment Committee](#) and [assessment coordinator](#), and an assessment report, which documents data being collected and actions taken as a result. Both the assessment plan analysis and assessment report analysis contribute to the institution's mission to "help students learn so they are successful as productive, creative, ethical, engaged citizens and leaders with an informed global perspective."

### ASSESSMENT TRAINING

Many academic departments began in the late 1980s to develop assessment plans and periodically submit those plans to administrative leaders. The Faculty Senate has had an assessment committee since 1993-94. At the time of the last re-accreditation visit, the associate vice chancellor served as the campus assessment coordinator and regularly reviewed departmental assessment plans and reports. In 1999 this position was lost as a result of budget reductions, and assessment responsibility was decentralized to the colleges.

Many departments continued their assessment activities to gauge and improve student learning, often aided by discipline-specific accreditation policies or in-house knowledge of assessment. Noted examples include the education preparation programs across campus, which successfully met assessment-focused NCATE standards in 2003. Other strong assessment efforts have been in place in the psychology department, the biology department and several others. However, the absence of annual campus-wide reporting led to the loss of common components. The decentralized approach made it harder to obtain and utilize consistent data across campus. Difficulties in collection have been exacerbated by instability in the institutional research office, cited in chapter two.

To meet the need for greater consistency and a campus-wide understanding of assessment, we instituted the changes listed at the top of this chapter. These efforts have created a more consistent understanding of the assessment process and increased support for assessment of student learning outcomes.



## GENERAL EDUCATION

The development of a new general education program based on assessable goals constitutes the most significant curricular development at UWRF in the past decade.

In its review of the UWRF general education program, the [1998 visitation team](#) noted:

*“The program’s objectives and areas of emphasis are laudable, but the assessment of these objectives runs the risk of being more difficult due to the abundance of course options within those areas. It perhaps is incumbent upon the institution to revisit its interpretation of the program’s balance of prescription and flexibility.”*

At the time of that visit, the assessment committee and the members of the academic program and policy committee (AP&P) had cited the need to make general education program goals “more assessable.” Based on those evaluations, we planned a complete revision of the university’s general education program.

Defining assessable student learning outcomes was at the heart of that revision process. In 2000, the Faculty Senate and AP&P established the following goals for the general education revision:

- The articulation of clear general education goals and objectives
- The creation of assessable outcomes
- Regular and routine general education assessment processes

We sent faculty to general education conferences and brought five national leaders in general education development to campus as we developed and refined the conceptual plan for the new program. After much discussion, the Faculty Senate approved the final plan in spring 2004.

The [general education plan](#) is an outcomes-based distribution model. The five goals state the student will be able to:

- Communicate effectively
- Demonstrate knowledge of past and present human endeavor
- Apply scientific principles to the natural world
- Engage in multidisciplinary inquiry
- Evaluate individual responsibility to self, society, and the world

Specific student learning outcomes are associated with each goal, as are the criteria courses must meet to be eligible for inclusion in that goal. Four of the five goals were divided into multiple “designators.” Students are required to take a specified number of credits in the various designators.

Courses in general education are assessed on a regular basis. The courses are approved for a maximum of five years. When the approval period elapses, assessment data for the course is examined to ensure that it has been effective in meeting the defined learning outcomes.



The Faculty Senate motion established the general education committee, charged with oversight of the program. The committee is responsible for [approving courses for general education](#), reviewing courses on a regular cycle, and evaluating the assessment results and plans for each course. A more complete [discussion of the general education program](#) and the steps in its development are presented online.

By the end of the 2006-07 academic year, 90 [courses had been approved](#) for the general education program. The process of implementing an assessable general education program has required the efforts of many faculty across campus. The recent survey of faculty indicated that 45 percent of the faculty had contributed in some way to the development of a course for general education. As the process has become institutionalized, it has led to a much better understanding of assessment across the university.

*“One of the aims of the [general education] committee was to stifle the common notion that ‘generals’ were something ‘to get done with’ rather than a true cornerstone of their growth as citizens, professionals, and leaders.”*

— Ruth Wood, chair of the general education committee, in an article she wrote for the *Falcon Features* magazine in 2005, introducing alumni to the newly-revised general education program

Currently, the program is in place, assessment data is being collected, and both individual courses and the entire program are being modified in response to the data collected. On the basis of responses from our external consultants and the evaluation of assessment plans, adjustments have already been made in the program.

### **Examples of the course review process based on assessment results**

Courses that have been approved in the general education program must be brought back to the general education committee within five years with data to illustrate that the course is meeting student learning outcomes for that designator. Initial approvals of courses in general education were staggered for lengths of time up to five years. Consequently, some courses have already been re-evaluated; in November 2006 eight courses were considered for re-approval. Based on the assessment results, instructional changes were made in some courses, and assessment procedures were revised in others. For example, the political science department refocused the POLS 114–American National, State, and Local Government course because the data indicated that few students learned the importance of partisanship in the organization of Congress. The reports document the use of data by departments to help students meet the expected learning outcomes of each general education course.

### **ASSESSMENT AT ALL LEVELS**

UWRF expects all academic programs to have identified student learning outcomes measured on a regular basis to assess the program’s success and enable continuous improvement.



## COURSE-LEVEL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The review of courses in the general education program provides a good example of course-level assessment. Courses approved for the general education program must address the student learning outcomes, the learning goals, and the specific definitions for each designator.



**History Professor Kurt Leichtle, in colonial period costume, handed out pocket U. S. Constitutions in September 2006 as part of the university's involvement in the American Democracy Project.**

For example, under goal two in the social and behavioral sciences (SB) designator, a course submitted for general education standing must: 1) be based on empirical research and human experience; 2) explore behavioral, civic, economic, or social relationships; and 3) examine factors that explain human/ social behavior. The student learning outcomes for an SB designation are that students will be able to: 1) identify basic methods of the social and behavioral sciences; 2) recognize and explain theoretical perspectives in the social and behavioral sciences; and 3) identify and correctly use terms and concepts that explain human/social behavior.

Once approved, the general education committee regularly reviews courses to ensure each course is meeting the student learning outcomes for that designator.

## UNIVERSITY-LEVEL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

In addition to the general education learning objectives, there are two [university-wide requirements](#) that students must meet in order to graduate



from UWRF. Students are required to take one course designated as American cultural diversity and one course designated as global perspectives. Both of these requirements may be satisfied as part of the general education program, major or minor programs of study, or elective credits. Courses must be at least three credits taken at the 200-level or above.

Many other courses across the university utilize student outcomes assessment to improve their courses. For example, AGEC 250–World Food and Population uses a pre- and post-test to ensure that students are meeting the objectives of the course, and CSTA 101–Fundamentals of Oral Communication administers a standardized listening test to evaluate the student’s ability to utilize essential listening skills in communication.

### **PROGRAM-LEVEL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Since 1994, every program on campus has had a plan for assessing student learning outcomes on file. In the fall of 2006 the Faculty Senate approved a new policy on “Academic Program Assessment Plans” that re-defined and clarified the format of the plans. In January 2007 the Faculty Senate approved a revised timetable for the implementation of assessment plans. Currently, every degree program has a recently reviewed assessment plan on file with the [assessment coordinator](#). Each of the assessment plans was evaluated using a rubric, and departments were given feedback on their plans by the Faculty Senate assessment committee and the assessment coordinator.

#### **Program level assessment examples**

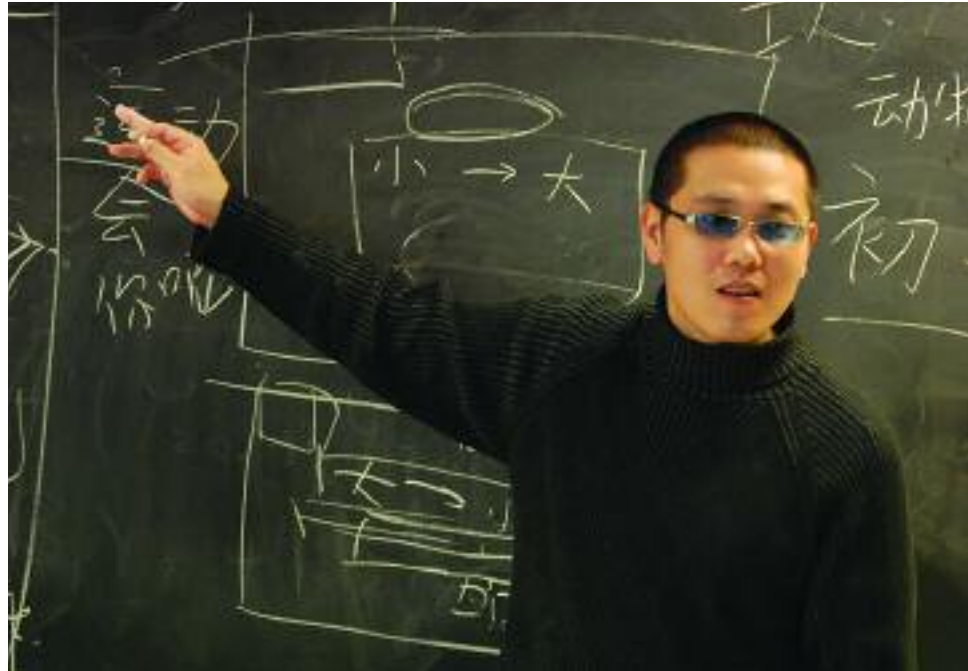
Departments at UWRF are actively using program assessment data for improvement. The following departmental practices provide a sample of student learning assessment on campus.

- The [psychology department’s](#) assessment plan has been in place for well over 10 years. Using multiple-choice questions, essays, and student attitude surveys, the department obtains an evaluation of their students’ learning. The department created a 170-item comprehensive examination called the Psychology Department Achievement Test (PDAT). The test was analyzed against the Educational Testing Service Major Field Test in Psychology for convergent validity. The psychology department now uses the PDAT each year to assess the learning level of students completing the program. Results of the PDAT are analyzed annually to find and repair any weaknesses in student preparation.
- For more than 10 years the [physics department](#) has had each advisor of a physics major keep selected assignments such as formal lab reports, senior (capstone) research papers, and pages of laboratory journals to determine the level of preparation of their graduates. In 2006, the department developed a prioritized list of skills for evaluating the capstone research. The department is tracking these skills to look for patterns of excellence and deficiency and is using this information to make changes in program activities prior to the capstone experience.



- As they updated their assessment plan, the [geology department](#) added “to conduct oneself in a professional and ethical manner” as a learning outcome in 2003. To assess this outcome, the department introduced the use of a form for tracking students’ participation in professional activities, a test on field ethics, and a senior exit survey.

Chinese national Lou Ling spent two semesters teaching Chinese to UWRF students in 2006-07 through an exchange agreement between the university and Zhejiang Education Institute in Hangzhou.



- The assessment plan for the [College of Business and Economics](#) includes electronic portfolios and rubrics that are assessed in three one-credit courses designed to teach specific skills. Extensive surveys of students, alumni, and business community partners are used to evaluate its program.

Each of the programs that are externally accredited undergo additional reviews of its assessment plans in line with professional standards.

Assessment at the university level falls upon the two programs in which all students participate: the general education program and university requirements. As of the printing of this self-study, an [assessment plan](#) for these two programs has been approved by the assessment committee, awaiting discussion, vote and approval by the Faculty Senate. The review of the general education program and university requirements is based upon the philosophy of peer evaluation and review. We understand the need for a comprehensive process for assessing these programs and we are moving in that direction.



## **ASSESSMENT COORDINATOR POSITION**

When the self-study committee first organized in 2005, it requested the re-establishment and solidification of a position for an assessment coordinator that had been lost in previous budget cuts. The request was quickly approved, and in January 2006 a half-time coordinator for student learning outcomes assessment was named with the following duties:

- Work with the provost and deans on issues of academic program assessment and serve as the provost's representative to the Faculty Senate assessment committee
- Assist departments, programs, and units with assessment plans
- Assist the general education committee with assessment of the general education program, and assist departments undergoing professional accreditation
- Maintain accurate records on program assessment plans and results
- Keep current on assessment trends and issues
- Work with the director of institutional research to assist in assessing institutional effectiveness and assist in responding to requests for information from external agencies (such as the UW System, legislature)

In August 2006 clear expectations for the revised assessment process were set for all departments. The provost called for assessment plans to be completed by the end of the fall semester and implemented in spring 2007. Reports from the academic units were submitted to the assessment coordinator in May 2007.

## **ASSESSMENT LEADS TO PROGRAM CHANGES**

Departments and programs have been doing assessment long enough to see trends and patterns in their data and have made changes leading to program improvement. Those with more recently revised assessment plans have reported that the effort of developing a rigorous assessment plan has clarified department and program goals. Beyond the desire and good intentions to improve programs, the act of specifying learning objectives is a powerful tool for analyzing the quality of a program.

- Agricultural Economics began using focus groups of their graduating seniors in 2002 and added pre- and post-testing in 2004. From the data obtained, the department instituted three changes: a) creation of a freshman-level course that provides an overview of agricultural business management skills, career options and opportunities, and major managerial challenges they will face; b) course restructuring to emphasize the skills students learn, with an eye to future employment; c) addition of regular social gatherings of their majors and minors and the creation of a new student club. They now report a marked improvement in the satisfaction level of students. The pre- and post-testing results have encouraged the department to expand the quantitative aspects of their coursework.



- The Department of Political Science has had a clearly developed process for collecting assessment data for many years. They use course mapping (specific skills required at increasing course number levels) and a senior seminar as a culminating activity that uses both direct and indirect measures of graduating seniors (grades and exit surveys). Based on data generated, the department changed the assessment plan to eliminate a portfolio requirement, introduce a required supporting course in statistics, and require a methods course of all majors.



**Accounting Society students offered assistance to low-income tax filers in the River Falls community on several evenings in March 2007.**

- Based on their assessment program, the accounting program has begun to implement a number of changes:
  - a) increased international content;
  - b) increased coverage of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002;
  - c) greater utilization of guest speakers in class and at Accounting Society meetings;
  - d) increased emphasis on teamwork and oral presentation projects;
  - e) increased use of spreadsheets in the auditing course;
  - f) earlier focus on formal writing skills;
  - g) increased ability to use financial statements to make decisions;
  - h) increased awareness of legal and regulatory issues;
  - i) greater emphasis on ethics; and
  - j) the addition of not-for-profit accounting and international accounting electives.
- The communicative disorders graduate program uses two primary outcome measures: knowledge outcomes measured by a Praxis examination in speech-language pathology, and skills outcomes measured by the UWRF Skill Outcome Form and employer surveys. Based on data received from these measures, the department developed a new course called Research Procedures in Communicative Disorders and increased practicum experiences.

In a survey of department chairs conducted in the summer of 2007, 94 percent of departments/programs reported that they have made curricular changes based on assessments of their program. This indicates that UWRF's curriculum is dynamic and that a culture of assessment is taking root in virtually every academic discipline on campus.

### **MAINTAINING PROGRAM QUALITY**

Departmental assessment plans provide an annual report on the work of the department. A key purpose of the assessment is to identify to what extent



learning objectives are being met and to identify opportunities to improve the program.

### **ASSESSMENT OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS: THE PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS**

UW-River Falls systematically reviews all academic programs on a regular schedule. [UW System Policy ACIS 1.0](#) on systematic program review states:

*the ultimate goal of a program review should be to examine the extent to which the educational goals of the program are still appropriate and are being achieved satisfactorily. Almost inevitably, a structured program review will result in some (possibly minor, or sometimes major) changes in the program. The ultimate goals of any program review should be improving the program.*



**Members of the teacher education faculty meet to map out curricular strategies.**

Every academic major on campus must undergo a systematic review every seven years on a timeline established by the Board of Regents. New programs must complete a special joint review in the fifth year following approval by the Board of Regents.

In 2004-05 the audit and review committee drafted a new template for the seven-year review of all academic programs, placing much more attention on the efficacy of departmental assessment plans. In 2005 the assessment committee and Faculty Senate approved the changes, strengthening and clarifying the assessment component of the program review process.

The [program review](#) provides the opportunity to:

- comprehensively evaluate the academic majors, assessing current strengths and challenges
- consider the resource needs and support levels associated with the major
- make programmatic recommendations on academic majors to the dean, provost, chancellor and university community
- routinely communicate information on program viability to the UW System, as required in system academic policy
- communicate information on program accountability to external groups and university constituencies

The format and content of the review document is fixed by UW System and



UW-River Falls policy and must include evaluation by an external reviewer who is expected to not only review the existing program but to also suggest methods of improving all levels of the program, e.g., curriculum and staffing. These suggestions can be the most important element of the program review process by serving as a catalyst of change and improvement. Examples of such changes can be found within virtually all departments. For example, the review for speech communication and theatre arts strongly recommended that we create a separate major for our theatre program, and a review of the art department indicated the need for a tenure-track art historian. Both recommendations were adopted.

### **CURRICULUM OVERSIGHT**

UWRF has a well-defined process to ensure that curricular additions and changes are academically sound. All course additions and significant changes to existing programs and new programs must go through a series of steps—department, college curriculum committee, dean and university curriculum committee for course changes or the AP&P committee and Faculty Senate for program changes. Public notice is provided at each step of the process and input from departments that might be affected by curricular changes is required. The UW System and the Board of Regents must approve new majors and programs.

## **CORE COMPONENT 3B**

- The University of Wisconsin-River Falls values and supports effective teaching.

UWRF has a strong tradition of recognizing and celebrating effective teaching. For 42 years the university has annually selected an individual faculty member as its distinguished teacher. Our most prestigious award winner is chosen through nominations from current seniors and recent graduates. In 2001 the Distinguished Teacher Award Recognition Wall was dedicated in the Wyman Education Building. The wall features plaques with an etched portrait of every winner since 1965. In addition to this permanent recognition, the award winner receives a monetary award from the UWRF Foundation and is invited to be the commencement speaker at the graduation ceremony the following December. Our [2007 Distinguished Teacher, James Madsen](#), a physics professor who involves students with his research at the South Pole, is the most recent of a long line of outstanding teachers at UWRF. The full list of distinguished teacher awardees can be viewed in the Wyman Education Building and is [available online](#).



## STATEMENTS AND STRUCTURES SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE TEACHING

The centrality of teaching and learning at UWRF is clear from our focused mission: “to help students learn so that they are successful as productive, creative, ethical, engaged citizens and leaders with an informed global perspective.” Our core value of academic excellence develops that emphasis. “We help students attain their fullest potential as critical thinkers, effective communicators and committed life-long learners by providing personalized, integrated educational experiences.”

Goal one of our strategic plan also indicates that we will:

- **Create a Culture of Learning:**  
*UWRF will develop a strong learning environment on the campus and beyond. We will support both student learning and faculty learning through research, scholarly, and creative activity.*

These statements of purpose clearly demonstrate UWRF’s commitment to effective teaching.

The University of Wisconsin System is built on policies that stress the importance of teaching excellence. For example, the June 2006 Regent policy paper on academic planning and program review in the UW System states: “High-quality teaching and scholarship... should provide the basic common context from which or within which all programs in the UW System should flow.”

On the UWRF campus, the large number of [Faculty Senate committees](#) dedicated to teaching and classroom issues support our commitment to effective teaching. To ensure the widest possible campus input on decisions

*“Dr. Madsen is a superb teacher. He can take a subject relatively unknown to a student, such as a science senior capstone course, and make it interesting. He has helped in an astrophysics project at the South Pole and he brings that outside information right into the classroom.”*

— a student nominating Dr. Madsen  
for the distinguished teacher award



The Distinguished Teacher wall display in the Wyman Education Building provides the backdrop for a campus visit by Wisconsin’s First Lady Jessica Doyle.



related to teaching, each of these committees consists of a mix of faculty (from across all colleges), staff members, administrators, and students. Committees specifically charged with issues related to teaching include:

- [Academic Policies and Programs Committee \(AP&P\)](#)
- [Academic Standards Committee](#)
- [Advising Committee](#)
- [Assessment Committee](#)
- [Diversity Committee](#)
- [General Education Committee](#)
- [Information and Instructional Technology Committee](#)
- [International Programs Committee](#)
- [Learning Resources Committee](#)
- [University Curriculum Committee](#)

For the charges of these committees, see the [Faculty Handbook](#), Chapter III.

### **MIX OF FACULTY AND TEACHING ACADEMIC STAFF**

Appendix A includes information on the numbers and credentials of our faculty and teaching academic staff. Since the end of enrollment management in 2005, our student headcount numbers have been growing approximately 2.7 percent per year (from 5,959 in fall 2004 to 6,457 in fall 2007). With the state control of positions, the increase in student numbers has not been accompanied by the addition of tenure track teaching lines. The university has made a consistent commitment to providing full schedules for all admitted students. But the combination of more students with a fixed number of faculty positions has resulted in increasing dependence on non-tenure track academic staff to provide the number of class sections needed.

Although tenured and tenure-track faculty continue to provide the majority of the instruction at UWRF, the number of teaching academic staff has been steadily increasing. In 1998 at the time of our last review, academic staff comprised less than 20 percent of the instructional staff. In fall 2005 a headcount of 130 academic staff comprised 35.5 percent of our teaching staff. By the fall of 2007 we had 170 academic staff members, which was 42.5 percent of the total headcount. Because many of the academic staff hold part-time and temporary appointments, the percentages of student credit hours is lower than the headcount would indicate. In 2005 teaching academic staff produced 26 percent of the SCH, and in 2007 the share of SCH taught by academic staff increased to 33 percent.

While we are continuing to maintain strong tenure track involvement in the primary teaching, the trends are a cause for concern. Temporary and part-time faculty members often have more limited understanding of and commitment to the long-term curricular goals of the department and university. They do not assume the responsibilities for advising the large number of students, nor are they normally involved with university and community service.



We have been fortunate in finding a number of well-qualified academic staff members, and we are assessing courses and evaluating teaching to ensure that instructional quality can be maintained. The campus ethos places high value on the active involvement of our full-time faculty with the direct instruction of our students. Significant changes to that culture would be troubling for many on campus.

## **HIRING, RETENTION, MERIT, PROMOTION, AND REVIEW POLICIES**

A quality teaching/learning environment is based on the quality of the people involved in that process. We believe that the process starts with the hiring of effective faculty and having policies in place to mentor, monitor, retain, reward and promote those faculty and teaching staff who demonstrate effective teaching and learning.

### **Hiring**

A national search is conducted for every tenure-track appointment. In the hiring of new faculty, “effectiveness in teaching or potential as a teacher” is a basic consideration in evaluating applications. When considering prior experience, previous teaching at the university level is given the most weight. As part of the hiring process, the university ensures that our faculty candidates understand that quality teaching takes precedence in retention, tenure and promotion decisions. Applicants are normally required to present a teaching demonstration during their campus visit, attended by faculty and students, and references are asked about the candidate’s teaching potential.

For hires since 1998, tenure is limited to those who hold a doctorate or a qualified professional degree (master of fine arts, master of social work with ACSW qualifications, or master’s degree and professional experience in broadcasting and journalism).

At an institution with a mission statement grounded in student learning, numerous policy statements indicate that teaching effectiveness is a major expectation for all faculty personnel actions. The personnel rules regarding hiring, retention, promotion, and post-tenure review can be found in the [Faculty Handbook, Chapter IV](#).

### **Faculty Retention**

The Faculty Handbook, Chapter IV 3.2.1(c), concerning renewal recommendation of probationary faculty reads: “The most important performance criterion will be effectiveness in teaching.” Departments are expected to provide a written set of “teaching expectations” that will provide guidance to the new faculty members.

### **Tenure and promotion**

The Faculty Handbook identifies one of the criteria for tenure: “faculty member possesses teaching... expertise.” Concerning promotions, UWRF policy lists teaching as one of the key criteria.



### Post-tenure

Even after achieving tenure and promotion, all tenured faculty members at UWRF undergo a post-tenure review every five years. In order to receive a positive review, faculty members must demonstrate continuing competence in teaching and in the areas of scholarly activity and professional and educational service. The post-tenure review cover sheet notes that the evaluation must include a narrative, and an “evaluation of the teaching effectiveness of the faculty member based on student evaluations, peer evaluations, and the faculty member’s teaching portfolio.”

While student evaluations are only one means of assessing classroom teaching effectiveness, UWRF is in compliance with [UW System Board of Regents Policy 20-2](#) regarding the use of student evaluations of teaching effectiveness. That policy states: “the Regents seek to establish University of Wisconsin System policy on the use of student evaluation of teaching for: a) improvement of instruction; b) retention, promotion, and tenure decisions; and c) merit salary increase deliberations.” Student evaluations of teaching are included as a measure of teaching effectiveness for all faculty personnel decisions. Peer reviews of teaching are also required.

The following table of the average student evaluations indicates that our students are generally very satisfied with the level of instruction that they receive at UWRF.

#### KEY

Responses are based on a six-point scale  
6 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree

Figure 3-1

### Average Student Evaluations of Faculty

	Knowledgeable	Organized	Clear Explanations	Enthusiastic	Enhanced Learning	Clear Expectations	Effective Feedback	Respectful
<b>Spring 2007</b>	5.5	5.0	4.9	5.4	4.9	5.0	5.0	5.4
<b>Fall 2006</b>	5.4	5.0	4.8	5.4	4.8	5.0	4.9	5.4
<b>Spring 2006</b>	5.4	5.0	4.8	5.4	4.8	4.9	4.9	5.4
<b>Fall 2005</b>	5.4	5.0	4.8	5.4	4.8	4.9	4.9	5.4
<b>Spring 2005</b>	5.5	5.1	5.0	5.4	4.9	5.1	5.1	5.4
<b>Fall 2004</b>	5.4	4.9	4.8	5.4	4.8	4.9	4.9	5.4

### Merit

At UWRF, teaching effectiveness is both an expectation and a point of recognition. All tenure track faculty at the university undergo an annual review for merit. Departmental merit ratings are expected to look at each faculty member’s contributions in the areas of teaching/advising, professional involvement/scholarship, and service. At least half of the merit ranking must be based on teaching excellence.



An example of a policy at the college level can be found in the [College of Education and Professional Studies Handbook](#).

*The College of Education and Professional Studies values and rewards teaching as the most important performance criterion for salary and merit. While faculty are expected to be professionally involved and accomplished in scholarly activities and are expected to contribute significantly to the university and greater community, excellence in teaching is the most heavily weighted consideration for awarding salary and merit.*

At every level, teaching effectiveness is valued and rewarded through the annual merit process.

### **Recruitment and Retention Funds**

UWRF makes a fiscal commitment to attract and retain highly qualified faculty. The chancellor distributes recruitment and retention (R&R) funds through the deans of each college who make the allocations. These funds are designed to be used to enhance teaching and scholarship and are used for set-up supplies and equipment purchases as well as to fund professional development activities, travel and supplies for new tenure-track faculty. In 2007 the university distributed a total of \$107,100 in R&R funds. Continuing tenure-track faculty are eligible to receive additional R&R funds each year as they approach tenure.

### **SUPPORT FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING**

The [Faculty and Academic Staff Development Board \(FASDB\)](#) promotes the effectiveness of faculty and academic staff with respect to teaching, professional development, and research. (There is a more extensive discussion of the work of the FASDB as it relates to faculty development in chapter four.)

In addition to its professional development role, FASDB provides support for the following items related directly to teaching and curriculum development:

- developing innovations in curriculum and instruction
- understanding the increased role of technology and its potential impact on instruction and learning
- adapting instructional methods to changing student populations and needs
- conducting research with respect to new paradigms for teaching and learning
- responding to needs for continued efforts to improve retention of new faculty and academic staff in addition to retention and graduation of students

The FASDB awards the majority of its funds through a competitive grants process. Of the board's five sub-committees, two relate directly to this section of the report:

- The [teaching committee](#) supports the efforts of faculty and academic staff to improve their teaching. Proposals may focus on methods or delivery of instruction or acquisition of knowledge related to one's teaching responsibilities.



CHAPTER THREE  
CRITERION THREE

Assistant professor  
Teresa Kruizenga monitors  
class work performed by  
students in the Educational  
Technology Center of the  
Wyman Education Building.



- The [university-wide initiatives committee](#) supports faculty and academic staff engagement in activities that will affect large numbers of UWRF faculty, students and staff.

### Exemplary Performance Awards

The 2005-07 biennial budget from the State of Wisconsin provided additional funds to the campus for the retention of outstanding faculty members. In 2007, \$98,000 in salary and equipment was awarded to 16 experienced teachers and scholars at UWRF.

### TECHNOLOGY TRAINING

In recent years, effective teaching has become interwoven with technological application. In order to keep faculty up-to-date with the latest education-related technologies, [Information Technology Services](#) (ITS) offers faculty online [assistance](#) across a wide variety of areas. In addition, ITS staffs a help desk that is accessible online, by phone, or in person. ITS staff offer small group and one-on-one [training sessions](#) for faculty. ITS has instituted policies to help ensure that technology is used effectively by well-trained teachers. Before using equipment in one of our technology enhanced classrooms, faculty members must attend a training session to obtain access to the equipment.

In addition to ITS training sessions, several faculty development presentations in recent years have focused on issues of effective use of technology in the classroom. For example, the [fall 2007 faculty development workshops](#) included sessions on iClickers, Sympodiums (Smart Boards), eReserves, and the Turnitin plagiarism software.



## VISITING PROFESSOR PROGRAM

The visiting professor program provides resources to bring an external expert to campus for a two- to four-day period to share his or her expertise with the university community. The faculty senate learning resources committee coordinates the program with funding provided by the UWRF Foundation.

The committee solicits nominations from across the university. The committee strives to ensure that the discipline areas represented by the visiting professors change from year to year so that the interests of all of the colleges are fairly represented. They attempt to select a candidate who has outstanding academic credentials and whose presentations may have appeal to a reasonable portion of the university community. The committee submits a proposal to the UWRF Foundation requesting the funds needed for travel, lodging, meals, honoraria, and other expenses incurred.

Once the visiting professor has been selected, the academic department(s) most relevant to this person's discipline arranges the schedule of events and activities for the visit. The learning resources committee works with these departments to help publicize public lectures and other events of the visiting professor's appearance. Together the committee and the department(s) try to arrange a schedule designed to give students and faculty opportunity for informal conversation and discussion with the visiting professor.

Dr. John Jacobsen, the [2007 visiting professor](#), came to UWRF from Chicago with 20 years experience as a physicist, artist, and software engineer. An exhibition of his photos and artwork was displayed at the Davee Library gallery. In addition to the exhibit and discussions in the library, Dr. Jacobsen visited classes and met with students and faculty in arts and the sciences. He also participated in a public presentation with the chair of the physics department, James Madsen.



**2007 Visiting Professor John Jacobsen, right, presented a display of his artwork while on campus. A physicist, artist and software engineer from Chicago, Jacobsen has served as a computer consultant on Project IceCube, a neutrino telescope being constructed at the South Pole.**

## GRADUATE COUNCIL

The graduate council routinely reviews graduate programs and courses to ensure that they meet the needs and expectations of advanced learners. Graduate council is comprised of the provost, director of graduate studies, director of the library, director of outreach programs, representatives from each of the dean's offices, and graduate faculty members representing each of the graduate programs.



### **SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING (SOTL)**

UWRF faculty have developed their understanding of Ernest Boyer's [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning](#) (SoTL) with support from colleagues in the UW System [Office of Professional and Instructional Development](#) (OPID). Bill Cerbin and Tony Ciccone, who have become nationally known for this work, have offered workshops and presentations at UWRF and around the state. Several UWRF faculty and teaching staff have developed interest in SoTL issues. At various times those faculty have formed reading groups and held periodic brown bag lunches on topics about teaching. OPID has provided system grant funding for SoTL projects on campus. The UW System supports several professional development opportunities for faculty which are discussed in chapter four.

### **RECOGNITION OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND ADVISING**

At UWRF we provide public recognition for those areas of service that we most value. Annual individual awards provide public awareness of quality of teaching, advising, and service. The awardees represent many others who are committed to that work.

#### **University and College Awards**

In addition to the distinguished university teachers mentioned previously, exemplary teaching is also recognized in each college. Depending on the size of the college, the numbers of teacher-of-the-year awards vary from one to three per year and generally carry a monetary reward. Outstanding teaching is also acknowledged in non-monetary ways. For example, the College of Arts and Sciences has an awards wall located in the first floor of KFA that contains photos of the current year's winners of several [CAS awards](#) including outstanding teachers, outstanding advisors, outstanding scholars, and those providing outstanding service. The display also contains plaques with the names of all previous winners. The other colleges annually recognize an outstanding faculty member and teacher and often post photos of those recognized. COEPS also recognizes an outstanding advisor and CBE recognizes a faculty scholar.

#### **UW System Regent Teaching Excellence Award**

The UW System recognizes outstanding teaching by giving an individual and departmental teaching excellence award each year. The plant and earth science department has won the system-wide teaching award, and three of our faculty members have won the individual teaching excellence award: Nick Karolides, English; Janna Cowen, economics; and Brad Caskey, psychology.

Dr. Caskey, recognized by the Regents in 2005, received his undergraduate degree from UWRF. A previous winner of our university distinguished teacher (1997) and university advisor of the year (2003) awards, Caskey maintains an active teaching and research agenda, engaging students in both large lectures and in individual undergraduate research projects. A frequent presenter of teaching strategies at faculty workshops, Caskey is known as a mentor/role model for young faculty.



### **Wisconsin Idea Fellows**

In 2004 the UW System Board of Regents recognized and honored the faculty and staff who have made outstanding contributions to their communities and to the state. The awards support the Wisconsin Idea that the boundaries of the university are the borders of the state. To date, eight faculty/staff from UWRF have received this prestigious award: Kelly Cain, environmental science; William Cordua, earth sciences; Michael Keenan, chemistry; Mark Kinders, public affairs; Brad Mogen, biology; Glenn Potts, economics; Charles Rader, geography; and Brian Smith, plant science.

### **Professional Teaching Honors**

UWRF faculty have been recognized beyond the campus by professional associations and given annual awards for outstanding teaching. For example, Steven Carlson received the 2005 State Educator Award at the Wisconsin Fertilizer Ag Lime Conference in Madison and was also recognized as one of six outstanding agriculture teachers at the Young Farmers Conference. In 2000 animal and food sciences professor Dean Henderson earned the American Meat Science Association Distinguished Teaching Award. Earl Blodgett won the 2004 Excellence in Teaching Award from the Association of Physics Teachers. William Cordua (2000), Lewis May (2006) and Bonnie Walters (2007) have earned teaching awards from the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture. Steve Kelm won the 2003 outstanding teacher award from the Midwest American Dairy Science Association/American Society of Animal Science, and Florence Monsour received the 2003 Gordon Mork Outstanding Educator Award from the University of Minnesota. Terry Ferris won an excellence in college and university teaching award from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This list of external recognitions is representative of the quality of teaching at UWRF.

### **Recognition for Advisors**

Recognizing the link between effective instruction and advising, we have established policies to encourage effective advising. All tenure-track UWRF faculty members are expected to advise students, and advising effectiveness is a component in department merit considerations.

Since 2000 the university has granted an [award for outstanding advising](#). The recipient is selected on the basis of nominations by graduating seniors and alumni. These nominations are then considered by the Faculty Senate advising committee, which makes the final selection for the “Advisor of the Year Award.” Steve Olsen, professor of marketing communications, who built the program from its beginning in 1997 to more than 150 students in three years, won the first advisor of the year award. CAS and COEPS also give an [annual advising award](#) selected by their students.

The university values advising at a broader student level, including advising to student organizations. Faculty members have been recognized nationally for advising efforts. For example, UW-River Falls physics professor Earl Blodgett received the 2004 Society of Physics Students (SPS) Outstanding Chapter Advisor Award for his work as advisor of the UWRF Physics Society.



## CORE COMPONENT 3C

- The University of Wisconsin-River Falls creates effective learning environments.

In 1999 UWRF received a Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology (PT3) implementation grant, totaling \$572,356, from the U.S. Department of Education. To implement the PT3 grant goals, a group of technologically competent students was selected and trained to become the [Technology Leadership Cadre](#) (TLC). The TLC members were charged with providing technology integration support to students, faculty, and partner school faculty through workshops and individual assistance. The TLC prepares students, faculty, and partner school faculty to integrate technology into their professional lives.

The TLC provides individual help to faculty in their offices or in one of the computer facilities on campus. This help may be in creating effective PowerPoint presentations, developing Excel spreadsheets, learning how to create an iMovie, starting a Chalk and Wire portfolio, using D2L for teaching, or implementing other learning technology tools. In addition, the TLC creates handouts, tutorials, and tips for faculty and students needing help. TLC representatives are available to come into a classroom and provide instruction to students on specific computer programs.

The TLC maintains a presence in the Educational Technology Center (ETC) in the Wyman Education Building, where any student or faculty/staff member may come and request technology assistance for classroom assignments and projects. Each semester the TLC hosts open help sessions in the ETC or in one of the library computer labs.

Although the PT3 funding ended in 2004, institutional and student technology fee support has been provided to allow the TLC to continue to provide critical technological support to both faculty and students.

### TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE

In today's world, the creation of effective academic learning environments has become almost synonymous with technological support. UWRF has a number of policies and programs in place to ensure technological sophistication that sustains educational excellence. Goal eight of our strategic plan focuses on enhancing the use of technology. The plan states: "UWRF will build an effective technological infrastructure to support the increasing demand and will provide the continuing training and support services needed to meet the institution's growing needs." To best serve the various disciplines, the university provides support for both Macintosh and Windows PC hardware and software.



### **Information Technology Restructuring and the Initiative**

In an effort to improve technology services, an [outside review](#) of the campus information technology environment was undertaken (See chapter two). Based on that report, a new chief information officer was hired. She instituted the [Information Technology Services Redesign Project \(ITSRP\)](#), a yearlong endeavor focused on aligning ITS with the educational mission of the university. The project was initiated in response to the recommendations of the IT review report of March 2006. Some of the project's accomplishments were readily apparent to the campus community (wireless connectivity throughout campus); others were relatively invisible but remedied infrastructure problems that prevented us from moving forward with other improvements. The project addressed commonly recognized "pain points" such as e-mail, electronic calendar, and remote access. Major progress has been made in data storage and handling and in many ITS services.

### **Computer Replacement Policy**

We live in a world where technological obsolescence is the norm. While a 10-year-old computer may still be capable of handling tasks like basic word processing, it is incapable of running the types of software needed to stay current. As more faculty viewed computer access as a necessity and not a luxury, the university realized that it must institute a formal policy concerning the replacement of faculty/staff computers. Since 1996, several policies have been instituted, reviewed and updated. The current [computer replacement policy](#) was put into effect in 2006. The primary goal of this policy is "to have a computer that is less than five years old for every permanent staff member with a 50 percent appointment or greater." Budget restrictions have made it impossible to shorten that time as we had planned. But the program has expanded to include teaching academic staff members with annual appointments. The university's annual computer replacement fund is approximately \$160,000.

### **Software Policy**

In many cases the age of a computer is not as important to establishing an effective learning environment as the computer's ability to run a specific software program and the availability of such software. One method by which software is upgraded is simply via the computer replacement system discussed above, e.g., each new computer is loaded with the newest operating system available for that computer. While this helps ensure the latest in general systems ware, it does not ensure the latest in specific application software.

ITS has specific policies concerning software availability, [support](#), and [cost](#). To help reduce the cost, UWRF has negotiated site licenses with numerous vendors, e.g., Adobe, Microsoft Windows XP, Microsoft Office, and SPSS. These licensing agreements allow for unlimited campus users with no charge to departments. For some products, site licenses are extended to the employee's home computer.

For discipline specific software, the cost of the software is often born directly by the user or by the department (via their supplies and equipment budget). With increasing software costs, this can place significant strain on the limited



departmental budgets. In such cases, departments have requested funds from several sources including college funds (through individual dean's offices), and funding programs discussed elsewhere in this document. These include laboratory modification grants, major equipment grants, the student technology fee, faculty development grants, or external research grants.

### **Student Technology Fee**

A critical funding source to enhance students' access to technology comes through a surcharge on tuition assessed to all students for this purpose. The student technology fee was established by the UW System Board of Regents in 1995. Under [Regent policy](#), students are appointed by Student Senate to a committee that advises the chancellor on use of the funds. Beginning in the 2007-08 academic year, the [Information and Instructional Technology Council](#) is the designated committee. Since its inception, the fee has generated approximately \$3,000,000. These funds are used to support computer services staff, HelpDesk student staffing, library databases, laptops for loan, and wireless access for academic buildings.

### **Campus Wireless Access**

The student technology fee was used to fully fund a \$250,000 project to extend [wireless access](#) to all campus academic buildings. The project, started in summer 2006, was completed at the start of the 2007-08 academic year. The new University Center opened as a completely wireless environment and access was extended to the common areas of residence halls in fall 2007. A 2007 [Educause](#) survey of student use of technology indicated that approximately 60 percent of UWRF students owned their own laptop computer. We anticipate this number will continue to rise as access to the wireless network becomes more ubiquitous, providing students with a greater degree of flexibility and access to resources.

### **Desire2Learn**

For over a decade the university has supported online course management packages designed to enhance the effectiveness of the learning experience. For several years, the main packages were Blackboard and WebCT, with training and support provided for both systems. In 2003-04, UWRF adopted the [Desire2Learn](#) (D2L) package as the campus standard, in conjunction with a UW System decision to support a single platform.

D2L has proven to be an effective [classroom tool](#). The package is a flexible system that can be customized by each faculty member from a large toolbox of features. The most commonly used features include a content area, a grades area, discussion and chat areas, a drop box area for students to electronically submit assignments, and a place for FAQ. The program provides an easy way to communicate electronically with a single student or the entire class. Virtually all aspects of a course can be put into D2L, including video lectures. This simplifies our ability to offer online courses. Students and faculty can access course materials from any computer with Internet access anywhere in the world. Traveling classes have used the system to provide access to materials internationally. D2L has provided unanticipated benefits, including cost savings



to departments by reducing copying costs for multiple handouts that can now be placed electronically in the course site. In addition to D2L, some instructors post course materials on their individual university Web pages.

Fall Semester	2004	2005	2006	2007
Number of courses	183	431	530	740
Students—unique logins	4,163	NA	5,586	6,493
Faculty—unique logins	82	NA	237	325

Figure 3-2

### Desire2Learn (D2L) Utilization

In 2007 over 60 percent of the teaching faculty and staff utilized D2L in their courses, and virtually 100 percent of the students logged on to D2L.

The ITS staff provides regular workshops and offers online help to introduce new faculty to the system and provide retraining when the system is updated. The TLC also provides individual D2L assistance to faculty, staff and students.

#### Laptop Computer Checkout

The Chalmer Davee Library checks out 16 laptop computers (5 Macs, 11 Dell and 3 LCD projectors) free of charge to faculty, staff, and students for selected time periods. The computers were checked out 780 times during spring semester 2007 (see [policy details](#)).

## TECHNOLOGY FACILITIES

### Tech Classrooms

During the past 10 years, the university has made a concerted effort to enhance student learning by bringing current technology to the classroom. The first dedicated tech room went online in the 1990s. Today the university supports 51 [technology-enhanced classrooms](#). These classrooms allow faculty to utilize a multitude of resources only available electronically, while exposing students to contemporary information delivery systems. The technology-enhanced rooms typically contain both Mac and Windows computers with Internet access, high-tech display/sound systems, and DVD and videotape playback systems. We have been expanding the number of rooms, and equipment is regularly upgraded.

In addition to classroom-dedicated systems, the university supports portable technology carts with the same basic capabilities to serve other classrooms in every academic building except the Wyman Education Building, where all classrooms are technologically enhanced.

### Campus Computer Labs

The university currently supports three [types of computer labs](#):



- **General Access Computer Labs:** General access labs are those used by any university student, faculty, or staff member. Six large labs are located in the Davee Library and currently have over 200 total individual work stations (with a mix of Mac and Windows platforms). There are also open access labs in the Agricultural Science Building, Wyman Education Building, Hathorn Hall, and the University Center. In addition, there are open computer stations in a number of the residence halls. Although the labs have been heavily used, the need for general access labs might decrease as greater numbers of students bring their own computers to campus. Nevertheless, the need to access specific software cannot always be met with private machines, and there will continue to be students who commute to campus and do not have ready access to computers or the Internet where they live.
- **Teaching Labs:** Some of the computer labs supported by ITS may be reserved for teaching and demonstration purposes. Use of a teaching computer lab is appropriate when participants, as well as the presenter, will be using computers in the course of their work. Each teaching lab is equipped with a teaching workstation and a projection unit and screen for displaying the presenter's computer screen. One of the teaching labs in the library is equipped with Macintosh computers. The teaching labs provide a wonderful resource for hands-on computer program training. Their use must be balanced, though, with the need for adequate general access computers for student use. Our ability to provide these resources also creates a challenge. As the number of courses requiring the teaching labs continues to grow, the potential for controversy increases concerning priorities for scheduling the use of the labs.
- **Departmental Computer Labs:** There are 20 computer labs on campus that support the instructional program of a particular department. These labs are not open to the general student population as they have specialized software and hardware to support a specific curriculum. Classes meet regularly in these labs to take advantage of the equipment and to receive instruction on the use of the software. Examples of departmental labs needing special software and instruction include the geographic information systems (GIS) lab in geography and mapping sciences, and the music theory lab, where all of the stations are connected to a music keyboard (see [policies](#) concerning the purpose and use of these labs).

### **NEW AND RENEWED FACILITIES**

In the introductory chapter, we provided an overview of the facilities that effectively support teaching and learning at UWRF. We also discussed the \$65M in new construction since the last campus visit in 1998. The Wyman Education Building and the Dairy Learning Center are two new facilities that are providing highly effective contemporary instructional spaces.

The new [University Center](#) provides a resource for the entire campus, with meeting rooms for student organizations and facilities for guest presenters to reach the entire campus and community. The plan for the building emphasizes the center's role in creating an environment for learning:



*“Just as important as the creature comforts and services that the University Center offers is the vital role it serves in linking classroom learning with life experiences and out-of-class learning opportunities. Through organized activities, or by simply providing an environment conducive to interaction and personal growth, the University Center serves as a learning laboratory for social responsibility, citizenship, and global awareness.”*

In addition to the new buildings, several significant upgrades and remodeling projects have enhanced our instructional facilities. Some of these efforts are described below.

### **Banks Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry**

In 2006 the College of Arts and Sciences received a generous gift from alumna Joanne Belfiori Banks to establish the Banks Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry. The center will promote and support creative, cross-disciplinary research and learning and provide a place for faculty and students to engage in dialogue and transformational thinking about old and new problems. The center will be a catalyst for research and teaching across traditional disciplinary boundaries.

When completed the center will house a classroom, meeting space and director’s office. Approximately \$100,000 of the donation is being used to create a state-of-the-art interdisciplinary classroom. The Banks Center, housed on the ground floor of the Chalmer Davee Library, will open in the fall of 2008.

*“I hope the [Banks] Center helps students transform the way they think about the curriculum. I hope it helps them draw connections. I hope it becomes regionally and nationally recognized as a model for promoting transformational research and learning. And I hope it leads to groundbreaking research and teaching.”*

— Terry Brown, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, on the new Banks Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry

The Banks gift will also be used to support programming by the center. In fall 2007 the Banks Center hosted Mark Rosheim, an expert in robotics, who has reconstructed Leonardo Da Vinci’s designs based on the artist’s notebooks. Rosheim is the first of many such visitors that the Banks Center plans to host in the coming years. The fund will also make it possible to offer small stipends to support faculty to develop courses or pursue research that will bring a variety of disciplines into dialogue on a topic or problem.

### **Art/Theatre Renovation**

In 1998-99 we remodeled all art studios in the Kleinpell Fine Arts building for safety and efficiency. Every studio was remodeled and several were relocated to provide optimal facilities and equipment for instruction. Ventilation capabilities were greatly improved, and a 1,120-square-foot space was established to the west of the building to house kilns, ovens, and glass-blowing furnaces. The theater department’s scene shop ventilation system was also improved as part of the project.



### **South Hall Remodeling**

South Hall, our oldest campus building, was originally constructed in 1898. In 2001 the building was evacuated and the floors replaced with a more environmentally healthy structural system. Several areas of the building were remodeled into offices and facilities to accommodate the new College of Business and Economics. Subsequent work by the campus provided a dedicated research lab for faculty, a networking lab for the computer science and information systems department, and student study space in that building.

### **Proposed Health and Human Performance (HHP) Building**

Karges Center was built in 1959 for 1,500 students and only a few men's athletic teams. We now have a student population of over 6,000 and 18 varsity men's and women's athletic teams. Building a new facility for the health and human performance department, athletics, and recreation has been a campus priority since 1997. It has been recommended for planning by the Board of Regents since the 2001-03 capital budget, but funding was not approved by the state at that time. In March 2007 the higher education subcommittee and building commission approved planning funds for 2007-09 with construction awaiting approval for the 2009-2011 biennium.

The new building plans include instructional space for classrooms, an anatomy lab, an exercise physiology lab, aerobics studio, dance studio, pool, racquetball courts, fitness center, strength and conditioning center, gymnasiums to serve our academic programs as well as some of our athletic teams, and recreational facilities for faculty, staff, and students.

### **Proposed Science Building**

Improved space for the sciences is an integral part of UWRF's 10-year facilities plan. The current science buildings were built 30-40 years ago and no longer support the numbers of students or the way that science is taught today. Science faculty members have begun the planning for facilities to meet contemporary needs and provide flexibility for the future. In fall 2004 UWRF sent a team of faculty and administrators to the [Project Kaleidoscope \(PKAL\)](#) Institute on Planning Facilities for the Undergraduate Sciences. Following that conference, faculty made "benchmarking" trips to visit nearby institutions with new science facilities. In fall 2006 UWRF received a [Keck/PKAL Consultancy Award](#) to bring a team of consultants to campus to assist with curriculum and space planning.

Our new and remodeled spaces offer clear evidence of UWRF's commitment to providing spaces for effective learning. Our plans for the future indicate the continuing nature of that commitment.

### **ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY OF INSTRUCTION**

We understand that the demand for alternative methods for the delivery of instruction will continue to grow. A number of courses utilize D2L to provide instruction that is a hybrid of online and face-to-face instruction, and individual



courses like Sociology 101 have been taught primarily online. In cooperation with the Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESA) 10 and 11, we regularly offer courses for high school youth options programs via interactive television. (Wisconsin has divided the state into 12 CESA regions to provide educational services to schools and students.) We also offer several outreach and graduate courses in asynchronous formats. The graduate certificate program in wildlife recreation and nature tourism is offered entirely online. We also collaborate with the [UW System Colleges](#), which offer lower level courses and [associate degrees entirely online](#). We have established course equivalencies, and courses from the UWS Colleges are applied directly to our degree requirements.

A significant new initiative to develop alternative delivery methods is the product of a [successful Title III grant](#). In collaboration with Chippewa Valley Technical College, UWRF received a \$2.5 million grant in October 2006 to expand online learning in this region. The five-year award will support faculty and staff training, support systems for students, and program development (see chapter two for a more complete discussion).

### **UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH**

The involvement of undergraduate students in active research is a major focus and a source of external recognition for the campus. One aspect of the positive relationships between faculty and upper level students is reflected in the number of faculty that have involved students with their research. In the past 10 years, those interactions have been promoted, and research with students is recognized in university merit, retention and promotion considerations.



**Undergraduate student David Markle received a UWRF Foundation research grant in summer 2007 to pursue his work on the mint plant.**



In 2000 a team of faculty and the dean of CAS attended a regional workshop of the [Council on Undergraduate Research](#) (CUR). They returned to hold a series of meetings and develop a network of faculty interested in promoting undergraduate research on campus. In 2002 CAS began a competitive [student grant program](#), utilizing college foundation funds to support undergraduate research. The program encouraged student research and introduced faculty and students to the [grant-writing process](#). In 2006 the College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences developed a similar program that supports CAFES students who make use of college laboratories and/or laboratory farms. The UWRF [Collaborative RSCA Grant](#) (Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activity),

administered by the Faculty Staff Development Board (FASDB) is designed to support collaborative student-faculty RSCA projects. Beginning fall 2007, our students approved a [differential tuition](#) plan that will provide an additional \$75,000 annually for student research, scholarly, and creative activities.

*“Every single student who has participated in an effective RSCA project will eventually tell you that no single classroom experience has had as much impact, nor produces such intense maturation of one’s intellectual capacity, as does the relationship between an RSCA mentor and student.”*

— Biology Professor Tim Lyden

In the spring of 2002, 39 UWRF students from many different academic disciplines attended the NCUR national conference in Whitewater, Wis. These students pre-

sented their scholarly activities to colleagues from across the nation. The presentations were very well received and the students were given wide acclaim for the quality of their work and the professionalism of their presentations.

In the spring of 2003, 32 students accompanied by six faculty members presented their research at the NCUR meeting in Salt Lake City. Twenty-seven students attended and made presentations at the 2004 NCUR meeting in Indianapolis, Ind. At the 2005 NCUR meeting in Lexington, Va., 42 students from UWRF presented posters and papers. Our group was the fourth largest contingent of student presentations from among the 250 universities participating in that conference. The next year, we developed an early application and selection process. In 2006, 19 of our students made presentations at the NCUR meeting in Ashville, N.C., and in 2007 we took 19 students to present at the NCUR meeting in San Rafeal, Calif. UWRF students participated in “Oklahoma Research Day” in October 2007, one of the largest state programs celebrating undergraduate research. Student presentations last spring covered a wide range of topics, including Kara Nelson’s “The effect of drainage tile on stream ecological integrity;” Chrystal Humbolt’s “Ideology and the Presidency;” and Danielle Tucker’s “The culture of early avian embryonic lung samples in 3-D artificial tissue (ATs) cultures.”

We have established a sound record of student presentations at our campus RSCA day and at NCUR, state research meetings, and national and regional professional conferences. Our [McNair Scholars](#) (see chapter 1b) are active participants in these events. This work has been supported by extensive faculty participation. In the 2007 faculty/staff survey, 59 percent of the faculty reported that they had worked with undergraduate students on RSCA projects.



Research, Scholarly and Creative Activities			
During the past 10 years, I have	Number of Responses	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>had a poster in the Research, Scholarly and Creative Activity (RSCA) Day</li> </ul>	144	58%	42%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>worked with an undergraduate student(s) on an RSCA project(s)</li> </ul>	148	59%	41%

Figure 3-3

### Faculty Participation in RSCA

UWRF Faculty Staff Survey Report. David Trechter et.al., Survey Research Center Report 2007/18

### INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

The support for effective learning environments does not stop at the borders of the campus or the state. Goal three of our strategic plan focuses on expanding global literacy and engagement. That vision indicates that “UWRF will integrate international and global experiences, learning and attitudes throughout the university.” Chapters two and four present more extensive information on the [Global Connections](#) office and our commitment to globalizing the curriculum and internationalizing the campus. Invaluable and indelible learning experiences result from the opportunities for students and faculty to live and study in another culture and another part of the world. Program options range from 7-10 day tours up to full-semester programs.

## CORE COMPONENT 3D

- The University of Wisconsin-River Falls’ learning resources effectively support student learning.

### CHALMER DAVEE LIBRARY

The [Chalmer Davee Library](#) continues a 130-year-old tradition of supporting academic excellence at UWRF. The library is a modern resource center (refurbished in 1997) that supports the university’s mission by:

- providing a welcoming environment conducive to learning, scholarship, and self-enrichment
- ensuring open access for the academic and local community to information and scholarship
- offering a carefully selected collection of books, periodicals, audiovisual materials, and electronic information resources
- instructing students in finding, using and evaluating information
- working with faculty to support the curriculum of the university
- serving as a depository for state and federal government information
- providing access to unique, historical materials from the area
- featuring a variety of exhibits and book discussions



The library collections include 350,000 volumes; subscription to 90 online databases and electronic reference sources across all academic areas; over 200,000 government publications on site, and thousands more online; 9,798 audiovisual materials, including videos, DVDs and CDs; and access to more than 14,459 magazines, newspapers, and journals in print and electronically. The library is normally open 103 hours per week during the academic year. Fifteen hours were added to the weekly schedule in fall 2007 based on student demand. The later hours are proving to be popular with students. Hours are abbreviated during the summer and J-term. The library provides personal service through a staffed reference desk 80 hours per week during the academic year.

Maintaining the level of support is an ongoing challenge as the prices for library materials continue to escalate. As a part of the UW System, we have access to a statewide network to supplement our holdings with over 12 million volumes. The [Wisconsin Library Services \(WiLS\)](#) facilitates national and statewide services through inter-library loan arrangements. The library provides access to the [WorldCat](#) database and resource system, the world's largest network of library content and services. Our location provides a significant advantage, as UWRF faculty and staff have been granted borrowing privileges at the University of Minnesota. Access to these significant collections provides this campus with many more resources than most campuses of similar size would be able to afford.

During the past 10 years, the library has significantly increased access to a number of electronic resources while reducing access to printed books and journals. Although the loss of books and paper copies of journals is not viewed as a positive step when content is lost, the resulting ability of staff and students to access information electronically enhances the learning environment. Through the current [online library system](#), faculty and students can peruse tens of thousands of books, magazine articles, and journal reports from anywhere they have Internet access. The Iliad [interlibrary loan system](#), implemented in 2004, provides electronic delivery of articles direct to the desktops of students, faculty and staff. One major challenge facing this system will be our ability to continue to support this level of access in a time of dwindling resources. To help address these challenges the new differential tuition program is providing \$92,000 to provide additional electronic resources.

In order to ensure a connection between library resources and academic needs, each academic department has a library allocation and a library liaison responsible for gathering recommendations from the faculty and communicating this information to the library staff.

Despite the limitations of budget and resources, the faculty and staff in our 2007 survey rated the work of the library staff very high. We clearly have an extremely effective library staff that is significantly involved with the academic life of the campus.



Question	Number of Responses	VS	S	N	D	VD
How satisfied are you:						
• that library staff are helpful and approachable?	290	52%	34%	13%	1%	0%
• that library resources are adequate?	289	19%	51%	24%	6%	1%

Figure 3-4

## Library Satisfaction

### KEY

- VS = very satisfied
- S = satisfied
- N = neutral
- D = dissatisfied
- VD = very dissatisfied

**UWRF Faculty Staff Survey Report.** David Trechter et.al., Survey Research Center Report 2007/18

The library staff provides direct instruction on library research to nearly 4,000 students annually—another example of their support of student learning and effective teaching.

## STUDENT ADVISING AND TUTORING SERVICES

Each of the four colleges has designated personnel to offer special advising services to support student learning. In 1999-2000 the state legislature allocated funding to enhance advising on all UW campuses. UWRF received 1.5 FTE positions to provide the services. Each college has applied those funds in slightly different ways. For example, CAS has two part-time supplemental advisors who meet in the dean’s office with students who have been readmitted following suspension. They discuss the student’s current semester progress and provide advice on ways to improve academic performance. CAFES has one part-time supplemental advisor for students on probation and those readmitted after a suspension. In CBE, the supplemental advisor coordinates the advising for all of the lower-level pre-business majors. COEPS has a full-time academic advisor who directs students through the complex process of entering the teacher education program and achieving certification. A campus-wide advising committee sets policies and provides guidance for advising on campus.

### Early Academic Alert Policy

In an effort to identify and assist students in potential academic peril, all faculty are asked to submit a report between the fifth and sixth weeks of each semester indicating which students in their classes are not making satisfactory progress due to poor performance and/or attendance issues. The policy was approved by the Faculty Senate in May 2005 and was first utilized that fall. This information is compiled and an alert is sent to affected students and their advisors.

The Academic Success Center (ASC) plays a significant role in our efforts to support student learning. The mission of the ASC is to coordinate academic support systems that enhance undergraduate student education. These support systems include academic counseling, peer tutoring, learning skills courses, and a range of advising programs. The ASC provides individual and small group advising to help students identify and define academic and intellectual goals



and develop strategies for academic success. The ASC partners with faculty, staff, volunteers, peer and departmental advisors to enable students to realize their academic potential.

### **Pre-majors**

A significant percentage of our students enter the university without a declared major (approximately 16-22 percent of incoming students). The university recognizes that in some cases not having a major may cause students additional stress and may decrease the likelihood of their success in the pursuit of a degree. Mindful of our mission “to help students learn,” the university has created a developmental program for students entering UWRF known as a “pre-major.” The program began in 2002 to assist students in making an informed choice concerning their college career, through one-on-one advising sessions that focus on both career and self-exploration. In tracking the students entering UWRF as pre-majors, approximately 64 percent successfully transitioned to an academic major and approximately 12 percent have been assisted in transferring to programs that best fit their academic needs at other institutions. (The remainder withdrew, were suspended, or made other choices such as entering the military.) The pre-major advising staff is located in the Academic Success Center, where students are introduced to other UWRF services designed to increase the likelihood of academic success.

**Tutoring Services** provides academic tutoring in a wide array of formats to assist students in understanding the course material and to develop effective study strategies. The programs have been quite successful. Students who actively participated in individual tutoring in 2006 realized a full letter grade increase in their GPA (+1.19). In a spring 2007 survey, 39 percent of the students reported that they might have dropped the class if they had not had a tutor, and an additional 7.3 percent reported that they definitely would have dropped the class. At the beginning of tutoring, 58.3 percent of the students were earning Ds or Fs, and after tutoring 88 percent earned a C or better (see [tutoring](#): summary data, fall 06 and spring 07).

In addition to individual tutoring, ASC staff “help rooms” for chemistry and physics as well as a Spanish conversation room. ASC has provided evening tutoring for math and science in the residence halls, a business and economics “help room,” and small group tutoring targeted toward multicultural students.

Study Symposia were created through collaboration between the Academic Success Center and the UWRF athletic department as an offshoot of the age-old “study table” concept and more modern “learning community” model. In addition to student athletes, the study symposia regularly serve students from CAFES and COEPS who are on probation. Since fall 2004 the symposium program has involved an average of 94 students per semester.

The **Writing Center** in KFA, managed by the English department, utilizes trained student tutors to help students write more effectively. The Writing Center maintains files on need and utilization and regularly assesses the responses of



both the students who make use of the services, and evaluations from faculty members whose students have visited the Writing Center. Based on responses, the Writing Center has doubled the number of tutors since 2003-04.

The [department of mathematics manages](#) the Math Help Center in North Hall, where upper-level student mentors provide help for students studying mathematics. These tutors are available on a walk-in basis to help any UWRF student enrolled in a remedial or general education math course. The Math help room provides students with an important and convenient supplemental source of tutoring and instruction. In addition, it affords our majors and minors, including many aspiring teachers, the opportunity to work directly with students.

[Outreach Advising](#) is a peer advising program designed to reinforce and broaden the scope of UWRF's existing advising practices. Every summer eight high-achieving students with more than 60 credits and a GPA greater than a 3.0 are hired and trained to answer basic questions, disseminate information, serve as referral agents, and monitor the needs of UWRF undergraduate students in the areas of registration and advising. Essentially, outreach advisors are expected to answer the small questions before they turn into big problems. Special attention is focused on reaching out to first-year, first-generation, undecided, low-income, and commuter students.

Outreach advisors are placed in areas of high student traffic, e.g., residence halls, University Center and dining facilities. Since the 2003-04 pilot year, outreach advisors have answered more than 3,200 student inquiries. They have facilitated workshops and programs that help to bridge the academic and social domains. The Outreach Advising Registration Workshop is held every fall prior to registration for spring semester for anyone who wants to come.

## **STUDENT HEALTH AND COUNSELING SERVICES**

The mission of UWRF [Student Health Services](#) is to enhance students' health by collaboratively providing basic health services, access to information and resources, advocacy for campus health policies, and prevention-focused programming so that students can successfully pursue their academic, personal, and professional endeavors.

Specific goals are to:

- provide accessible, appropriate health care services for students at the best price
- market health services to students, staff/faculty, and appropriate community members and work together to increase awareness of available services and assist students to appropriately access and utilize services
- provide and promote collaborative, coordinated health-related programming and appropriate health-related policies for campus, based on assessment data, research, and best practices
- work collaboratively with students, faculty, staff, administration, and the community, based on a public health model, to assure a safe and healthy campus and community



UWRF Counseling Services assists individuals to grow and learn within an educational, developmental, and therapeutic framework that enables them to become more productive, responsible, and contributing members of society. This is accomplished through individual, group, and programmatic means.

Specific goals are to:

- meet the developmentally focused counseling needs of UWRF students, faculty and staff on campus
- facilitate referrals to off-campus providers for more complex, longer-term psychotherapeutic mental health needs
- provide on-campus mental health crisis management support for students
- revise, update, or establish appropriate assessment and evaluation methods
- continue and expand collaborative mental health related issues education and programming, and promotion of prevention and wellness surrounding these issues, including marketing of services
- provide appropriate professional development opportunities and resources for staff to stay current and up-to-date professionally

### **College of the Overwhelmed Series**

In 2005 UWRF received a \$2,500 Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Bringing Theory to Practice grant to help raise campus-wide awareness of student mental health. As part of the grant, approximately 25 faculty and staff attended an initial faculty development day presentation on student mental health issues in August 2005. During the next phase of the project, approximately 100 students, faculty, staff, and community members read Dr. Richard Kadison's *College of the Overwhelmed*. On Jan. 19, 2006, the campus hosted Dr. Kadison for a day-long event that included a keynote address and several focused sessions for faculty and campus mental health staff members.

In 2006 UWRF received a \$10,000 AAC&U grant to continue our work in the area of student mental health. One outcome of this grant was the production of a publication titled, *Assisting Students During Emotional Distress*. The grant helped fund several initiatives designed to improve campus awareness of mental health issues including a student survey of mental health services on the UWRF campus. Funds from this grant helped fund a [spring 2007 campus-wide discussion](#) on *The Chemistry of Joy: A Three-Step Program for Overcoming Depression* by psychiatrist Dr. Henry Emmons. Again, a session was held to discuss how suggestions in the book could be used to improve student mental health at UWRF. This effort culminated with a campus visit by Dr. Emmons during which he spoke to a large group of faculty, staff, students, and community members. He led several small group sessions for counseling personnel while on campus.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

[Disability Services](#) at UWRF provides classroom accommodations to students with documented disabilities. The purpose is to ensure that these students



have equal access and opportunities for educational experiences at UWRF, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Common accommodations include:

- alternative text, e.g., audio recorded version of printed materials, enlarged-print versions, or Braille versions
- copies of lecture notes typically provided by arranging photocopies of the notes a skillful classmate has written
- test taking circumstances, e.g., extended test time, a distraction-reducing test-taking location, someone to read test questions out loud, someone to transcribe a student's oral answers to essay-type questions, or various combinations of these interventions
- interpreters for students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing
- other accommodations that address the unique situations of individual students

In 2006-07 Disability Services served 135 students who were enrolled in the program and eligible for assistance.

Disability Services offers numerous [services for faculty](#) members who are working with students with disabilities. Prior to each semester in which a faculty member has an identified student with a disability in a course, the faculty member is invited to participate in an information session on working with students with disabilities.

Disability Services has developed the following statement that all faculty are encouraged to include in their syllabi:

*The University of Wisconsin-River Falls welcomes students with disabilities into the university's educational programs and activities. Students with disability-related needs for reasonable accommodations should contact the Disability Services Office [102 Davee Library; (715) 425-3531]. Before final decisions can be made to allow accommodation, students must provide documentation; see <http://www.uwrf.edu/academic-success/> for further details.*

## **NEW STUDENTS**

In 2006 the university submitted a proposal to the UW System that requested funds from the growth agenda initiative to support a [first-year experience](#) (FYE) program. While awaiting budget approval, the university took a proactive step by re-assigning two staff members and two student intern positions to develop programs and assess the experiences of first-year students.

FYE has worked to create a coordinated and centralized place for first-year student support. Components of the program include: [new student registration](#); [Weeks of Welcome](#); [academic day](#); [family day](#); [new student](#) and [family communications](#); and developing partnerships with faculty/staff that connect new students with academic and co-curricular activities. Although most of



these programs had been in place prior to the creation of the FYE office, the coordination and communication has greatly enhanced the impact of this program.

The goal of the first-year experience program is to help new students become successful and well-oriented members of the campus community. The office coordinates new student and transfer student registration programs in June,

August, and January; it also provides a comprehensive Weeks of Welcome program for first-year and transfer students in [September](#) and [January](#).



Faculty member David Trechter provides advice during new student registration in June 2007.

FYE works to provide new students and their families with the information, resources, and support they need to be successful at UW-River Falls. Consistent and ongoing communication occurs with all first-year students and their families through the [Falcon 411](#) and [Falcon Families](#) newsletters. Every new student receives the weekly Falcon 411 and more than 700 families currently subscribe to the monthly

Falcon Families newsletter. Family members are encouraged to stay connected with UWRF through the [family day](#) program each fall. The impact of the enhanced communication can be demonstrated by the involvement in the family day event. Attendance has grown from 200 in 2005 to more than 800 students and family members in 2006. In 2007 a record turnout of more than 1,300 people participated in the festivities.

The FYE staff regularly collaborates with academic affairs, enrollment services, and student affairs to improve the service and support to our first-year students. In fall 2007 the UW System's growth agenda budget was passed and plans are underway to create a permanent organizational structure to advance FYE initiatives and continue to improve the experiences of our first-year students.

### **First-Year Communities**

The university has established several "first-year" wings in our residence halls where the resident assistants make a concerted effort to address transitional issues that first-year students typically face. Programming focus is placed on acclimating to college with emphasis on academic success, leadership development, making social connections, and healthy living. Specific goals associated with these floors include:

- publicizing academic services on campus
- assisting residents in developing academic goals
- encouraging study groups on floors



- encouraging participation in student organizations
- offering programs on study skills

### **Themed Communities**

To enhance a sense of connection and interaction, residence life has created wings focused on a specific topic or theme. Separate women in education, women in science, and recreation floors have been developed for first-year students with a declared major or a specific interest area. Resident assistants on those floors have a major that allows them to provide connections and guidance for those students. The floors encourage study groups and activities in the interest area, and faculty from that area are invited to present programs on the floor. The recreation wings were created in 1998, and the women in science and women in education themed wings were created in 2004. All of the themed wings were filled to capacity for fall 2007.

### **STUDENT AFFAIRS**

Our students are actively involved with guiding and planning events and activities that support the campus learning environment. Students take leadership not only through student governance and the allocation of segregated fees, but in the daily operations of the University Center and the residence life programs. In addition to those two programs, the Division of [Student Affairs](#) is responsible for operations like dining services, the child care center, and FredNet—the student service that provides Internet, telephone and cable television to the residence halls. The involvement center in the new University Center provides the focus for leadership training and co-curricular program development.

### **ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS**

The university understands the financial difficulties imposed by rising tuition rates, and the important role that [scholarships](#) play in supporting effective student learning. UWRF has developed policies and programs to help provide both new and current students with funds to help support their academic efforts.

#### **University Foundation Scholarships**

Thanks to the support of graduates and friends of the university, a significant number of “[all campus](#)” [scholarships](#) are awarded each year. The criterion for the scholarships is often centered on academic excellence, but specific criteria may be established by the donors. Sometimes the awards are linked to specific academic areas, e.g., the Allison M. Neel Memorial Scholarship award to a junior or senior pursuing a degree in chemistry, physics, plant and earth science, biology, geology, or psychology. Occasionally there are other qualifications as well, e.g., the River Falls Tuesday Club Award is granted to a woman with an interruption of a year or more in the pursuit of her education.

The university offers scholarships targeted at specific student groups, e.g., international students, students considering international study, students of



color, and students in specific pre-professional areas such as pre-pharmacy and pre-veterinary medicine.

Between 1998-99 and 2006-07, the number of available foundation scholarships increased from 450 to 544. More importantly, during that same period the dollar amount associated with these scholarships increased from \$275,000 to \$460,174.

### **College-Level Scholarships**

Several of the colleges at the university have designated foundation scholarships. In 2007 there were 120 distinct student scholarships for students in the College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences with approximately \$90,000 dollars distributed to students. The College of Arts and Sciences provided 136 scholarships for a total of \$112,000. The College of Business and Economics had 24 scholarships worth a total of \$25,000 dollars. In addition to 62 designated scholarships for a total of \$58,000, COEPS has used alumni contributions to endow a major scholarship to support a selected student through the university with continuous funding.

### **Department-Level Scholarships**

Many of the individual departments at the university offer student scholarships from funds donated by faculty, alumni, and friends of the department. In 2006 nearly every department offered scholarship opportunities for students in that discipline. In many cases departments had multiple scholarships available for students. For example, health and human performance had 10; elementary education, 6; music, 10; journalism, 11; plant and earth science, 18; and agricultural education, 11.

**Scholarship donors and recipients have the opportunity to come together at a UWR Foundation recognition celebration held each fall.**





## EVALUATION

### STRENGTHS

Our mission statement and core values speak to our commitment to the third criterion. Our mission is to help students learn, and one of our core values is to promote academic excellence by helping students to “attain their full potential as critical thinkers, effective communicators and committed life-long learners by providing personalized, integrated educational experiences.” These statements speak to a campus climate in which effective teaching is expected, encouraged, developed, and recognized. In addition, several of the goals of our strategic plan, “[Living the Promise](#),” speak directly to the university’s future focus on enhancing student learning—goal one, [create a culture of learning](#); goal three, [expand global literacy and engagement](#); goal five, [foster a culture of inclusiveness](#); goal eight, [enhance the use of technology](#); and goal nine, [invest in facilities to support our mission](#).

In addition to those plans, we note the following strengths and accomplishments:

- We have made substantial progress in establishing policies and procedures to examine assessment plans and collect university-wide assessment data. The position of an assessment coordinator has been solidified and is serving as a campus resource. We are regularly collecting data to document our learning outcomes.
- Our new general education program, which is outcomes-based and grounded in assessment, has helped instill a culture of assessment on campus.
- Individual departments and programs are utilizing assessment data to make programmatic changes. In a summer 2007 survey of department chairs, 94 percent of the departments said they had made programmatic changes based on their assessment efforts.
- Mission statements and policies at all levels emphasize the importance of effective teaching in our hiring, retention, and promotion processes.
- The UW System and the university have a long history of offering faculty development opportunities designed to improve teaching. UWRF faculty have been actively involved in these opportunities.
- We regularly celebrate and honor outstanding teaching and advising. Faculty members from across the university have been recognized at the local, regional, and national levels for their teaching and advising efforts.
- The university has utilized our resources to refurbish existing facilities to enhance learning. We have been aggressive and successful at lobbying and finding funding for the creation of new campus buildings.



- We are establishing a strong record of collaborative research, scholarly and creative activities with undergraduate students. UWRF has seen a growing number of students present their work at local, regional, and national conferences. Faculty report extensive involvement with these activities.
- A high percentage of our senior students (71 percent) report involvement with culminating projects and courses, e.g., capstone courses, senior projects, or research. This is significantly higher than our peers in the system and across the country (2006 NSSE data).
- Faculty and students have seen a large increase in the number of international opportunities. Our incoming students are significantly more likely to participate in study abroad than our peers in the UW System (2006 NSSE data).
- The UWRF Foundation has increased the amount of scholarship money available to support students.
- Support for the academic mission pervades the campus. Student Affairs, the library, the Academic Success Center and a range of other offices all contribute to the creation of an effective learning environment.

### **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT**

A significant concern has been the lack of continuity in the Office of Institutional Research, and an extended period without campus-wide coordination of assessment efforts. As a result, our assessment efforts have been decentralized and have only recently begun to be collected at the university level. Providing stability in the institutional research and assessment coordinator offices is important for continued assessment improvements.

In addition to the need for more consistent data collection, we note the following challenges:

- Assessment is an ongoing process. While we have plans and processes in place, we realize that the data being collected will need to be shared and used to continue to improve teaching and learning.
- While we have developed clear course-level assessments for general education, we will also need to develop a more comprehensive assessment process for the entire program. Finding ways to assess the competencies of our transfer students could be a challenge.
- There is a pressing need for new facilities for health and human performance and the sciences. The HHP building must still pass several hurdles and may not be completed until 2012. There is not yet a timeline for new or renewed science spaces. State supported capital funding has declined over the past decade relative to the cost



of construction. This is leading to even greater time to completion for projects. For instructional buildings relying primarily on state funding, it can take from 10 to 17 years from concept to completion for major building projects. We will need to continue to adapt and adjust until new facilities can be completed.

- We will need to continue to build resources, financial aid, and academic infrastructure to support the expansion of our international programs.
- With the potential for a growing student body and limitations on our classroom space, the university will need to train more faculty to use alternative methods of instructional delivery effectively. That has not been the focus of a majority of our faculty, who highly value the interactions provided by face-to-face instruction. Increasing our array of delivery options may be necessary to enable us to meet the needs of a changing student population, but we will also have to ensure that the alternative delivery of instruction will result in outcomes consistent with our mission and vision.
- Rising tuition is beginning to limit access for academically qualified low-income students. This could negatively affect student enrollment and retention, particularly for many of our first-generation students. (Forty-seven percent of our fall 2007 students are in that category.) This is a particular challenge given the composition of our student body (see figure 3-5).

Fall Semester Enrollment	2004	2005	2006	2007*
International and Students of Color	406	411	416	419
First generation college	1,638	2,273	2,732	3,038
Below Pell income ceiling	1,352	1,355	1,270	1,268
Non-traditional age**	683	718	719	835
<b>Total enrollment headcount</b>	<b>5,837</b>	<b>5,990</b>	<b>6,054</b>	<b>6,457</b>
Students self-reporting one or more of the above	3,101	3,537	3,865	4,257
<b>Percent of total headcount</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>66%</b>

Figure 3-5

### Student Body Composition

\* data are preliminary      \*\* only includes state-supported activity

Our 2007 [Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System \(IPEDS\)](#) data feedback report indicated that our students were much less likely to receive state and institutional support than those at our peer institutions, and consequently were more dependent on student loans. We must continue to increase the availability of scholarships and other aid to meet the growing financial needs of these students.



- Another challenge facing the university is the fact that the number of faculty/courses relying on technology continues to increase. We may need more resources to expand and upgrade facilities. Campus-wide wireless access might allow us to refocus existing funds to provide projection capabilities for laptops in lieu of adding more technology-enhanced classrooms. Although as wireless usage increases we may be faced with challenges of finding sufficient bandwidth to meet the demand.
- Finally, we will need to carefully monitor the increasing dependence on part-time and temporary academic staff to provide parts of the curriculum. Our commitment to providing full academic schedules for all of the students that are admitted is both commendable and vital to the public creditability of our institution. However, continued growth should be coupled with additional tenure-track instructional lines in priority areas wherever possible.

## **SUMMARY**

The university has continued to value and celebrate effective teaching and learning. Our mission is more than a simple motto. Units and programs across campus contribute to the creation of effective teaching and learning environments for our students. We understand that the instability in the institutional research office means that we do not yet have robust campus-wide data on all of our assessment of student-learning outcomes. But we have solidified the assessment coordinator position, we have made significant progress in developing a broad understanding of the nature and importance of assessment, and we have established active assessment programs in every department. Departments are not only collecting data, but they are making changes based on their assessments. We believe that we have the structures in place, and we are demonstrating our strength as an institution that supports good teaching and documents learning outcomes.



CHAPTER THREE  
CRITERION THREE