

UI100 Review Report
April 2008
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Introduction

UI100 is the required first-year seminar that serves as an introduction to the University's general education program, University Studies. UI100 represents the fourth iteration of the first-year seminar, preceded by three versions of the previous seminar, GS101. The University Bulletin description includes this information: *A skills-centered seminar introduces students to the University Studies program and the value of liberal education while addressing one of a variety of themes. Required of all students entering the University with 23 or fewer credit hours.* Each section of UI100 has an interdisciplinary theme that is the vehicle the instructor uses to accomplish the course goals:

- To introduce students to the concept and value of liberal education.
- To introduce students to the University Studies program goals and structure.
- To develop student skills in locating and gathering information.
- To develop student skills in critical thinking.
- To develop student skills in oral and written communication.
- To connect academic planning and career planning by students' timely completion of the FOCUS assessment in which they build a profile of their talents, abilities, and interests and the career paths persons with such profiles might consider (successful completion of this objective constitutes credit for the UI100 co-requisite CL001).

Actions

In conjunction with the Dean of University Studies & Academic Information Services, Dr. David Starrett, and the University Studies Council (USC), the UI100 Advisory Committee undertook a review of UI100 in the Fall 2007 semester. Working closely with University Studies Review Chairperson, Dr. Cheryl McAllister, the Advisory Committee chose (1) to include pointed survey items about UI100 in the USC's surveys of UI4xx students and alumni and (2) to survey faculty about their knowledge, impressions, and perceptions of UI100 along with their experience with UI100 and demographic data about faculty respondents. Additionally, Advisory Committee members looked at several years' summary data from IDEA reports of student evaluations of instruction administered in every section of UI100 every semester since the course's inception in Fall 2000. Advisory Committee members met periodically during the academic year to finalize surveys and to analyze and discuss the findings of those surveys and of IDEA evaluations in order to make recommendations to the USC about UI100.

Members of the Advisory Committee and their academic affiliations at the time of the review were:

Member	Unit
Leon Book, Chair	Student Transitions & First-Year Experience Office of the Vice Provost/School of University Studies
Bill Bratberg	Department of Middle & Secondary Education College of Education
Bruce Domazlicky	Department of Economics & Finance Harrison College of Business
Allen Gathman	Department of Biology College of Science & Mathematics
Gloria Green	Department of Nursing College of Health & Human Services
Dale Haskell	Department of English College of Liberal Arts
Kim Dillivan	Department of Agriculture School of Polytechnic Studies
Claudia Ruediger	Kent Library Academic Information Services
David Starrett	Dean, School of University Studies & Academic Information Services Ex-Officio
Cheryl McAllister	Chair, University Studies Review University Studies Council Ex-Officio

Findings

University Studies Review Chairperson, Dr. Cheryl McAllister, and her colleagues on the University Studies Council (USC) have provided a thorough analysis of the findings of the several surveys conducted during this review. Dr. McAllister has kindly shared those findings with the UI100 Advisory Committee, and those findings are summarized below. Additionally, the Advisory Committee considered several years of data from students' IDEA evaluations of instruction. Since UI100 was installed in Fall 2000, every section of UI100, every semester, is evaluated by students using the IDEA survey. Generalizations from that body of data are also presented below.

Student survey data. In general the data from these surveys indicate a more positive impression of UI100 than a negative one, but nonetheless, the data from a variety of sources indicated concerns, misperceptions, and criticisms of the UI100 course. The USC's evaluation of student survey data indicate that of the 274 students who responded to this survey, only 181 indicated they had taken UI100. Of those 181 students, 56% felt the course helped them make significant progress towards meeting the first 3 University Studies Objectives and 41% agreed that UI100 had been a valuable part of their overall learning experience. The data concerning the UI300-level and UI400-level courses indicates that these courses have a better 'reputation' among students (and faculty) than the UI100 course. Southeast alumni who graduated between 1998 and 2007 were invited to respond to a survey regarding their University Studies experience. Of the 397

respondents, only 174 reported taking UI100. Because of the range of graduates surveyed, some respondents took the earlier GS101 course, some had the course waived, and some transferred into Southeast and were not required to take UI100. Of the 174 who did report taking UI100, 57% agreed that UI100 had provided them with an appropriate introduction to the University Studies Program and its goals.

In general the data from these surveys indicate a more positive impression of UI100 than a negative one, but nonetheless, the data from a variety of sources indicated concerns, misperceptions, and criticisms of the UI100 course. Both the University Studies Council and the UI100 Advisory committee collected and considered data related to that course. The following are highlights of the data collected related to the UI100 First Year Seminar course:

- Forty percent of the faculty felt UI100 was a valuable part of the University Studies Program, while 20% of the faculty disagreed with this statement, and another 40% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.
- Of the 274 students in a UI400-level course during the fall 2007 semester who responded to this survey, only 181 indicated they had taken UI100. Of those 181 students, 56% felt the course helped them make significant progress towards meeting the first 3 University Studies Objectives and 41% agreed that UI100 had been a valuable part of their overall learning experience.
- Of the 397 respondents to the Alumni survey, only 174 reported taking UI100. Because of the range of graduates surveyed, some respondents took the earlier GS101 course, some had the course waived, and some transferred into Southeast and were not required to take UI100. Of the 174 who did, 57% agreed that UI100 had provided them with an introduction to the University Studies Program and its goals.

Faculty survey data. The USC reported that in their analysis, the biggest concern from the faculty survey was their perception of the value of the UI100 course. The report authors indicated that 40% of the faculty felt UI100 was a valuable part of the University Studies Program, while 20% of the faculty disagreed with this statement, and another 40% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

The UI100 Advisory Committee wanted to know if there were differences in the data from faculty about UI100 whether or not the respondents had taught the seminar at least once. Consequently, they parsed the data into two groups: those who had and those who had not taught the seminar. As reported in the USC review, there is an important difference between the opinions and observations of faculty who taught the course and those that have not. This is summarized in the following table:

Have you seen the Course Approval Document for UI100?				
	Have taught: number	Have taught: percentage	Have not taught: number	Have not taught: percentage
Yes	52	76%	22	18%
No/Don't know	16	24%	102	82%

Do you believe all students who attend Southeast should be required to take UI100?				
Yes	26	38%	37	31%
No	43	62%	83	69%
When the rigor of UI100 is compared to other first year courses, UI100 is:				
At least as rigorous or more rigorous	37	57%	43	41%
Less rigorous	28	43%	63	59%
Students understand and value what they learn in UI100.				
Agree or strongly agree	16	24%	12	10%
Neither agree nor disagree	16	24%	66	56%
Disagree or strongly disagree	35	52%	40	34%

Comments from faculty in both categories indicated the belief that, even more than in other courses, the instructor of a UI100 course is the biggest factor in determining whether the course will be a significant educational experience for students. One respondent wrote that “UI100, when taught well, is a positive experience for both students and the instructor alike.” Data from students and alumni reinforced this finding. The survey revealed that faculty who have never taught the course had many misconceptions about what content the course covered and what skills the course was designed to develop. Data from the department chairs and the deans indicated that there were similar mixed reviews of the UI100 course.

IDEA evaluation data. The Advisory Committee chose to examine student evaluations of instruction going back to Fall 2004 when a new custom-published textbook was introduced for the course. Prior to that time, instructors had used a critical thinking text, and the Committee members felt that, because the custom text addresses specifically and directly the course objectives, student evaluations prior to Fall 2004 might skew the data. While data about UI100 from student and alumni surveys ranges from generally positive to mixed, data from students as indicated on their IDEA evaluations of instruction are more positive about their experience. For example, 61% of the students indicated that the quality of instruction in UI100 compared to all classes in the institution was similar (35%), higher (18%) or much higher (8%). Similarly, the average rating of excellence of the UI100 teacher was exactly the same as the institution average (4.1 on a 5.0 scale). Likewise, the average rating of the excellence of the course was virtually the same: 3.7 for UI100 versus 3.9 for all courses. Also noteworthy are the IDEA results on “progress on relevant objectives”. A full 80% of the respondents indicated that, compared to all courses in the institution, their progress was similar (57%), higher (17%) or much higher (5%). The institution average for this category (3.9) was virtually identical to the UI100 average (3.8). Additional data on three key course components are also pertinent. Students reported that virtually 100% of the courses either

required some or much writing, oral communication, and critical thinking. The table below summarizes these data:

Component	Percent indicating amount required was:		
	None or Little	Some	Much
Writing	0%	34%	66%
Oral Communication	3%	55%	42%
Critical Thinking	0%	27%	73%

From these data, a case can be made that the course achieves its purposes. It is important to note, too, that students complete these IDEA evaluations during the semester that they take UI100. These activities and course components are very fresh in their minds. Data from student and alumni surveys report impressions of UI100 that are at least two years removed and in some cases as many as 7 years distant. These lasting impressions are certainly important and provide valuable insight into the long-term effects, if indeed any, that the seminar might have had on students, but they may not speak as clearly to the quality of the experience students had in UI100 as the IDEA data seem to indicate.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the review, including data from current students, from alumni, from faculty, and from deans and chairpersons, the Advisory Committee drafted a set of recommendations for the University Studies Council to consider as part of its overall review of University Studies:

1. Ensure every instructor receives the UI100 Course Approval Document (CAD) so they can compare their individual syllabi to the CAD to verify that they are carrying out course expectations.
 - Provide the CAD to participants in the UI100 New Teacher Workshop in addition to the generic syllabus and examples of how the generic syllabus has been adapted by individual faculty.
 - Provide a link to the CAD on the UI100 website.
2. Provide regular and periodic faculty development workshops to assist faculty in their efforts to address specific course tenets/objectives.
3. Explore establishing a faculty mentor program.
4. Maintain on the UI100 website a clearinghouse of successful, proven activities (best practices).
 - Ensure that the files are in such a form as to facilitate the activities being easily adapted to individual instructors' needs.
5. Because UI100 is a seminar and requires a dynamic and interactive pedagogy that some faculty may not be familiar or comfortable with, create an aspirational UI100 Faculty status analogous to Honors Faculty or Graduate faculty status with specific criteria and experience that prospective instructors must meet in order to qualify to teach UI100.
 - Explore means to include UI100 Faculty status among criteria for promotion, merit, and tenure considerations.

- Explore budget structures to allow instructors admitted to the cadre of UI100 Faculty to apply for professional development funds reserved for them.
6. Explore means to present, explain, and promote UI100 to University Studies program constituents so that they understand purposes and tenets of the course and that they do not associate UI100 with previous iterations of the first-year seminar at Southeast, GS101, highlighting among the points of fact about UI100 that the present first-year seminar was designed to address constituents' complaints about GS101.
 7. Refer to the course as "UI100 First-Year Seminar".