# Assessment in the Majors, 2002

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## INTRODUCTION

Each year, George Bridges, Dean and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, asks departments to submit reports that list learning goals for undergraduate majors, assessment activities, and curricular assessment and changes. The purpose of these reports is to communicate undergraduate program-level assessment activities to external audiences and to the campus community.

This document proves an end-of-year summary of those reports. The Assessment in the Majors Chart for 2002 includes the reports for nearly all the UW departments that offer undergraduate majors. In addition, an Assessment Methods Chart, updated biennially, lists approaches each department uses to assess both teaching and student learning and is included on the OEA web site.

The summaries of departmental assessment reports include information from 51 (85 percent) UW undergraduate majors. As the report summaries show, more than half of the departments reporting (54 percent) have learning goals for their majors, and several others note that they are in the process of developing such goals. A glance at the learning goals for Landscape Architecture, Chemistry, Dance, Industrial Engineering, and Oceanography shows interesting similarities and critical differences between departmental goals.

As the report summaries also show, all the reporting departments assess the learning of students in their majors with methods that extend beyond classroom assessment techniques. About 65 percent of the reporting departments use capstone or capstone-like experiences (such as senior seminars) to evaluate students' learning. About 47 percent of the departments report using exit surveys, and 12 percent report using outside evaluators to assess students' work. Departments also frequently use focus groups, interviews, or other forms of conversations with students to identify what students have learned and what they believe is working in the major, as well as those areas that need improvement or attention. Other methods frequently used to understand and evaluate student learning in the majors include employer surveys, student self-assessment, and focused study of student performance. The Office of Educational Assessment provides information to all departments on graduates, as well as evaluations of departmental courses.

The departmental summaries that follow include curricular changes departments instituted in 2001-02. All but two UW departments reported significant curricular changes for 2002. Two major changes for 2001-02 are the mergers of Communication and Speech Communication into one Communication Department and of Biology, Botany, and Zoology into one Department of Biology. In addition to curricular changes of this scope, departments, such as History, have performed comprehensive review and revisions of their entire undergraduate programs, have added courses to focus on specific skills, such as the addition of

Interdisciplinary Writing Program courses to content courses in Dance, and have eliminated courses that seemed to no longer be useful to curricular goals. For nearly every department, curricular review is an essential and time-consuming part of the assessment work of UW majors.

The Assessment Methods Chart shows the range of methods used by individual departments to assess teaching and learning. It also provides an overview of methods used at the UW. The chart is somewhat deceptive, as many departments have several tracks for majors and those tracks may use different assessment methods. Thus, the learning of two students in differing tracks in the School of Business, for example, may be assessed in different ways. Several departments are using a wide variety of methods for assessing teaching and learning and may serve as models for departments that are working to develop new ways to assess their programs. Examples include Geography, Germanics, Zoology, Electrical Engineering, Materials Science and Engineering, Forest Resources, Nursing, and Social Welfare.