

**Senate Committee for Enrollment and Admissions Policies  
Report and Recommendations on First Charge  
January 24 2012**

**Charge:** In consultation with the Provost's Office, the deans, the division of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, and the undergraduate Student Government Association, the Committee on Enrollment and Admissions Policy will provide recommendations related to enhancing the freshman educational experience. These recommendations will take into account the University's strengths, evidence-based instructional and educational practices, and possible barriers to implementing new policies and procedures. The committee will submit a report to the Senate Agenda Committee that summarizes the Committee's findings and recommendations by December 15, 2011.

This report starts with background information on the Northeastern freshmen, lists current freshmen activities and opportunities, and reports a list of recommendations for enhancing the freshmen experience at Northeastern University.

**Background on Northeastern Freshmen**

The characteristics of Northeastern freshmen are changing in several regards:

1. A growing number of our entering freshmen are international students, representing an increase from 3.5% in 2006 to 16% in 2011.
2. Our entering freshmen are better prepared for college work than earlier cohorts. Their mean combined SAT score increased over 110 points in the last 5 years. The number of students with a QPA lower than 3.29 after the first year decreased, while the number of student with a QPA greater than 3.3 after the first year increased.
3. Our entering freshmen are transferring in increasing amounts of AP/IB credit. For instance, in 2006 only 30 students transferred in more than 29 AP credit hours; in 2011 there were 171.
4. An increased proportion of our entering students are joining the Honors Program. Only 10% of the incoming freshmen joined the program in 2006. This number almost doubled in 2011.

(Further details can be found in the table attached at the end of this document.)

In their most recent sets of responses to the National Survey of Student Engagement (in Spring 2009 and Spring 2011), our freshmen have indicated:

1. Less interaction with faculty than is the case at peer institutions.
2. Less reported work and lower perception of academically challenging courses than is the case at peer institutions.
3. Less agreement that the institution emphasizes studying and academic work than is the case at peer institutions.

It should be noted that these differences from peer institutions are not large, but that they are consistent across specific queries in these areas and that they are distinct from the responses of Northeastern seniors, where these perceived experiences paralleled or exceeded those at peer institutions. It is also notable that the NU freshman perception of faculty interaction is somewhat more positive in Spring 2011 than in Spring 2009. Finally, anecdotal input from faculty and students support the premise that freshman courses do not consistently provide appropriate rigor.

### **Background on the Current Freshman Experience**

- Each college has launched and/or is considering creative approaches to enhancing the freshmen year.
- Much of the freshman experience occurs in the NU Core: freshman writing, level-one mathematics, exploration via the level-one knowledge domains, and the first-year learning community.
- Every college offers a first-term 1-SH First-Year Seminar (FYS) that serves as an introduction to NU/ the college/the major. Many, but not all, majors are provided such courses. Instructors for these courses are sharing best practices via workshops and a Blackboard site for syllabi, etc.
- Most colleges provide freshmen an introduction to the various forms of experiential learning. Some colleges are providing opportunities to freshmen for research and/or community service. Freshmen are encountering opportunities for global study in their first summer and via the N.U.*in* program. A read-only version of a broad sampling from the PlacePro/NeuCool database of co-op positions, "Explore Co-op," will be available in 2012 to freshmen.
- Freshmen are required to live on campus. As of this year, every first-year student becomes a member of a Living Learning Community.
- Freshmen are welcome in almost all student organizations and some colleges have created mechanisms for guaranteeing freshman involvement.

### **Recommendations to Enhance the Freshman Year**

- In addition to the current mechanisms for cross-college discussion, we recommend the creation of additional resources for communicating best practices for the freshman year, such as internal web site(s) (Blackboard, Sharepoint, etc.), workshops and other venues for faculty interaction.

- The university should provide a diagnostic screening for entering students for whom English is not a native language, along with the appropriate new support systems and funding for current resources for students who need additional work in English understanding/speaking. Faculty and advisors have noted an increasing number of cases where individual student success is limited by English language understanding/ability, and where the academic rigor of the class is limited by a subset of students who cannot participate in the expected activities, e.g., case studies and group presentations.
- The colleges and departments should review their curricula, including NU Core, major and elective classes, to align with the high qualifications of our entering freshmen and their expectations for rigorous, challenging courses. They should also ensure broad communication with their faculty members about the changing qualifications of our entering freshmen.
- The colleges and departments should review their teaching assignments, TRACE input, and other appropriate materials to insure that freshmen instruction is delivered effectively and that it involves some interaction with our tenure-track faculty.
- The colleges and departments should develop courses that serve their freshmen whose AP/IB credit exempts them from the “standard” freshman courses in the major. For example, Biology has developed inquiry courses (BIOL 2297/99) limited to freshman majors entering with AP Biology credit that focus on recent developments in the field through readings, discussion and projects.
- The colleges and departments should develop courses that are sufficient in quality and quantity to serve their Honors Program students. It is notable that, in some cases, students entering in the Honors Program are the same students whose AP/IB credit exempts them from the “standard” freshman courses in the major; thus, the same set of courses could address both needs in some cases. Additionally, the colleges and departments should develop mechanisms for early involvement of faculty in mentoring the honors students—along with other appropriate students—for success in honors project work and other forms of scholarship, along with possible graduate work.
- Colleges and departments should explore the opportunities for faculty/freshman interaction—as well as freshman/upper-class student interaction—offered by the student organizations and the Living Learning Communities.
- The Faculty Senate and/or the UCC should examine the effect of increasing AP/IB credit on the NU Core intent for learning communities: “First-year learning communities will be established that consist of two or more courses in the same semester in which students are cohort-registered.” The role of the 1-SH First-Year seminars (FYS) that

were established by many units as one component of the learning communities should also be considered. Possibly the FYS could replace the current learning community requirement, as has been the case on many other campuses, and the NU Core component goals could be aligned with the FYS format, e.g.,

- To introduce students to university study and strategies for managing their learning
- To introduce students to NU as an academic community, including fields of study and areas of interest available to students
- To acquaint students with the learning tools and resources available at NU and in the major, including experiential learning opportunities
- To provide an opportunity for students to connect with a community of other students, along with faculty and staff, in an academic area of interest to them
- To introduce students to their responsibilities as part of the NU community
- To allow the student to identify academic aspirations and create a plan for future academic success

Respectfully submitted:

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Freshman Characteristics (Fall '06-'11)	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	
<b>NU Cohort Size</b>	2953	2867	2920	2832	2837	3082	2953	2867	2920	2832	2837	3082	
Mean Incoming GPA	3.59	3.65	3.74	3.71	3.78	3.83	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Mean combined SAT score	1230	1254	1271	1288	1309	1341							
International Students	103	165	183	262	301	495	3.49	5.76	6.27	9.25	10.61	16.06	
US Citizens	2774	2630	2668	2495	2476	2519	93.94	91.73	91.37	88.10	87.28	81.73	
Honors Students	291	331	278	296	529	577	9.85	11.55	9.52	10.45	18.65	18.72	
# students w/1+ AP credit hours	870	1061	1168	1194	1369	1580	29.46	37.01	40.00	42.16	48.26	51.27	
1-4	311	322	349	314	373	345	10.53	11.23	11.95	11.09	13.15	11.19	
5-8	159	185	208	215	261	253	5.38	6.45	7.12	7.59	9.20	8.21	
9-12	152	197	184	173	191	220	5.15	6.87	6.30	6.11	6.73	7.14	
13-16	88	112	147	155	162	195	2.98	3.91	5.03	5.47	5.71	6.33	
17-20	60	84	84	115	128	166	2.03	2.93	2.88	4.06	4.51	5.39	
21-24	44	64	74	73	96	131	1.49	2.23	2.53	2.58	3.38	4.25	
25-28	26	38	40	49	68	99	0.88	1.33	1.37	1.73	2.40	3.21	
29+	30	59	82	100	90	171	1.02	2.06	2.81	3.53	3.17	5.55	
QPA after first year	0.00	24	23	4	12	10	-	0.81	0.80	0.14	0.42	0.35	-
>0.0 to 2.2999	269	241	176	202	163	-	-	9.11	8.41	6.03	7.13	5.75	-
2.3 to 2.7999	463	410	375	371	330	-	-	15.68	14.30	12.84	13.10	11.63	-
2.8 to 2.9999	299	262	256	248	239	-	-	10.13	9.14	8.77	8.76	8.42	-
3.0 to 3.2999	642	569	577	559	484	-	-	21.74	19.85	19.76	19.74	17.06	-
3.3 to 3.4999	415	406	430	415	437	-	-	14.05	14.16	14.73	14.65	15.40	-
3.5 to 3.6999	419	433	488	456	513	-	-	14.19	15.10	16.71	16.10	18.08	-
3.7 to 3.8999	318	366	411	400	458	-	-	10.77	12.77	14.08	14.12	16.14	-
3.9 to 4.000	105	157	153	168	198	-	-	3.56	5.48	5.24	5.93	6.98	-