

Standard Four: The Academic Program

Description

The Urban College of Boston is a private, two-year college that encourages and supports intellectual growth for low-income students who live in the metropolitan Boston area and beyond. Through its open admissions policy, Urban College is committed to providing its student population access to an Associate of Arts degree and ensuring that students are successful in earning that degree.

In 1993, the College was granted a charter to offer the Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education, General Studies and Human Service Administration. All certificate programs come under the umbrella of the three degree programs. In addition, these programs prepare our students for career advancement and transferring to baccalaureate degree granting institutions with which UCB has agreements. (See Exhibit 4.01: *Articulation Agreements and Partnerships*.)

The *Certificates of Achievement* enable students to focus on particular aspects of professional and personal interest within the three fields of study, while working toward their Associate of Arts degree. In alignment with the mission of the College, these provide students with a testing of the waters in what is often their first attempt at attaining a college degree. In addition, the Certificate also provides an obtainable goal; many students feel that the required 66 credits for the Associate Degree is an unobtainable goal. This mindset is often changed once the Certificate is earned.

The College also provides developmental coursework in English and math for those students who are in need of additional readiness skills to be successful in college coursework. During the fall 2005 semester, the College adopted the use of *Accuplacer* to measure the writing skills of its student body. In addition, the College realizes that many of its students lack sufficient study skills and/or have not yet recognized their individual style of learning. In the fall 2004 semester, the College began conducting the *Learning-Styles Assessment* for new students and for those students who were having difficulty in current coursework. These two instruments, *Accuplacer* and *Learning-Styles Assessment*, are usually completed prior to registration and have offered students and advisors significant insight into each student's preparedness to succeed in college.

In addition to offering the Associate of Arts degree and Certificates of Achievement, the College works in partnership with ABCD Head Start to provide coursework required by their employees to earn their Childhood Development Associate (CDA) credential. This national credential, awarded by ABCD Head Start, is part of a national effort to credential qualified caregivers who work with children from birth to age five. The CDA Training Program, a competency-based program featuring an individualized training plan, provides an important step for students toward acquiring an Associate Degree, as well as another step on the ladder of upward mobility in the childcare field.

Since 90 percent of Urban College students are non-traditional, working adults, the College schedules all classes in the evenings, Monday through Thursday. The College operates on a 15-week semester, with classes meeting one night per week for three hours (6:00 to 9:00 p.m.). This schedule provides a greater depth and continuity of study and fits better into the busy schedules of students trying to continue employment, working with childcare and other family issues, as well as general life demands.

Urban College of Boston also offers courses in several community and neighborhood locations by contractual agreement. (See Exhibit 4.02: *Contract Course Agreements*.) These Early Childhood Education contract courses have been offered at *Learning Works*, 19 Temple Place, Boston; *Associated Child Care*, Jamaica Plain, and *Child Care Circuit*, Lawrence. They are taught by Urban College of Boston faculty in accordance with the adopted UCB course syllabus to assure consistency and quality. The Early Childhood Education Division Chair visits the sites frequently as part of the evaluation process (See Standard Two: *Planning and Evaluation*). While these courses are offered off-site, students receive tutoring support, if needed, at the College's main facilities at 178 Tremont Street in Boston.

Ongoing assessment of teaching, learning, and effectiveness of every part of the curriculum takes place through a variety of structures and committee review processes, directed by the Academic Affairs Committee. The College currently has two active committees and other mechanisms that review curriculum offerings, ensure assessment of programs, students and courses, and set policies and procedures for the Office of Academic Affairs as well as offer opportunities for faculty to participate in decisions surrounding the academic program:

- **Curriculum Advisory Committee** meets regularly to determine if the curriculum is current and to ensure that needs are being met. The committee also has the responsibility for reviewing new course offerings and determining when courses will be scheduled to ensure that students can complete their program of study in a timely fashion. Membership includes the Academic Dean, ECE Division Chair, HSA/GS Division Chair, and Instructor of English. (See Exhibit 4.03: *Curriculum Advisory Committee*.)
- **Academic Standards Committee** meets to develop policy and procedures for curricula, academic services and to hear grievances. Membership includes the Academic Dean, Dean of Enrollment Services, ECE Division Chair, HSA/GS Division Chair and Instructor of English. (See Exhibit 4.04: *Academic Standards Committee*.)
- **Faculty Meetings** provide the core faculty with an opportunity to meet twice a month as a group to discuss on-going issues surrounding part-time faculty concerns as well as student concerns. In addition, the meetings provide an avenue for group discussions surrounding enhancement of teaching and learning through academic offerings and academic support needed to assist students in their quest for academic excellence. (See Exhibit 4.05: *Faculty Meetings*.)

- **Faculty Development Meetings** occur once per semester and membership is comprised of full- and part-time faculty. These meetings are geared to provide not only a professional development day (See Standard Five: *Faculty.*), but they also provide an opportunity for the interaction of all faculty in the discussions of course delivery, course offerings, future academic plans and faculty concerns. (See Exhibit 5.06: *Faculty Professional Development Seminars.*)

Through faculty and course evaluations, students have an opportunity to participate in the assessment of faculty and the delivery and relevance of course offerings. These evaluations occur at the end of each semester for each course. Students complete a Likert scale evaluation of 18 items aimed at assessing course content, delivery and teaching. In addition, they have the opportunity to provide a written assessment of their experience. These confidential evaluations are turned into the Academic Dean's office for review and the findings are shared with the instructor and department chair after grades have been submitted. These evaluations can also provide the College with valuable information regarding relevance of course content, as perceived by the student body.

Certificate Programs

The College provides eight certificate programs that offer students an alternative route to acquiring career skills and to furthering their educational experience. These courses introduce students to an area of specialization, such as case management, early childhood education, human services and computer application systems.

These programs have been popular with students who desire to master certain subjects in their quest for job advancement and have proven to be a way to build confidence in their decision to return to college after a long hiatus. *Certificates of Achievement*, which consist of 21 – 24 credits, can be applied to the Associate Degree requirements at the College and serve as the first academic achievement for many UCB students. They provide students with the confidence to strive for and matriculate into a degree program. The areas of concentration for the *Certificate of Achievement* are:

- Early Childhood Education (ECE);
- Early Childhood Education – Bilingual (Spanish & Cantonese);
- Family Services;
- General Studies (GS);
- Human Services Administration (HSA);
- Direct Service Worker (Youth – 6-18);
- Personal Computer Applications; and
- Youth Program Administration

Degree Programs

All degree programs require students to complete 66 credits with a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or greater. They are planned so that full-time students can complete the degree programs within two years; however, the majority of UCB students are part-time. While all three programs require that students take 33 credits of general education coursework, the remainder of the requirements are specific to the discipline.

The general education core constitutes 50 percent of each program of study. The courses offered in the general education core provide a broad spectrum of liberal arts offerings. These courses provide students with a balance of coursework in the humanities, natural science, social science, math, health and life fitness, and computer application. It is the intention of the College to design general education courses that produce the well-rounded educated person: development of problem-solving and organizational skills, competency in written and oral communication, as well as an appreciation for life-long learning. (See Exhibit 4.06: *General Education Curriculum*.) Important issues pertinent to each course are examined from diverse perspectives, thus promoting the formulation of sound judgments and strengthening the ability to think critically. Specific required general education courses are:

- ENG 111 – College Writing I3 Credits
 - ENG 112 – College Writing II3 Credits
 - COM 111 – Speech Communication.....3 Credits
 - PSY 100 – General Psychology3 Credits
 - HLF 201 – Health and Life Fitness..... 3 Credits
 - Humanities6 Credits
 - Social Sciences.....3 Credits
 - Natural Sciences 3Credits
 - Computer Application Systems3 Credits
 - Mathematics3Credits
- Total: 33 Credits

Each degree program also requires two professional seminar classes, the first taken early in the program of study and the second, the capstone course, at the conclusion of the program.

- The *Early Childhood Education Pro Seminar I* allows students to become familiar with the foundations and development of their profession. The role of the professional is examined in context of standards, practices, ethics, values, legal and regulatory issues. This course is the beginning process of portfolio development. During the *Early Childhood Education Pro Seminar II* course, students conduct a professional self-assessment, finalize a professional portfolio, produce a resume and explore career opportunities.
- The *General Studies and Human Services Administration Pro Seminar I* courses, which are designed as a laboratory for professional growth, examine the purpose of education and offer students practice in personal observation skills, journal reflection, skill inventory, goal setting and the understanding of student

responsibilities associated with attending college. *Pro Seminar II* for General Studies and Human Services Administration provides students with an opportunity to develop a professional portfolio, produce a resume and explore career options and to conduct a professional self-assessment.

The degree content-specific requirement for Early Childhood Education and Human Services Administration consists of four courses that build upon a sequence of acquired knowledge, as well as Internships I and II. (See Exhibit 4.07: *Core Curriculum*.) The General Studies degree content-specific component requires students to take a broad scope of courses: seven courses drawn from at least four areas selected from humanities, social science, natural sciences, mathematics, computer application systems and management. An important component of the Early Childhood Education and Human Services Administration degree programs is the internship. Students must complete two three-credit field experiences which offer the opportunity to:

- Assess and refine professional capabilities and career plans;
- Establish effective relationships in the work environment;
- Apply acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace; and
- Further develop the portfolio as evidence of professional obtained experience.

The placement of the internship is determined following discussions between the student and his/her advisor. Each student is assigned a supervisor. In ECE, the supervisor meets with individual students at their placement site on three separate occasions. In addition to the site visits, ECE students meet regularly as a group for eight to ten seminars where students are given the opportunity to share their experiences and learn new techniques to assist in building their careers. (See Exhibit 4.08: *Early Childhood Education Curriculum*.) For students enrolled in the HSA degree program, students have off-site supervisors with whom they meet each time they are at the arranged site. These supervisors help students devise individual programs that lead to advancement in their human services careers. (See Exhibit 4.09: *Human Services Administration Curriculum*.)

New Course Development and Curriculum Changes

The Early Childhood Education courses have been structured to meet the needs of the students who are seeking employment (preparing students for the job market) and to align with the Massachusetts Department of Early Education for Children *Guidelines and Standards*, published in 2004, as well as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standards for two-year colleges. This outcomes-based approach ensures that students who complete the Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education at Urban College of Boston transfer with ease to four-year programs in early childhood education and/or gain employment as childcare providers. (See Exhibit 4.11: *NAEYC Accreditation Work*.)

The General Studies curriculum has also gone through tremendous change since 2000. The College has recognized the need to adapt the English curriculum so that a greater number of

Hispanic/Latino and Cantonese students continue with their studies after taking the four available early childhood courses in Spanish or Cantonese. In 1999, the College added two English courses to address the writing needs of the English as Second Language learners so that students would continue to strive toward a certificate program. However, this was not enough. Although students were successful in acquiring the certificate, the College continued to see students struggle with the acquisition of English writing skills. Many still did not have sufficient writing skills in place to continue working toward the Associate Degree. Therefore, during the spring of 2005, the College revisited the English curriculum and based on findings, hired an English/ESOL consultant to revise the English curriculum. The revision of the English curriculum was completed in August 2005 and put into place for the fall 2005 semester. The College now offers seven different levels of English courses, three of which are ESOL and a new ESOL Speech Communication course. (See Exhibit 4.10: *Revised English Curriculum*.) The College is committed to providing courses that enable students to gain the ability to communicate effectively through writing and speaking, thus assuring that UCB students can read and write effectively in their personal and professional lives.

The College also recognized that many students were experiencing difficulty transferring all credits to Lesley University. The College responded by developing two new art courses that were needed to fulfill Lesley's liberal arts requirement. While this was first looked at in response to those students who were transferring to Lesley, the College also saw it as an opportunity to expand its offerings in the general studies/liberal arts curriculum for all students. These two courses, *Art and Architecture* and *Art Through the Child's Eyes*, were offered for the first time during the 2005 summer semester. Since the curriculum for *Art and Architecture* is built around lecture, and frequent on-site trips to museums and significant architectural Boston neighborhoods, it will remain a part of the summer offerings in this northeastern city. *Art Through the Child's Eyes* will be offered on a rotating basis between the spring and summer semesters. (See Exhibit 4.12: *New Course Development*.)

The College has also begun to redesign its computer information systems courses, so that they are more in line with the changing world of technology, always mindful of the need of many Urban College of Boston students who wish to acquire specific computer skills for employment. Currently, new course descriptions have been written and faculty are in the process of writing syllabi, with expected implementation in the fall 2006 semester.

As mentioned, the College requires students to take a writing placement exam prior to their first registration. In developing the new English curriculum, it became apparent that the former method of assessment for writing would not be compatible with the new curriculum. The College, therefore, adopted the use of *Accuplacer* to assess students' writing readiness. This instrument was first used for the fall 2005 registration period. The consultant matched the scores of *Accuplacer* with the appropriate English courses. The College feels that this has been a major step in placing students in appropriate levels of English and ESOL courses. In addition, the College saw a greater need for developmental courses for its students and during the fall 2005 semester offered additional sections of both ESOL and developmental English courses.

Other Degree Options

Experiential Learning – Since many UCB students have been out of the classroom for ten years or longer, the College recognizes that learning may have been attained outside the traditional classroom. This may include employment, travel, reading or volunteer activities; therefore, the College may award up to six academic credits for experiential learning. To obtain credit, the student must submit a portfolio presenting detailed evidence of knowledge gained in a non-traditional setting. The Division Chair in the appropriate area of study and the Academic Dean make a determination of eligibility for Pass/Fail credit. (See Exhibit 4.13: *Experiential Credit Form* and Exhibit 4.14: *Experiential Credit Policy*.)

Directed or Individualized Study – Students may request a directed or individualized plan of study. Requirements for approval include the development of a learning contract arranged by a faculty member and approved by both the Division Chair in the appropriate area of study and the Academic Dean. This contract specifies the learning objectives to be met as well as the skills to be acquired. In addition to specified readings, project development, written papers, tests/exams and field placement when appropriate, students must also schedule regular meetings with the supervising faculty member. Students may take a maximum of six credits of directed or individualized study in areas that are applicable to their academic program. (See Exhibit 4.19: *Directed or Individualized Study*.)

Teaching and Learning at the Urban College of Boston

The Urban College of Boston, in accordance with its mission, designs programs of instruction purposefully to further opportunities for personal and professional growth and advancement. The College ensures that a balance of theory and practical application is offered in all classes. Many Urban College students have had unsuccessful and disappointing experiences in previous formal educational settings, which may have resulted in low self-esteem and lack of confidence. Faculty understand this and bring understanding and compassion to the classroom while, at the same time, challenging students to achieve their goals. The College and faculty have seen students' capabilities and growth potential renewed and strengthened, while students are transformed into empowered individuals set on attaining their educational goals. When faculty enter this education endeavor, they also understand the obstacles that many UCB students face:

- Underdeveloped academic preparedness (study skills, reading, writing);
- Lack of understanding of time commitments; and
- Family and job responsibilities.

In responding to difficulties that UCB students experience, the College acknowledges that excellence in teaching, as well as academic advising, is crucial for the academic success of its students. With the assistance of federal grants, the College provides extensive mentoring, tutoring and advisement to all UCB students.

Classes at Urban College are small, averaging 17 students. The College recognizes that its student body benefits from a variety of teaching methods. Therefore, faculty provide learning tasks that include readings, projects (both group and individual), oral presentations, discussions, lectures and cooperative learning. Case studies, role-playing, field trips and guest lectures enhance learning as well. The College embraces developing an understanding of the inter-relatedness of knowledge and connections between the major field of study and the disciplines of the liberal arts.

Academic Student Support

The Urban College of Boston is committed to providing its students with a full range of educational resources and support services. These include skill building, peer tutoring, workshops and professional tutoring. UCB offers a range of services and activities designed to support, strengthen and encourage student effort, and to assist in overcoming problems which may interfere with student progress.

Learning Resource Center

The Learning Resource Center (LRC) offers an encompassing range of academic guidance and support, as well as one-on-one tutoring for students. The LRC focuses on maximizing the potential and development of each student's learning experiences at the Urban College in a comfortable and supportive atmosphere. Services provided by the LRC include:

- One-on-one tutoring;
- Reading and writing skill development;
- Computer usage training;
- Internet searches needed for class requirements;
- Make-up exams;
- Rehearsal and feedback of oral presentations; and
- Viewing videotapes required by class.

This varied method of assistance fosters skill development while contributing to students' success. Tutoring assistance is offered in Spanish and Cantonese, as well as in English. Tutoring support is available from 4:00 to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Twelve computer stations located in the LRC enhance the support given by the professional tutors.

Records that document daily use of the LRC and hundreds of tutorial sessions each semester have demonstrated that the LRC has provided support ranging from building writing, study and computer skills to opportunities for making up/supplementing coursework and participating in teacher-led study groups. (See Exhibit 7.04: *Learning Resource Center Logs*.) Approximately 300 students use the LRC each semester and of those who have used the LRC on a regular basis, 60 percent have maintained or improved their cumulative grade point average.

The comprehensive library of Emerson College, which is located next door to the college, provides additional resources to complement the LRC. In addition, the Boston Public Library, located in Copley Square, a short distance from the College, as well as its neighborhood branches, is used by students. The College also has an agreement with Emerson College bookstore where they purchase textbooks ordered by UCB.

Additional Academic Support

All incoming students are assessed in their writing and reading skills prior to registration and all students are encouraged to complete the *Learning-Styles Assessment*. Both assessments can be arranged through the Office of Academic Support Services. The results of the writing assessment (*Accuplacer*) provide the student and the College with the appropriate English course that should be taken. The *Learning-Styles Assessment* informs students of their individual style of learning and provides insight into the student's best mode of study. Each student who takes the *Learning-Styles Assessment* receives a six-page printout detailing ways in which he/she can study best along with suggestions for achieving academic success. The Director of Academic Support Services assists all students in the preparation of an academic plan, when needed. Career counseling is also provided through this office which includes helping students to develop opportunities for full- and part-time jobs. The office also arranges non-credit workshops on Friday afternoons that provide students with additional skill acquisition in developmental areas such as grammar, punctuation, and basic computer usage. These workshops, supported by the English writing curriculum and in consultation with the English faculty, are free and open to students on a first-come basis and usually accommodate 25 students. (See Exhibit 4.15: *Academic Support Service Workshops*.)

Admissions, Enrollment and Retention

Students who wish to attend the Urban College of Boston can be admitted to the College at any time during the year since admissions decisions are made on an on-going basis. Applications are reviewed and decisions are made after all required information is submitted. Once reviewed, students are admitted for either the fall, spring or summer semesters. In order to be admitted to the degree programs offered by the College, students must have earned a high school diploma or must have a GED certificate.

Students who have attended other colleges/universities and wish to transfer to Urban College must provide the College with an official transcript of their previous credits earned. The Urban College of Boston accepts up to 45 transfer credits for which a student has earned a "C" (2.0) or better. All remaining coursework needed for completion of one of the three degree programs must be taken at Urban College. (See Exhibit 6.08: *Student Transfer Policy*.)

When applicants have acquired high school diplomas, GED certificates, or college transcripts that are in a language other than English, they must have their diplomas, certificates and/or transcripts translated into English and must submit a notarized copy to the Office of Enrollment Services.

Students from the Caribbean, the British territories or other countries with a British system of education must present certified copies of the *General Certificate of Education* (Ordinary or Advance Level), *Caribbean Examinations* (CXE) results, or their school certificate.

Once students make a decision to attend Urban College, they are assigned an advisor who will meet with them to develop a plan to achieve their academic goal, whether it is to take one course, strive toward a certificate, or matriculate into one of the three degree programs.

New students are invited to attend an orientation session at the College which is usually held during the second or third week of classes. Faculty and staff are introduced, college policies and procedures are discussed, and if appropriate, a tour of the facilities is conducted.

The Urban College of Boston offers three ways in which students can begin coursework: as a degree candidate, a certificate candidate or as a professional studies student.

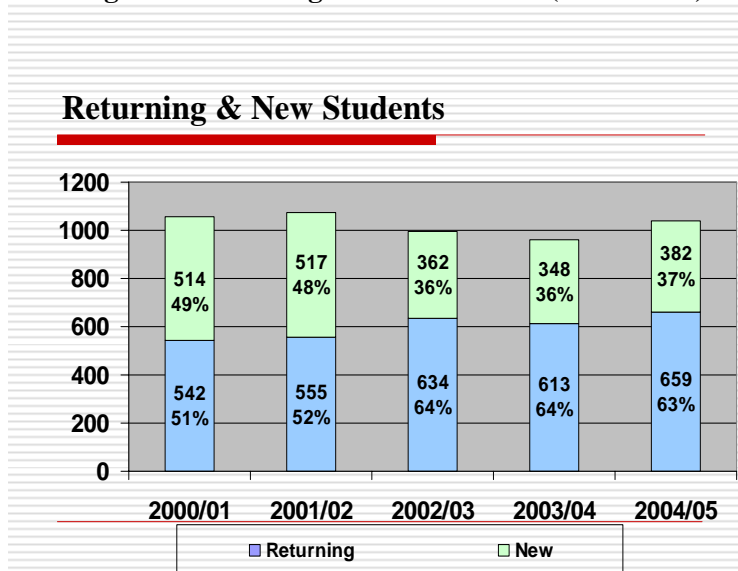
- *Degree Candidate* – Students pursue studies leading to the degree of Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education, General Studies or Human Services Administration. Depending on their interest and level of skills, students may be encouraged to earn their first college credits as certificate candidates before matriculating into a degree program.
- *Certificate Candidate* – Students choose a designated cluster of courses in an area of their personal or professional interest, such as Early Childhood Education, General Studies, Human Services Administration, Management, Case Management or Personal Computer Applications. Successfully completed courses in the certificate programs may be applied to the degree program in the same or related area of study.
- *Professional Studies Student* – This option allows students to be enrolled in courses of personal or professional interest without the need to satisfy degree or program requirements. Enrollment in courses is on space available basis, following registration of degree and certificate program students.

Urban College of Boston is committed to maintaining a personalized atmosphere that includes small classes, one-on-one advising, friendly relationships between faculty and students, follow-up phone calls to students who miss more than one class, academic support services and the Learning Resource Center – basically demonstrating to the student body that the institution cares about their academic success and retention. These retention initiatives are important to all students, but they are considerably more important for the UCB student who never considered the possibility of attending college and who may face extreme obstacles in pursuing his/her dream of earning a college degree.

Enrollment for the College has remained stable during the past three years (2001-2004). UCB has maintained an enrollment of approximately 619 students per semester, with an average of

90 new students per semester and an attrition rate of 12.5 percent. However, during the spring and fall 2005, the College experienced a growth of 13 percent and 15 percent respectively. (See Figure 1, below.)

Figure 1: Returning and New Students (2000 – 2004)



Although the College continues to experience student enrollment growth (See Standard Six: *Students*) it is important to note the significant growth in full-time equivalency (FTE). In fall 2002, the College’s FTE was 207; the number grew to 255 during spring 2005, and for fall 2005, the FTE was 277. This represents a 34 percent growth in FTEs. As students become embraced by the UCB community, the College sees a transformation from an individual who walked in and enrolled in one course, just to test his/her ability, to a newly empowered person enrolling as a three-quarter or full-time student.

The attrition rate of Urban College is relatively low; however, this is most likely attributed to the fact that UCB does not withdraw students automatically when they do not enroll in consecutive semesters. Students are not formally withdrawn from the College unless they request withdrawal, do not return for classes for two consecutive semesters, and/or are dismissed due to poor academic achievement. Unlike many traditional, residential colleges and universities, it is more difficult to demonstrate retention rates for Urban College. During the past four years, students who graduated with Associate of Arts degrees were enrolled in classes for an average of 11 semesters. Many UCB students take up to 15 semesters to complete their Associate Degree, showing a commitment and persistence that is almost unheard of in a traditional setting.

Students at Urban College of Boston face tremendous challenges in deciding to return to the classroom – language barriers, single-parent family responsibilities, lower-paying jobs, housing issues and even homelessness. Nevertheless, they persevere. Many take only a one three-hour course per semester until they earn their degree. In addition, some students who are

academically challenged find the coursework too difficult, even with the academic support offered by the College. In most cases, UCB advisors redirect these academically challenged students to other education programs that are more appropriate for their learning style and ability.

Urban College of Boston serves our non-traditional students well by offering an environment that understands their various needs, such as the ability to extend a period of time to complete the degree, different learning styles, evening classes and one-on-one advising and tutoring. Urban College is committed to assisting students in transitioning from being admitted into the College to completion of their programs of study; the College has demonstrated its commitment through the recent hiring of a Director of Academic Support Services.

Awarding of Academic Credit

The Dean of Enrollment Services and Registrar makes the determination of the awarding of transfer credit based on policies adopted by the College. As mentioned, students may transfer up to 45 credit hours from other accredited colleges for grades of “C” or higher. Students must submit an official transcript to the Office of Enrollment Services from all institutions where transfer credit was obtained. In addition, standardized tests, e.g. CLEP, are transferable only if the student has received acceptable scores that are comparable to someone who has completed a classroom course in the subject. Transfer credit from non-accredited institutions of higher learning may be accepted based upon a review by the Dean of Enrollment Services and Registrar to determine equity with current academic courses and requirements at Urban College.

Standards for performance in the awarding of academic credit at UCB are upheld faculty-wide through review of course syllabi, which specify the learning outcomes and objectives for each course, along with the criteria for meeting the objectives and outcomes. Review of each division syllabus is conducted annually by the Academic Standards Committee.

The decision for the awarding of academic credit for experiential learning is based on policies established by the College. Students may request and be awarded six credits under *Experiential Credit*; grades are awarded on a Pass/Fail basis. After submission of a portfolio that demonstrates competency in the course(s) requested for credit, the Academic Dean and Division Chair make the final decision on the awarding of credit. (See Exhibit 4.14: *Experiential Credit Policy*.)

Appraisal

The Urban College of Boston has designed the certificate and degree programs offered in accordance with the College’s mission. General education required courses ensure that all students receive a well-rounded liberal arts core. The certificates, designed in response to student needs, provide students with access to job opportunities while acquiring post-secondary educational opportunities.

The College does an admirable job of guiding students from admissions to the registration of courses, but the tracking of students from entry into certificate programs to matriculation into degree programs needs improvement. Advisement at Urban College of Boston is an on-going process and students are strongly encouraged to meet with their advisors throughout the academic year. There are often long lines during the registration process, and the College is considering the expansion of advising and/or changing the advising time to improve the process. The proposed change will allow advisement of current enrolled students to take place at the end of the semester but prior to registration. This change is also being considered because of increased student enrollment and improved service to advisees.

All certificate and degree requirements are published in the annual *UCB Catalog*, which is reviewed and updated on an annual basis. Requirements can also be found on the College website. (See Exhibit 10.01: *Urban College of Boston Viewbook and Catalog*.)

All programs, both degree and certificate, share a common general education (liberal arts) core along with additional courses in the particular field of study. Courses within the major field of study have a logical sequencing and progression that begins with *Professional Seminar I* and ends with the capstone course *Professional Seminar II* for all degree programs. The capstone course includes the finalization of a professional portfolio that not only demonstrates competency of the program of study but serves to demonstrate job preparedness competency to the potential employer. Degree and certificate programs, offered at UCB, lead to college degrees in recognized fields of study at other colleges and universities and are easily transferable to four-year degree granting colleges.

All certificate programs require a minimum of 21 credit hours, while all degree programs require 66 credit hours. The credit hours acquired in the certificate programs can be transferred into one of the three degree programs. Students who have earned credit at other accredited colleges may transfer up to 45 credit hours into a degree program at UCB. In order for transfer credit to be accepted, students must provide an official transcript and must have earned a "C" or better in the requested transfer hours.

In response to the changing dynamic of the world of computer technology, the College will be redesigning the Computer Information coursework. During the past three years, student enrollment for computer classes has declined, which may be an indication that the current coursework is not applicable to today's job market requirements.

Institutional Effectiveness

The academic programs of the College continue to reflect the mission. It is important that the College continue to respond to the needs of students and community when designing new coursework and/or revising existing curriculum. Changes in the Early Childhood Education program have resulted from guideline and standard revision in the professional field and to offer a broader, more in-depth content within the discipline. Changes in the General Education core have resulted from the under-preparedness of students. In addition, the College responded

to the need to expand its offerings in humanities with the development of art appreciation courses during the spring 2005.

In the *Community Survey*, 91 percent of the total sample agreed that *Urban College of Boston's academic programs help students advance in their careers*. This result supports the premise that the College is fulfilling its mission in providing career mobility for its students, and is due, in large part, to UCB's strong Early Childhood Education program. Eighty-one (81) percent agreed that: *Students understand the learning goals and requirements for each academic degree program*. When asked about specific skills, the results are less strong: 64 percent of the total sample considered that: *Students completing their studies at UCB demonstrate college level skills in the English language*, and 61 percent considered that students completing their studies *demonstrate college level skills in computer use*. Yet, 81 percent responded that *UCB offers instruction and support in information literacy and technology appropriate for a two-year college*. There were no unanticipated results in the *Audit for Academic Programs*.

A number of questions in the *Community Survey* asked about Urban College's efforts and strengths in supporting students in their learning. Seventy-eight (78) percent of the total sample felt that *Urban College focuses on understanding the differences in student learning styles and how they learn best*. A consistent 83 percent believes the *College provides adequate academic advising for student success*, and 81 percent agreed that the *Learning Resource Center meets the needs of all students in providing academic support*.

Overall, the academic programs were considered a *great strength* by 82 percent of all respondents. That represents the fifth greatest strength among the eleven standards (following students, mission, faculty and integrity).

The Urban College of Boston has developed a plan to assess systematically the student learning outcomes for all programs. (See Exhibit 12.05: *Urban College of Boston Assessment Plan*.) This plan builds on the identified programmatic objectives and promises to yield information that will be useful in the continuous improvement of academic programs at Urban College.

Projection

- Urban College of Boston will continue to strive to offer degree and certificate programs that lead to job security and that are transferable to four-year degree colleges. The College will also continue to work with these four-year colleges/universities to ensure ease in transfer of credit, thus reducing the possibility of restricted credit transfer.
- Discussions will continue regarding curricular offerings (certificate and degree) to assure that the College is meeting the needs of its current student body and strategic planning goals.
- The College will continue to assist students in need of academic support services, increasing the number of tutors when necessary. In addition, if needed, the College will expand the tutoring schedule to include Fridays and Saturdays.

- The College will continue to provide one-on-one advising with the possibility of expansion due to increase in student enrollment. In addition, the College will expand its offerings under the Office of Academic Support Services to include career counseling as needed.
- While the part-time faculty serve the College in accordance with its mission, the College plans to hire an additional full-time bilingual faculty member in Early Childhood Education.