

**FISCAL YEAR 2009
UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS
REPORT**

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

MARCH 2009

The Context for Increasing the Participation and Achievement Of Students, Faculty, and Staff from Traditionally Underrepresented Groups

The two campuses of Western Illinois University—Macomb and Quad Cities—publicly commit to increasing the participation and achievement of all members of the campus community through successful implementation of our values-based Strategic Plan, *Higher Values in Higher Education*. Central to our history and tradition of academic excellence are strong commitments to teaching, the individual learner, and active involvement in the teaching-learning process. Western Illinois University values educational opportunity and welcomes those who show promise and a willingness to work toward achieving shared educational goals. Personal growth supports the development of the whole person in an environment supporting wellness, ethical decision making, and social responsibility with commitments to equity, justice, and diversity.

Following the IBHE’s *2009 Reporting Guidelines*, this report specifically focuses on institutional accomplishments and new initiatives related to underrepresented student, faculty and staff recruitment; and college readiness programs. This report also highlights the Office of Academic Services Program at Western Illinois University-Macomb as an effective practice supporting student recruitment and preparation. This report concludes with data regarding personnel and funds budgeted for programs serving underrepresented groups, enrollments of students with disabilities, freshmen retention rates by racial/ethnic category, and a status report on the accessibility of university web pages.

Institutional Accomplishments

Student Recruitment at Western Illinois University-Macomb

Western Illinois University is committed to increasing underrepresented freshmen and transfer student applications, admissions, and enrollments. With regard to new freshmen, the table below shows that Western Illinois University has been successful in generating more interest (applications) from freshmen from underrepresented groups (acceptances). The University also received more commitment (enrollments) from minority transfer students.

New Freshmen and Transfer Student Applications, Acceptances, and Enrollments At Western Illinois University – Total Fall 2006 Through Fall 2008						
Minority Students (including Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American)						
	New Freshmen			New Transfers		
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
Applications	1888	2271	2639	469	437	455
Acceptances	912	1044	1225	300	265	292
Enrollments	268	334	367	191	163	197
Accepted/Applied	48.3%	46.0%	46.4%	64.0%	60.6%	64.2%
Enrolled/Accepted	29.4%	32.0%	30.0%	63.7%	61.5%	67.5%

All Other Students						
	New Freshmen			New Transfers		
	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
Applications	5732	5932	5525	2348	2277	2132
Acceptances	4459	4550	4303	1805	1711	1591
Enrollments	1660	1623	1449	1232	1084	1076
Accepted/Applied	77.8%	76.7%	77.9%	76.9%	75.1%	74.6%
Enrolled/Accepted	37.2%	35.7%	33.7%	68.3%	63.4%	67.6%

The table below shows a comparison of enrollment at WIU and all Illinois public universities. The data indicate that we continue to make gains in the enrollment of students from underrepresented groups.

Total Minority Undergraduate Enrollment at Western Illinois University Compared to the Median at All Illinois Public Universities Fall 2005 Through Fall 2008				
	Fall			
	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
Western Illinois University	12.3%	12.6%	13.4%	14.9%
Illinois Public University Median	23.7%	23.9%	24.3%	NA
Difference	(11.4%)	(11.3%)	(10.9%)	

Mean ACT score comparisons over the past three years reflect increases for Black and Hispanic new freshmen.

Selected Mean ACT Score Comparisons of Western Illinois University New Freshmen Fall 2005 Through Fall 2008				
	Fall			
	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
All Students	21.2	21.2	21.2	21.2
Black/Non-Hispanic	18.7	18.5	18.8	18.9
Difference from All Students	(2.5)	(2.7)	(2.4)	(2.3)
Hispanic	20.1	19.8	20.5	20.6
Difference from All Students	(1.1)	(1.4)	(0.7)	(0.6)

Western Illinois University's institutional accomplishments are based on a history of outreach and a commitment to implementing new and revised recruitment enrollment strategies. The following highlights illustrate continuing efforts at WIU.

- Admissions representatives attend minority student recruitment events throughout the year, including the United States Hispanic Leadership Conference/College Fair and National Hispanic College Fair. Other college fair programs attended by multicultural recruitment staff include Joliet Junior College Cinco de Mayo, Illinois Institute of Technology Minority Math and Science Fair, and the Golden Apple Award Program.

- During the 2005 – 2008 time period, post-baccalaureate certificates in African and African Diaspora Studies and in Women’s Studies were developed and implemented.
- The College of Education and Human Services continues to work with Rock Island/Milan School District #41 and Black Hawk College with goals that include recruiting minority students to teacher education programs, supporting minority students in preparing for the field of teaching, preparing minority students to become teachers, and enhancing their corresponding field and clinical placements.
- The Department of Special Education applied for and received an ISBE Grow Your Own planning grant in the spring of 2006. The grant was to assess the feasibility of offering a program to a cohort of place-bound individuals from underrepresented groups in the Quad Cities who have a desire to become special education teachers. Based upon that planning grant, the Department applied for and received a second ISBE grant for \$94,099 to provide the necessary coursework for a cohort of 25 students to allow them to earn teacher certification in special education and to eventually work in difficult-to-staff schools in Rock Island and Moline. In 2008, each member of the cohort also received a laptop computer and specialized training in its use.
- The Diversity Partners of the Department of Educational Leadership are administrators from underrepresented groups who have graduated from the EDL program. Based on their feedback, department faculty sought certain incentives to encourage minority students to enroll in the Department's programs. As a result, and with support from the offices of the Dean and the Provost, the Department was able to offer minority students in its master's degree program tuition waivers for their first four classes. The program began in 2006 and is ongoing.
- The Department of Educational and Interdisciplinary Studies are heavily invested in issues related to English Language Learners (ELL) and the needs of multilingual students and their families. Their most recent federal grant, Project Estrella, encourages the development of bilingual educators. This \$300,000 U.S. Department of Education grant places WIU in a consortium with three school districts (Beardstown, East Moline, and Moline). The grant provides financial and educational support for students as they prepare to become professional, highly qualified bilingual/ESL and mainstream teachers.
- The Department of Curriculum and Instruction received funding for a Quality for All grant. This group of 12 candidates with minority representation will complete the requirements for early childhood certification in August 2009. The Department also began its Professional Development School relationship with East Moline in 2008. This will provide numerous opportunities for candidates to work closely and successfully with children from diverse backgrounds.
- The Educators for Tomorrow scholarship program continues to provide financial support for underrepresented students preparing for careers in teaching. A dozen students have received scholarships during the past three years.
- The Department of Art takes a proactive approach to engaging underrepresented groups, including participation in the Chicago Public Schools’ *All-City Art Exhibition* competition. This is the largest competition of high school artistry in the Midwest. Last year, the department was successful in attracting one African American female to the program by offering a scholarship and tuition waiver. Art faculty attended this year’s preliminary showing of the competition and were able to identify one African American and one Hispanic student, both of whom expressed interest in the art program at Western. The department views this type of active engagement as central to its efforts to recruit underrepresented students. To further the department’s efforts with targeted recruiting of underrepresented groups, a similar program is being developed as the Chicago Public Schools’ *All-City Art Exhibition* competition, with the East Saint Louis School system.
- Over the last two years the Department of Broadcasting has worked with East St. Louis High School and invited broadcasting to visit campus and learn about our program. The students had the opportunity to tour facilities, talk with current students and faculty, and to work with radio

and television equipment. The department also engages in outreach with high schools in Chicago with large student populations from underrepresented groups. The department also supports the Illinois Broadcasters Association's Multicultural Internship Program.

- The College of Business and Technology initiated a diversity recruitment program coordinated by a new Graduate Assistant, hired to serve as the College's chief diversity officer. Resources have been allocated to allow for travel to historically black colleges and universities to recruit students from underrepresented groups to the Masters of Business Administration program. The College has also become a sponsoring partner with the PhD Project, designed to increase the number of minority students in PhD programs.

Student Recruitment at Western Illinois University-Quad Cities

As an upper division, degree-completion institution with selected graduate programs of excellence, Western Illinois University-Quad Cities also commits to increasing minority new transfer student applications, admissions, and enrollments. The University experienced improvements in attracting high-achieving and motivated students; the ratios of accepted to applied increased for both minority and all other students. The University has also been particularly successful in building minority student commitment enrolling almost 100% of both minority and non-minority students. The table below displays application, acceptance and enrollment data for the past three years.

New Transfer Student Applications, Acceptances and Enrollments At Western Illinois University-Quad Cities Fall 2006 Through Fall 2008			
	Minority Students		
	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
Applied	30	37	34
Accepted	16	26	23
Enrolled	16	26	22
Accepted/Applied	53.3%	70.3%	67.6%
Enrolled/Accepted	100.0%	100.0%	95.7%
	All Other Students		
	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
Applied	180	218	226
Accepted	106	128	153
Enrolled	106	128	153
Accepted/Applied	58.9%	58.7%	67.7%
Enrolled/Accepted	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The *Census 2000 Supplementary Survey Profile* demonstrates that the percent of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher is significantly lower in the Quad Cities than other proximal metropolitan statistical areas (20.8 in the Quad Cities compared to 27.7 percent in Cedar Rapids, 36.2 percent in Bloomington/Normal, and 47.6 percent in Iowa City). Because its service area contains many potential first generation college students, admissions practices at Western Illinois University-Quad Cities are holistic. They emphasize multiple components of the collegiate experience, including application processes, academic programs, financial aid/scholarship opportunities, and academic major/career options.

To promote access to higher education, enrollment at Western Illinois University-Quad Cities has a decisive benefit. All students, regardless of state residency, are guaranteed in-state tuition and fees. This is particularly important to the University's immediate service area; educational attainment and earning power are positively correlated. The median family income in the Quad Cities (\$37,371) is only 81.8 percent of the State of Illinois median family income (\$45,708), according to the *Census 2000 Supplementary Survey Profile*.

With this recruitment philosophy and approach, all of the following underrepresented student recruitment initiatives have been implemented during the last three years. Partnerships with local agencies and community colleges are critical to the success of these initiatives. The Quad Cities is the second largest metropolitan area in the United States without access to a public four-year institution.

- The Quad City Scholars program operates in area high schools in conjunction with colleges, universities, and local businesses to encourage all high school students to pursue college degrees. There is a focus on providing college and career exploration programs for 9th thru 12th grade students within the Iowa and Illinois Quad Cities. This program is open to all students, but seeks to support first generation, minority, and underrepresented groups with scholarship assistance.
- The Minority Teachers Incentive Program is a Rock Island school district program that is administered by a retired school district teacher. It introduces college career choices to students of all ages with an emphasis on teaching. Students visit both Western Illinois University campuses to build connections with the University. Successful minority members of the community, including University staff, serve as motivational speakers, and several multicultural events are held throughout the year to spotlight various cultures.
- Western Illinois University participates in an educational consortium that consists of various Quad Cities not-for-profit colleges and universities. Consortium members travel to area businesses with significant minority populations, such as Tyson Foods, to explain options of attending college. Employees are allowed to speak with the various colleges during their lunches, breaks, or after work hours. These outreach efforts target working professionals who may not have otherwise considered working full-time and attending college part-time.
- Several Multicultural College Fairs are held around the Quad Cities area. Recruitment efforts have been extended to minority churches, events sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Bettendorf Chamber of Commerce, and Geneseo Chamber of Commerce.
- VIVA Quad Cities is a local event, which celebrates the culture and contributions of the Hispanic population. Staff from Western Illinois University-Quad Cities were founding members and serve on the VIVA Board. This relationship has allowed Western staff to interact and reach out to the Hispanic population.
- The Quad City Minority Partnership is comprised of Quad City area Iowa and Illinois high schools, businesses, and colleges and universities. This collaborative team is committed to developing and delivering culturally responsive educational programming to benefit minority and first generation 9th – 12th grade students to foster academic, community service, social and civic leadership, and career empowerment.

The University will continue to build on its recruitment successes. *Higher Values in Higher Education* charges the University with doubling enrollment at Western Illinois University-Quad Cities from current levels to 3,000 students. Western Illinois University – Quad Cities, recently hired a Higher Education Consultants Association (HECA) grant funded position to focus on recruitment of students from

underrepresented groups from two-year colleges. This position will also develop a mentorship program that will assist students in the transition to a four-year institution and completion of a bachelor's degree.

Faculty and Staff Recruitment to the Campuses of Western Illinois University

Western Illinois University's comprehensive Equal Opportunity and Access program includes workforce diversity initiatives, non-discrimination compliance oversight and support, outreach programming and training, as well as Americans with Disabilities Act and Title IX compliance. Support for these efforts is affirmed in the University's Strategic Plan, *Higher Values in Higher Education*. These efforts also support two goals outlined in the Plan: to attract, recruit, retain and develop an excellent faculty representative of the diverse and global society, and to develop strategies to increase the recruitment and retention of staff and administration from traditionally underrepresented groups.

This past year, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access provided support and coordination for 162 faculty and administrative searches, compared to 149 searches for FY07. Success in increasing faculty and staff diversity starts with the development of diverse applicant pools. A review of applicant pools for FY08 shows that 3,475 individuals applied for faculty and administrative positions during the past year. Comparatively, there were 3,562 applicants in FY07 and over 4,500 in FY06. While the number of positions filled has fluctuated some during this period, this decline will be evaluated to determine if there are factors that relate to advertising strategies, and other recruitment initiatives. During FY08, females comprised 50 percent of the applicants for administrative vacancies (a slight increase over a year ago), and 32 percent for faculty and other instructional positions (up from 26% last year). Applicants from underrepresented groups comprised nine percent of administrative applicant pools (same as last year), and 17 percent of faculty and other instructional applicant pools (down from 19% last year).

During FY08, a total of 48 tenure track faculty positions were filled, resulting in the hiring of 18 females and 15 individuals from underrepresented groups. This includes the addition of 6 African American, 1 Hispanic, 1 Native American, and 7 Asian tenure track faculty members. The table below shows a four-year comparison for tenure track faculty positions filled.

Tenure Track Positions Filled	FY05		FY06		FY07		FY08	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Females	9	45	12	30	22	42	18	38
Individuals from Underrepresented Groups	2	10	15	38	16	30	15	31
Total	20		40		53		48	

In addition to the tenure track searches, 47 other instructional positions were filled. This category includes temporary faculty, associate faculty, faculty assistants, and coaches. Of the new employees in this category, 26 (55%) are female and 6 (16%) are individuals from underrepresented groups. The table below shows a four-year comparison for other instructional positions filled.

Other Instructional Positions Filled	FY05		FY06		FY07		FY08	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Females	25	68	45	57	13	65	26	55
Individuals from Underrepresented Groups	2	5	14	18	5	25	6	13
Total	33		37		79*		47	

*Initial FYE instructional hires (33)

During the past year, 67 individuals were hired to fill administrative vacancies, including 33 females (49%) and 13 individuals from underrepresented groups (19%).

Administrative Positions Filled	FY05		FY06		FY07		FY08	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Females	12	43	33	72	39	64	33	49
Individuals from Underrepresented Groups	5	18	26	57	9	15	13	19
Total	30		28		61		67	

Hiring for the current fiscal year (FY09) is well underway and, to date, 30 faculty and academic vacancies have been advertised, including several academic administrative positions - the Dean of the College of Education and Human Services, and five department chair openings. Twenty-five administrative positions have filled since June 30, 2008. Individuals hired include 2 African Americans and 15 females.

Data also show that significant hiring activity occurred for civil service positions on campus during FY08. A total of 78 positions were filled, and individuals hired included 42 females and 5 individuals from underrepresented groups. The table below shows a four-year comparison.

Civil Service Positions Filled	FY05		FY06		FY07		FY08	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Females	23	46	42	63	47	72	42	54
Individuals from Underrepresented Groups	7	14	10	15	9	14	5	6
Total	50		67		65		78	

The University continues to utilize Trainee and Learner programs to enhance workforce diversity within civil service job groups. Trainee programs allow individuals an opportunity to receive “on-the-job” training. This procedural provision allows the University to hire individuals who possess career potential, but lack one or more of the minimum qualifications required to test for a particular classification. Once an individual meets the minimum qualifications he/she must take the Civil Service exam and pass with a score of 70 or better to continue employment in the position. Learner programs, like trainee programs, allow individuals the opportunity to learn on the job, and are used for classifications that do not have any minimum qualification requirements. Both trainee and learner programs can be utilized when the Civil Service exam has not provided a diverse pool of candidates for a particular job classification.

Interest in Trainee and Learner programs continues to increase, with 357 active applicants in FY08 compared to 297 in FY07. During the past year there were 15 Trainee placements and 8 Learner placements active in various departments. Of these 23 individuals, 5 are African-American and 1 is Asian/Pacific Islander. The tables below display Trainee and Learner placements by job classification for FY05, FY06, FY07 and FY08. It is important to note that individuals may be in a Trainee or Learner status for more than one year.

Current Trainees	FY05	FY06	FY07	FY08
Athletic Equip. Specialist	2	0	1	1
Clerk	0	0	0	0
Parking Service Agent II	1	0	0	2
Office Support Staff	1	4	7	6
Administrative Assistant	0	0	0	1
Webmaster	0	1	0	0
Night Supervisor of UU	0	1	0	0
Image Processing Technician II	0	0	2	0
Medical Records Tech.	0	0	0	1
Electrical Engineer	0	0	0	1
Press Technician I	0	0	1	3
Total	4	6	12	15

Current Learners	FY05	FY06	FY07	FY08
Building Service Worker	8	5	0	6
Mailing Equipment Ex/Op	1	1	0	0
Police Officer	1	0	4	0
Route Driver	0	1	2	0
Stationary Fireman Helper	0	0	1	2
Total	10	7	7	8

We continue to see progress in our workforce diversity initiatives. Significant emphasis has been placed on recruitment efforts for faculty and staff vacancies. Highlights include:

- The Office of the Provost and Academic Vice President at Western Illinois University established four (4) primary goals for the Academic Year 2009. Diversifying the faculty and administrative staff at WIU is one of the four goals. The primary objective of the diversity goal is to deliberately and selectively recruit and retain individuals who are from underrepresented groups for faculty and administrative staff positions. In support of this important initiative, the University created and filled a new position, an Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs in the Office of the Provost and Academic Vice President. One of the primary responsibilities given this new position is diversity within Academic Affairs.
- In 2008, WIU established the Underrepresented Minority Dissertation Fellowship. The purpose of the dissertation fellowship is to enhance diversity in research, teaching, and service at Western through the recruitment of underrepresented minority graduate students from various institutions throughout the country who are completing dissertation research. During AY09 two minority dissertation fellows were recruited and hired as faculty members in the political science and communication departments, respectively. The fellows teach one course per semester, and are expected to devote significant time to the completion of their dissertation. Additionally, fellows

work with a senior-level faculty mentor and are involved with co-curricular activities including the University's Diversity Council.

- The Underrepresented Minority Visiting Professorship and Post-Doctoral Programs received approval and Academic Affairs is currently in the process of filling these positions. Like the Minority Dissertation Fellowship, the purpose of these two programs is to enhance diversity in research, teaching, and service at Western through the recruitment of underrepresented minorities who are established professors or recent doctoral graduates.
- WIU's Dual Career Recruitment and Retention Program is a recruiting tool that is used to encourage an "excellent faculty representative of the diverse and global society" to join the faculty and/or professional staff at Western Illinois University. Through the efforts of this program, the academic affairs area was able to increase minority faculty and staff in the 2008-2009 academic year.
- The University's Equal Opportunity and Access Internship Program is designed to increase the pool of qualified women and minorities for administrative positions. The program provides women and minority employees with an opportunity to develop and increase administrative skills in an area of their interest. Current employees are provided with release time to work closely with current administrators in their area of interest.
- The College of Arts and Sciences implemented the Visiting Scholars' Program. This program develops relationships with doctoral students from underrepresented groups while they are in graduate school and is a recruitment strategy designed to enhance faculty diversity. Doctoral students are invited to campus to present a colloquium to the home department and serve as a guest lecturer in one or more classes. Our first scholar was from the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences at the University of Louisville. As part of the visit, the Scholar presented "Attention and Television: The Role of Individual Differences in the Everyday Skills of Children."

College Readiness and Transition Programs

The university's First Year Experience Program, highlighted as an Institutional Effective Practice in FY06, continues to provide important academic and personal support as students transition to the university. A strong partnership between Academic Affairs and Student Services creates a dynamic integrated experience. The selection of common reading tied to the university's annual theme provides additional important connections for new students that extend well beyond the classroom.

The University Advising and Academic Support Center, along with department advisors in various disciplines also work closely with Student Services staff in the Summer Orientation and Registration (SOAR) program. This comprehensive advising, registration, and orientation program includes connections for students' families that have been evaluated very positively.

Personnel and Funds Budgeted for Programs Serving Underrepresented Groups

Western Illinois University has maintained staffing and resources for programs serving underrepresented students, faculty and staff, committing over \$1,300,000 during FY08.

Dollars and Staff Years Budgeted to Programs Serving Underrepresented Students and Faculty at Western Illinois University Fiscal Year 2007 and Fiscal Year 2008				
	Staff Years		Dollars Budgeted	
	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
Designated Programs	<u>22.23</u>	<u>19.91</u>	<u>1,358,285</u>	<u>1,304,000</u>
African American Studies Department	5.10	5.80	345,021	426,323
Casa Latina Cultural Awareness Center	2.50	2.50	106,583	110,650
Disability Support Services	5.10	5.10	177,107	225,778
Dual Career Recruitment Program	0.00	0.00	100,000	100,000
Gwendolyn Brooks Cultural Center	2.50	2.50	106,998	113,640
Minority Achievement Program	0.00	0.00	28,600	29,408
President's Minority Graduate Access Program	0.00	0.00	30,000	30,000
Western's Equal Opportunity Scholarship & Grant Program	0.00	0.00	20,000	20,000
Women's Center	2.25	2.25	112,527	116,293
Women's Studies Department	4.78	4.76	331,449	334,764

Enrollment of Students with Disabilities

In addition to serving 168 faculty and staff with self-identified disabilities, Western Illinois University also provided accommodations to 338 students (324 undergraduate and 14 graduate) with self-identified disabilities during Fiscal Year 2008. This report previously documented the role of the Affirmative Action Office in serving individuals with disabilities. In addition, Disability Support Services provides reasonable accommodations to make programs and activities accessible for Western Illinois University students with disabilities (orthopedic, visual, hearing, learning, chronic health). Disability Support Services also provides University publications in alternative formats upon request.

The College of Arts and Sciences has made a number of significant contributions that benefit students, faculty, and staff especially in terms of space and facilities. Morgan 109 & 101A have been fitted with a disability station as well as a ramp, making this classroom wheelchair-accessible for both students and faculty. Thirty tables have been distributed among all 16 CAS departments to accommodate disabled students. Office furniture additions to enhance accessibility have been installed in Morgan 114, and a biology lab in Waggoner was rebuilt to ensure wheel chair accessibility for students and staff.

Disability Support Services (DSS) has completely renovated their service delivery methods to provide greater educational access for students with disabilities. Many changes were made to ensure that services for students are efficient, effective, and user-friendly. Services provided include alternative exam accommodations (i.e. extended time, readers, scribes), alternative text formats (i.e. Braille, electronic, enlarged), and note taking assistance. Services are aimed at removing barriers for students with learning disabilities, AD/HD, chronic health and psychological conditions, mobility impairments and other types of disabilities.

Institutional Effective Practice Office of Academic Services Program

Western Illinois University's strategic plan, *Higher Values in Higher Education*, includes a mission to create "a community of individuals dedicated to learning, will have a profound and positive impact on our changing world through the unique interaction of instruction, research, and public service as we educate and prepare a diverse student population to thrive in and contribute to our global society." In addition, a core value of the plan is Educational Opportunity, stating that the university "welcomes those who show promise and a willingness to work toward achieving education goals." The Office of Academic Services (OAS) Program supports the mission and goals of the university by providing educational access and support.

The Academic Services Program at Western Illinois University began in 1970 and in 1994 the program merged with the University Advising Center to the current University Advising and Academic Support Center or UAASC. The percentage of students from underrepresented groups admitted through this program has averaged 30 percent over the past three years. For FY08, of the 349 OAS students enrolled, 109, or 31 percent were students of color.

The program is an alternative admission and advising program, and is unique in that academic advisors assist in the screening and admission of applicants to the program. Acceptance to the OAS Program may occur in several ways:

- 1) Students may be admitted based on ACT and grade point average guidelines that have been formulated to predict success with the support of the program;
- 2) Students may be invited to campus to participate in subject matter placement testing and an interview with an advisor. These students are required to provide a letter of interest and at least one support letter from a counselor or teacher of a core course;
- 3) Applications can be deferred for additional information – for example, a 7th semester transcript or letters of support; or
- 4) Students who are not accepted through these options may appeal to the Council on Admissions, Graduation and Academic Standards.

This individualized evaluation process allows consideration of factors that may not be reflected in the standard ACT score and grade point average data. Advisors are able to review transcripts and note patterns of improvement over the course of students' high school record. Letter from students and teachers often provide information about extenuating circumstances in students' lives that may have significant impact on high school performance.

Accepted students sign a participant agreement that outlines their responsibilities for academic success. Once admitted, students receive frequent developmental advising from staff who are strong advocates for the student and the program. These advisors are the core and the strength of the program, and are heavily invested in the students' success. In addition to proactive academic advising, the Office of Academic Support also offers extensive tutoring, and an early warning system beginning about the fourth week of the semester.

The graduation data from the three most current classes is not yet available, however the data shows that from 1999-2001 the six year graduation rate of those who enrolled in the OAS program (52.9%, 48.2%, 54%) compares favorably to the six year graduation rates for those students admitted as traditional undergraduate students (56.1%, 57.9%, 57.2%).