

ALVERNO COLLEGE ELEMENTARY EDUCATION PROGRAM

In addition to reviewing program documents and other materials, interviews were conducted with 24 individuals for the Alverno College case study. This number included the chair of the Education and Spanish Language and Cultures Division, the director and two senior associates in the Educational Research and Evaluation office, the director of Graduate Programs, the associate dean for Academic Affairs, two members of the Council for Student Assessment, an individual from the Assessment Center, four teacher education faculty members who teach courses and supervise student teachers or work with candidates during field experiences, five Arts and Sciences faculty members, and three Education faculty members who teach the integrated literacy sequence of courses. The remaining interviewees were one principal who has served as a reviewer of pre-student teaching portfolios and whose school is a site where Alverno places candidates for field experiences and student teaching, and two cooperating teachers, one of whom graduated from Alverno's program. Individuals were interviewed either alone or in small groups of two or three. Interviews lasted 60 to 90 minutes.

Program Description

Institutional Context. Alverno College is an independent, Catholic, liberal arts college for women, located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The mission of the college is to promote the personal and professional development of women by working in four areas: creating a community of learning; creating a curriculum; creating ties to the community; and creating relationships within higher education. Reflecting the high value that Alverno places on teaching, the college received the Hesburgh Award in recognition of its efforts to enhance undergraduate teaching.

Combined enrollment for undergraduate and graduate programs at Alverno was approximately 1,950 students in 2001–2002. About 125 students are in the graduate program. Almost all (95%) of Alverno's students are from Wisconsin; 65 percent of the college's Wisconsin students are from Milwaukee. Approximately 40 percent of students are minority students, and about 70 percent are first-generation college students. Alverno offers 67 program areas of study in seven academic divisions: Arts and Humanities; Behavioral Sciences; Business and Management; Education and Spanish Language & Cultures; Fine Arts; Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Technology; and Nursing. The faculty consists of 96 full-time members teaching classes that average 20–25 college students.

The faculty of Alverno has defined a curriculum that is organized around eight abilities that graduates of a liberal arts education should demonstrate in disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts:

1. Communication — Communicating effectively with audiences using a variety of media
2. Analysis — Merging critical thinking with experience and training
3. Problem solving — Identifying a problem and its cause, developing strategies that work in different situations, and evaluating the effectiveness of the solution strategy
4. Valuing — Recognizing the moral dimensions of your decisions, accepting responsibility for the consequences of your actions, and holding strong to your own ethics, while recognizing different value systems
5. Social interaction — Working collaboratively with others and seeking out others' views
6. Developing a global perspective — Acting with an understanding of and respect for the interdependence of global life
7. Effective citizenship — Being involved in the community; participating in the community with responsibility and informed awareness; developing leadership abilities
8. Aesthetic engagement — Engaging with various forms of art and in artistic processes; taking and defending positions about the meaning and value of artistic expressions in their differing contexts

Each discipline has defined the abilities in more specific terms in the context of its major. Candidates must be judged to have developed these abilities at an “advanced” level in order to graduate. The faculty’s ultimate goal is the development of each candidate as an educated, mature adult capable of lifelong learning.

Creating an ability-based curriculum led Alverno faculty to rethink and reorganize learning experiences since they assume that developing the ability to use knowledge requires active engagement in learning. One of the more notable consequences of the ability-based curriculum, however, is the emphasis on determining candidates’ progress in the curriculum by using performance-based assessments. Assessment at Alverno is considered part of the learning process and is referred to as “assessment-as-learning.”

This stance toward assessment — observing performances of the learner in action, judging the learner on the basis of publicly shared developmental criteria, and giving feedback to the learner — is a defining characteristic of the college and drives both faculty and candidates to focus on developing candidates’ ability to use knowledge, not just understand it (Alverno College Faculty, 1994).

Recognizing that these abilities develop over time, faculty members defined performance at various levels for each of the eight abilities. Courses are designed and sequenced to help candidates achieve increasingly advanced levels of the abilities. This developmental approach encourages faculty members to help candidates determine their strengths and work with candidates from their strengths to reach higher levels of performance. There are no grades at Alverno. Instead, a number of portfolios and performance assessments provide a means for candidates and faculty members to regularly assess candidates’ progress in developing the abilities at advanced levels, the requirement for graduation.

The Education Department. The Education Department consists of 10 full-time and 4 part-time faculty members. In addition, a number of adjunct faculty members assist with supervision of student teachers and candidates in field placement. The department offers an Elementary Education major and minors (called support areas) in Early Childhood Education and Secondary Education. Candidates seeking secondary certification major in a content area. In addition, candidates may earn degrees in Art or Music Education, through the Art and Music Departments, respectively. For the 2000–2001 school year, there were 22 elementary education graduates.

The Elementary Teacher Education Program. The mission of the teacher preparation program for elementary education, as described in Alverno’s application for the National Award Program for Effective Teacher Preparation, is “to prepare professional teachers who are committed to developing the abilities of all learners, are effective in integrating subject area content and developmentally appropriate teaching and assessment strategies, and understand and value diverse perspectives and experiences.” Candidates in the elementary education program must develop the following five abilities at advanced levels in order to graduate:

- *Communication:* The ability to use verbal, nonverbal and media modes in structuring the learning environment
- *Diagnosis:* The ability to weigh observations about the behavior of children and then to tailor action to assist their learning
- *Coordination:* The ability to manage varied aspects of a teaching/learning situation

- *Integrative interaction*: A multi-faceted ability that includes respect for diverse perspectives, use of interaction to learn about others, and a sense of professionalism
- *Conceptualization*: The ability to bring together understandings in three areas — subject content (e.g., mathematics, literature, science), education theory (e.g., developmental psychology, motivation), and liberal arts (e.g., problem solving and valuing)

Evaluation of Individuals, Groups, and Program Components

Data Sources and Uses. Alverno’s Education and Spanish Language and Cultures Division and the Educational Research and Evaluation office completed a matrix to indicate the data that the university collects on the progress of individuals, groups, and program components. In terms of data collected on the progress of individuals, one of the sources (10%) is used strictly as summative data and two (20%) are used only as formative data; the others (70%) are used both formatively and summatively. None of these sources is used as confirming data. The four primary sources of data collected on groups and the nine sources of data on program components are about evenly divided between performance and non-performance based. Most (80%) are used formatively; about half are used summatively. About half are considered confirming evidence.

Teacher candidates receive information regarding their own performance; group and program data are shared with education faculty and with other college faculty through work with the Council for Student Assessment, the Research and Evaluation Committee, and the Educational Research and Evaluation office. Table 1 is a list of the data sources that the chair of the Education and Spanish Language and Cultures Division rated as having “much” or a “great deal” of influence in decision making about needed changes.

Data Management Capacity. All of the college faculty members interviewed talked about the role of faculty members individually and collectively in collecting and using data about candidates’ performance. As mentioned previously, creating an ability-based curriculum focused the faculty on performance assessment and on gathering evidence that the curriculum is effective in helping Alverno students demonstrate the abilities. Furthering understanding of the abilities and ways in which to assess them is an ongoing endeavor for the Alverno faculty. Faculty members are provided with initial training on how to give their students feedback about their learning, and this topic is one that is addressed frequently by the faculty within and across departments.

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF KEY DATA SOURCES FOR ALVERNO COLLEGE

SOURCE OF DATA		
INDIVIDUALS	GROUPS	PROGRAM COMPONENTS
Interview with candidate to determine growth in self assessment (second semester of education coursework)	Analysis of candidates' growth in self-assessment (periodic)	Department evaluation of program outcomes (periodic)
Performance assessments in arts and sciences and teacher education courses	A study published as <i>Analysis of Performance Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness and Student Learning</i>	A study published as <i>Analysis of Performance Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness and Student Learning</i>
Reflection logs for field experiences	Analysis of portfolios completed for admission to student teaching (annual)	Analysis of portfolios completed for admission to student teaching (annual)
Portfolios for teacher education classes (may include videotapes)	Analysis of portfolios for teacher education courses (annual)	Videotapes from field experiences and student teaching (annual)
Portfolio for admission to student teaching (includes videotaped lesson)	Principal survey (annual)	Institutional evaluation of alumnae learning and performance (periodic)
Performance assessment of teaching effectiveness and student learning (includes samples of K–12 student work)	Graduate survey (annual)	Studies conducted by or with outside groups (National Center on Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching [NCREST], National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], other higher education institutions) (periodic)
Digital Diagnostic Portfolio (ongoing)	Course evaluations by candidates (semester)	Graduate and principal surveys (annual)
Peer review process for faculty		Comments from Teacher Advisory Committee (semester)
		Review of assessments in education courses by Council for Student Assessment (ongoing)

The college focuses on assessment at the individual and institutional levels. Data management is assisted by the Assessment Center, the Council for Student Assessment, and the Educational Research and Evaluation office. The Assessment Center's role is to assist the faculty by administering outside-class assessments and, in some cases, course assessments for individuals outside class time. Outside-class assessments provide students with information about their performance in situations more removed from the

context of a given class. The content of these assessments may represent a synthesis of information from several courses, be designed by faculty members other than the given classroom teacher, and be evaluated by off-campus assessors. The center provides training for business and professional community members who serve as external assessors. The center also maintains a file on each student, which contains her outside-class assessments, including videos of group or individual oral performances. The center coordinates meetings with assessors who provide students with feedback on the assessments they have taken. The Council for Student Assessment and the Educational Research and Evaluation office are discussed more fully in other sections of this case study.

To support Alverno's mission, Alverno faculty members are expected to share with others what they have learned about assessment of student learning. For the past 25 years, Alverno has conducted a summer institute for other higher education and K–12 faculty to help them understand how to think about and assess student learning. Alverno's focus on assessment has distinguished the college among higher education institutions and has been instrumental in Alverno receiving numerous grants from private foundations such as the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Education researchers from the Educational Research and Evaluation office interviewed for the study emphasized that it's important for the data system to generate information that is responsive to the needs of the faculty and that can be used to make improvements. These individuals also thought that Alverno had a relative advantage over other colleges because the strong student assessment system generates a great deal of data about student performance, which can be used to help determine the effectiveness of programs.

Process for Acting on Results. There are numerous structures, such as the Council for Student Assessment and the Research and Evaluation Committee, that contribute to the program's ability to examine data and make improvements. In addition, time is provided for faculty members to work together on issues of teaching and learning in the context of the ability-based curriculum. Education faculty members meet once a week on Tuesday afternoon, which provides a regular opportunity to discuss data and make decisions about needed changes.

For example, the chair of the Education Division explained that a few years ago, the department began to require student teachers to include in their portfolios an analysis of a lesson they had taught. Included with the analysis are samples of student work from the lesson. As part of their analysis, candidates reflect on how they addressed the five abilities that frame the teacher education program. The Educational Research and Evaluation office analyzed 40 portfolios, looking for patterns in candidates' performance. They found that candidates' analyses tended to focus on their behaviors as teachers (e.g.,

clearly stating objectives, engaging students' interest) rather than on the extent to which students were learning. Department members studied and discussed the findings during their weekly meetings and improved the assignment by providing clearer directions and a rubric that clarified for candidates how the assignment would be evaluated.

College-wide opportunities for discussing data are available every Friday when the whole faculty meets in different configurations. There also are mandatory faculty institutes several times a year, which provide opportunities for faculty members to gain new skills and deepen their understanding of how to gather evidence of student learning and program effectiveness.

As described by the director of Graduate Programs, the chair of the Education Division, and three faculty members, on the individual candidate level most assessments are designed to provide the candidate with feedback on current performance and guidance on how to reach the next level. In general, these assessments are considered "low stakes." In order to advance through the program to graduation, however, candidates must demonstrate that they are performing at increasingly advanced levels of the abilities. They cannot advance to courses that focus on Level III performance unless they can perform at Level II. Similarly, if their portfolio for entry into student teaching does not provide evidence that they have met the requirements for student teaching, they are required to do additional work to meet the requirements. This might mean successfully completing an additional field experience or working with a faculty member to acquire specific content-area knowledge or skills.

Faculty members gather data from candidates about courses both formally and informally. For example, as one supervisor of student teachers explained, candidates are asked to provide comments and suggestions for changes for each field experience. These comments are reviewed by supervisors during their regular meetings, and changes are made to the courses as necessary. Another formal way that feedback about faculty is gathered is the faculty evaluation process. Each year, selected faculty members are up for evaluation and candidates complete a faculty evaluation form that is used college-wide. The form yields quantitative and qualitative data. The evaluations are reviewed by the deans, division chairs, and coordinators of departments. An Arts and Sciences faculty member described the qualitative part of the form as more valuable because it allows instructors to learn what candidates thought went well and was effective in the class. Individual instructors consider these comments carefully when planning for the next offering of the class.

Three supervisors and the associate dean for Academic Affairs also spoke about the faculty evaluation process, which includes self-assessing and setting goals annually. According to one of the supervisors, the self-assessment asks faculty members to report

their accomplishments in teaching, in the profession, and in the community. The form is given to the department chair, who then meets one-on-one with the faculty member to discuss the accomplishments and goals. The chair provides written feedback from the interview and the materials submitted by the faculty member. After their third year at the college, faculty members are evaluated every three years through a year-long peer review process. (New faculty members are observed twice each semester and are assigned a mentor.) Faculty members select a peer reviewer in consultation with the division chair. As one of the supervisors explained, the peer review process allows faculty to focus on something that is important to them. This supervisor commented that she viewed the process as one of growth rather than passing judgment. She described it as the most helpful professional development process she'd ever had.

Two Arts and Sciences faculty members mentioned that candidates often provide unsolicited feedback, which these individuals attributed to the college's emphasis on self- and peer assessment. One of these faculty members described an experience with candidate feedback when she first came to Alverno. "When I finished teaching the first class, a student came up to me and said, 'You did a really good job getting us to do this, but you didn't so well on this and. . . .' They're very gentle, but they will speak up."

Evidence of Teaching All Children. One of the eight abilities that Alverno students must demonstrate for graduation is developing a global perspective. Interviews with the chair of the Education Division, the director of Graduate Programs, cooperating teachers, supervisors of student teaching and field placements, and literacy instructors provided information about how various courses and field experiences in the teacher education program help candidates advance in this ability by learning how to teach diverse students. For example, candidates learn to understand and address various aspects of diversity in a required class on human relations, one on principles of instructional design, and one on the exceptional learner that includes a practicum. Candidates acquire additional skills in teaching diverse learners through placements in urban and suburban settings. According to one of the cooperating teachers, three of the supervisors, and the division chair, during each field placement, candidates complete reflective logs that address many forms of diversity, including culture, special needs, and family type. The forms that supervisors and cooperating teachers complete about each candidate also specifically ask about the candidate's ability to meet the needs of all learners in the classroom. Candidates provide evidence of their ability to work with diverse students through various performance assessments, including videotapes of lessons they teach to a variety of students and an analysis of samples of K–12 student work. One of the supervisors said she had anecdotal evidence that there was an emphasis at Alverno on helping candidates learn to teach diverse students:

I hear students in the program, especially those getting close to graduation, say they are so sick and tired of different styles of learning and different ways to think about things. [To me it means] we got the point across. . . . I always think that's a backward compliment to us.

Based on a review of the existing curriculum and feedback from graduates in the new teacher support course, Alverno faculty members planned to develop a new 400-level course during the 2001–2002 school year. The course will focus on diversity and meeting the needs of all learners, including those with limited English proficiency and those with exceptional education needs.

Alignment of Evaluation with Program Standards and Goals

Program Goals. The five Education Department abilities described previously (i.e., conceptualization, diagnosis, coordination, communication, and integrative interaction) serve as the goals of all of the teacher education programs. The abilities are linked to a set of key concepts (i.e., developmental needs; diversity; professionalism, which includes inquiry/research; school and society; and media and technology), and the essential processes in which teachers engage (i.e., planning, implementing, assessing). Taken together, the abilities, concepts, and processes outline the central outcomes and knowledge bases of the program. The five abilities have been explicitly aligned with the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium's (INTASC) ten principles, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards' five propositions, and the Wisconsin Standards for Teacher Development and Licensure.

The director of Graduate Programs explained that the faculty created detailed conceptual maps for each of the abilities based on reviews of the literature, group discussions about effective teaching, reflection on their experiences as teachers and on what K–12 students need to learn, and based on INTASC, NCATE, and Wisconsin Standards for Teacher Development and Licensure. These conceptual maps define the abilities of a beginning teacher, a teacher with some experience, and a master teacher. The Alverno teacher education curriculum is carefully designed to ensure that candidates can demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to perform at the beginning level when they graduate. For example, assignments in reflection logs during field experiences prompt candidates to examine the abilities, concepts, and processes in action.

Determination of Proficiency. Levels of proficiency are decided through conversations among faculty members and between faculty and K–12 partners. According to all of the faculty members interviewed, it is a way of life at Alverno to have ongoing discussions about the abilities and how to assess them. According to the chair of

the Education Division, this examination of the abilities and focus on assessment led faculty to define descriptors and indicators for various levels of development for each of the abilities. These indicators were derived from teacher education faculty members' experiences as K–12 teachers, their deep knowledge of the ability framework, and the past performance of their student teachers and graduates. Other important sources of information for determining levels of proficiency were K–12 and community partners' expectations of new teachers.

The Development of Program Evaluation

Development Efforts. The director of Graduate Programs, the chair of the Education Division, the associate dean for Academic Affairs, the chair of the Council for Student Assessment, and the director of the Educational Research and Evaluation office directly addressed the development of Alverno's systematic evaluation of program effectiveness by talking about Alverno's development of an ability-based curriculum. According to these interviewees, in the early 1970s, the president of the college challenged faculty to answer the question, What's so important about your course and your discipline that students should study it? She provided time for faculty to work together to clearly define the ability areas that would apply to all departments in the college. A task force was created to break the abilities into levels. All faculty members were given the opportunity to critique the levels. The task force synthesized the feedback and met individually with faculty members whose suggestions didn't seem to fit or contradicted the rest of the feedback. This process helped to develop trust among faculty members. The task force evolved into the ability committees, which eventually became ability departments. As these interviewees noted, creating an ability-based curriculum caused the faculty to think differently about teaching, learning, and assessment. The need for performance assessment and the central role of assessment in the learning process became clear to faculty across the college. Today, the focus on student assessment as learning defines the college.

To define how the abilities would play out in the Education Department and to develop their conceptual framework, education faculty members gathered information about effective teaching from the research and best practice literature and conducted interviews and focus groups with practitioners and others. The framework is examined frequently, taking into account what Alverno faculty members observe from their experiences with candidates and standards or requirements set by groups outside the college, such as INTASC and the state Department of Education. The framework guides instruction and assessment across the department. For example, each week that a student is in a field placement, she has to write a reflective log that relates to the focus of the particular field. The purpose of the reflective logs is to help candidates see the conceptual framework in

action. Therefore, candidates are asked to reflect on such things as how the teacher communicates, how he or she offers multiple explanations, or how the teacher uses his or her understanding of child development to avoid problems in the classroom. Faculty members indicate which ability they are addressing when they give assignments to candidates.

The chair of the Education Division described the evaluation of the education major, which was conducted in the early 1980s, as a critical turning point for the department. This study was carried out with the assistance of the Educational Research and Evaluation office and the Research and Evaluation Committee. According to the dean, this study led to changes in the Education Department. For example, the department redesigned its methods courses to highlight connections between and among subject areas, integrate the design of multiple methods of assessment, integrate technology into teaching and assessment, and focus on working effectively with a diverse range of student learning needs.

A senior research associate with the Educational Research and Evaluation office (ERE) described a study of Education Department graduates' experiences of the curriculum, which was conducted by the department with the assistance of ERE and the Research and Evaluation Committee. He emphasized that a key to being able to gather the appropriate data was having clearly defined outcomes for the major for each of the abilities. These outcomes are well known by both faculty and teacher candidates. The department used the results to rethink when and how often candidates were advised, the approaches to assessment, and the critical times for assessing particular skills.

Portfolios have been an important part of the evaluation system at Alverno for many years. They are used to determine whether individual students are acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills in specific classes and across courses that form the foundation for student teaching. In addition to portfolios for specific classes, candidates must prepare a portfolio for admission to student teaching. The director of Graduate Programs described the development of this portfolio as beginning with a requirement for candidates to keep a communication notebook in which they were asked to reflect on their ability to communicate across all of their advanced courses. Candidates considered these a burden because they didn't see their relationship to the real world. Based on this feedback, the faculty worked together to design a portfolio that would include some of the same content as that found in the communication notebook but also have an audience: K-12 principals and teachers. Candidates welcomed the change from the communication notebook to the portfolio because presenting the portfolio to a principal and teacher was seen as practice for a job interview.

As described by three education faculty members and the chair of the Education Division, the pre-student teaching portfolio includes a videotape of the candidate working with students and performance assessments they have completed through their coursework. Using criteria provided by the Education Department, candidates select the assessments that address these criteria and that help them make the case that they are ready for student teaching. The video must be accompanied by the lesson plan for the activity and the candidate's analysis of the lesson using the five abilities. The portfolio also must include something that shows candidates' reflective practice, strength in their content area, and evidence that they can design teaching materials. Candidates meet with their advisors for guidance on selecting appropriate pieces for the portfolio prior to delivering their portfolio to their external assessor.

According to supervisors, faculty members who teach literacy courses, and a principal and cooperating teacher who have served as assessors of the portfolios, the portfolio system has changed over the years as a result of faculty observations of how candidates approached and handled the process and input from K–12 teachers and principals. For example, based on suggestions from teachers, candidates now include evidence about how they manage classroom discipline. One of the cooperating teachers noted that based on her feedback and that from other assessors, the portfolios are not as large as they used to be, however they are more meaningful collections of a candidate's work because much more attention is paid to the quality and the relationship of the items in portfolios. Faculty members who teach literacy courses also noted that the quality of the portfolios for admission to student teaching has improved. They attribute this increase in quality in part to changes they made in their courses after observing that many candidates waited until the last minute to compile their portfolios. To help candidates better manage the task, instructors in the beginning reading course ask candidates to prepare a literacy portfolio that includes reflections on themselves as literacy learners as well as literacy teachers. Candidates exchange the portfolio with a peer, and the instructor gives them feedback. Additional pieces are added to the literacy portfolio during the next two courses. In this way, over time candidates develop the skills to compile a portfolio. They also have an organized set of materials from which to select entries for their portfolio for student teaching.

According to the director of Graduate Programs, who has been at the college since 1976, Alverno has always collected some data on its graduates through surveys of graduates and principals. During the 1980s, survey questions were changed to match the five advanced abilities that guide instruction and assessment at the college. They also did some follow-up studies with graduates beyond their first year and conducted focus groups with principals and with alumnae who were out two or three years. The focus groups provided qualitative data that were useful for improving the program and for revising the survey form to include open-ended questions that gave respondents opportunities to

provide more details, including examples that explained their responses. In the mid 1990s, the college participated in a study by the National Center on Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST) that used a questionnaire designed around six factors derived from the work of Linda Darling-Hammond, INTASC, and others. In subsequent years, Alverno adapted this questionnaire as its survey for graduates and principals.

Two Arts and Sciences faculty members noted that the connections among education and Arts and Sciences faculty have grown over time as faculty members have developed a shared sense of accountability for teacher candidate performance. Faculty members collaborate to develop courses; some Arts and Sciences faculty members teach segments of education courses. The collaboration also extends to assessments. Arts and Sciences faculty members may jointly develop assessments with education faculty members, or they may design assessments that allow candidates to use their knowledge of pedagogy in the content area. One Arts and Sciences faculty member said that this presents a united front to candidates — they know that the expectations are the same across departments. It also helps them realize that there is coherence among the program’s components.

Three teacher education faculty members (literacy instructors) talked about the evolution of self-assessment at Alverno. To guide students in developing their ability to self-assess, beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels have been defined for various self-assessment situations (e.g., observing, planning, analyzing/interpreting). The next developmental step in self-assessment, as well as portfolios, is the move to a Digital Diagnostic Portfolio. Candidates will be able to collect self-assessments from all of their courses in one place. The digital portfolio is being introduced to students in a few courses at a time, but eventually it will be used college wide.

The director of Graduate Programs, the supervisors, and the literacy instructors mentioned that another improvement in the program in recent years that is continuing to develop is the use of K–12 student work in courses. Examining samples of student work for evidence of learning helps candidates make the connection between how they are assessed at Alverno and how they should assess their students. Candidates are being taught to systematically look for student learning by asking such questions as, What does writing look like in the fourth grade? What does a good rubric look like? During the student teaching semester, candidates are assessed twice on their ability to analyze the effects of their teaching. For these assessments, candidates select instructional strategies for a lesson, explain why they selected the particular strategies, and analyze the effects of the strategies on student learning, using samples of student work to justify their claims.

Barriers to Evaluation. Time was mentioned as the biggest barrier to the systematic evaluation of effectiveness of the teacher education program by the cooperating teachers

and the principal interviewed as well as by supervisors and Arts and Sciences faculty members. For example, although Friday afternoons are set aside for faculty members to meet to discuss curriculum and assessment issues, the number of cross-department efforts makes it difficult to find time to meet across departments as well as within departments. As one Arts and Sciences faculty member remarked, “The challenge is going to be, what kind of flexibility can we build in institutionally so that we can keep everybody in the loop.”

The portfolios, although seen as of great value, also require a great deal of time for candidates to prepare and for assessors to review. The principal interviewed, who has served as an external assessor of portfolios, suggested that it might be useful to look at the portfolio at various points in its development rather than just at the point before the candidate enters student teaching.

Time also is seen as a barrier to observing candidates more frequently. For example, one cooperating teacher mentioned that it would be better if university supervisors could “drop in” more frequently — just for a quick observation of the candidate. Such visits would be in addition to the regularly scheduled formal observations. This same cooperating teacher also mentioned that it would help candidates if there was more time to meet with their cooperating teacher before or after class so they could plan for or reflect on lessons.

Candidates complete field logs after each visit to a classroom during their field placements. The logs usually have specific prompts to which the students respond. A cooperating teacher noted that although the logs are time consuming to complete, most candidates are committed enough to the program that this is not a barrier.

Cooperating teachers complete forms on candidates’ performance. Although it takes time to fill out the forms, cooperating teachers don’t seem to mind. As one cooperating teacher said:

I would always do it before school or when it was quiet in my classroom so I could really reflect on that field student and their work. It was just another added duty. But I enjoy doing that. That’s good time. There’s “good time” and “bad time,” and that’s good time.

Because Alverno assesses its teacher candidates using performance assessment, one of the cooperating teachers thought a potential problem might be a need to prove to some cooperating teachers that such assessment is a good way to evaluate candidates. To overcome this barrier, Alverno tries to use its graduates as cooperating teachers or find cooperating teachers who share Alverno’s philosophy about the importance of being able to demonstrate knowledge and skills.

One of the supervisors interviewed said that in her opinion, another barrier to collecting data is having a systematic way of inputting feedback to a central location. She thinks that the Digital Diagnostic Portfolio will help overcome this barrier. Information from selected assessments in courses, including content-area and student teaching portfolios, will be stored in one place. This will make it easy for candidates and faculty members to get the big picture view — and the details — of candidates' knowledge and skills.

The chair of the Education Division and two supervisors mentioned that although the small size of the department may seem to be an advantage, it may make faculty members question some data, both in terms of the necessity for collecting this information and its accuracy. Because classes are small, faculty members have a good sense of what students know. If candidates are asked about how well a class addresses particular issues, and they say it doesn't, a faculty member might be tempted to have a conversation with the students and say, "Remember when we . . .?" and the students will respond, "Oh, yeah, when you put it that way." If classes are large or data are collected by someone who doesn't know the students well, there is less chance that a faculty member will question data. In addition, the chair of the Education Division noted that because faculty members know students well and have good relationships with them, they may view formal data collection as unnecessary because it doesn't provide "new" information.

Although Alverno surveys its graduates every year, the college is not always successful in obtaining as many responses as it would like. The three literacy instructors interviewed described some ways that Alverno tries to overcome this barrier. One way is by having faculty members work frequently in the K–12 schools and talk informally with graduates during those visits. Another successful strategy is to use Alverno graduates as cooperating teachers whenever possible. In some cases, however, this undermines Alverno's data collection efforts. One of the cooperating teachers interviewed said that some graduates may think they don't need to fill out the survey since they have contact with the college as a cooperating teacher. In other words, serving as cooperating teachers keeps them connected to the school so they don't think they need to participate in other alumni activities, including completing the graduate survey.

One thing that has not been a barrier to the development of the system is relationships with K–12 partners. All K–12 partners interviewed reported that Alverno has an open and positive relationship with them and seeks to make relationships mutually beneficial. The perception is that the college emphasizes quality and is committed to preparing teachers for urban schools.

Although cost often is seen as a barrier, the director of Graduate Programs said that cost has not been allowed to be a barrier. For example, when she was chair of the division, she convinced the academic dean that candidates needed to be observed by Alverno faculty

members during each of their four field placements before student teaching. Each section of the field class has only eight or nine teacher candidates in it, so a faculty member can observe each candidate several times during the semester. This approach becomes more costly as the number of candidates in field placements increases, but the college continues to support the approach. Some other costs of the evaluation system are supported by grants, which the college actively pursues.

Confirming Data. Principal surveys and graduate surveys are conducted annually. According to the chair of the Education Division and the director of Graduate Programs, these are two key sources of confirming evidence. The surveys include questions about perceptions of preparedness to promote student learning, develop curriculum, teach critical thinking, assess student learning, understand learners, and develop professionalism. The survey questions were adapted from an instrument developed for a 1997 study commissioned by the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST).

Confirming evidence of the effectiveness of Alverno's teacher education program often comes in the form of anecdotes from the field, particularly through contact with K–12 practitioners. For example, field supervisors who were interviewed for this study reported hearing comments such as, "A first-year Alverno teacher looks like a third-year teacher from another program," "I can tell you who the Alverno teachers are in any school I walk into," and "There is a sense of mission in Alverno alums." Although such comments are not specifically about the performance of the students of Alverno graduates, they do speak to the quality of Alverno teachers.

Other informal data gathering occurs through conversations with staff of intermediate service agencies who work with teachers in a number of schools. Field supervisors reported that they often ask how specific Alverno graduates are doing and have never received negative feedback. Field supervisors also have contact with graduates when they visit K–12 schools to observe candidates in field placements or student teaching. Graduates often invite field supervisors to visit them when they are out in the schools. Field supervisors tend to informally keep track of graduates — especially those who were the best students — because they want to recruit them to be cooperating teachers and/or external assessors. Similarly, graduates often keep in touch informally by sending e-mails to faculty members. One Arts and Sciences faculty member suggested that there might be a way to be more systematic about using e-mail to gather data about graduates.

According to the director of Graduate Programs, Alverno graduates — even those in their early years of teaching — often assume leadership positions as teachers. They lead curriculum development efforts, provide professional development for colleagues, serve as mentors, and work on committees to establish charter schools. The literacy instructors

noted that they and other Alverno faculty members have many opportunities to see or hear about Alverno graduates in leadership positions because Alverno faculty members are in the K–12 schools frequently and are involved in a variety of projects with K–12 practitioners. An Arts and Sciences faculty member mentioned that this type of information also is informally gathered by attending state meetings of professional organizations (e.g., Wisconsin Council of Teachers of Mathematics) where Alverno graduates can be observed presenting workshops for other teachers.

It's no surprise that time is seen as a barrier to collecting confirming data from teachers. For example, one of the cooperating teachers said, "Teachers already have a great many things to do, and collecting data for the college might be perceived as just more paperwork." This teacher suggested, however, that it might be easy for the college to have access to ITBS scores of students of Alverno graduates. She also suggested that college faculty members could conduct observations in graduates' classrooms to evaluate their performance. Because many Alverno graduates have their students keep portfolios, this teacher saw student portfolios as another possible source of data for confirming evidence.

Another barrier to collecting confirming evidence is access to graduates. The chair of the Education Division and one of the literacy instructors explained that Alverno has overcome this barrier to some degree by offering a New Teacher Support Class. Information about graduates' skills is collected informally through interactions during the class. As part of the class, teachers talk about their experiences with students and conduct action research in their classrooms. Alverno is beginning a master's program in reading, and according to the chair of the Education Division, the department is thinking about how to best use this additional access to graduates to collect data about effectiveness.

Technology is viewed as both a barrier and a support to collecting confirming data. For example, the principal interviewed for this study said, "If appropriate technology were available, principals could more easily complete surveys about graduates. They could also easily compile student performance reports by teacher."

Collecting confirming data is difficult not only because access to information about student performance may be restricted, but also because there isn't agreement that teachers' effectiveness should be judged by students' performance on tests, especially state assessments. One of the literacy instructors remarked that, based on research in Milwaukee Public Schools and on her own observations in schools, teachers view the state assessments as something to be tolerated so they can get back to the job of "real teaching." The principal interviewed thought that teachers' attitudes toward state assessment data might change, however, when the state implements its new balanced approach to assessment, which includes growth data. As principals and teachers in the

K–12 system, including Alverno graduates, deepen their understanding of such data, it may become easier for the college to have conversations with them about collecting confirming data.

Another possible barrier to collecting confirming data on teacher effectiveness is how effectiveness is defined by teachers and principals. Teachers and principals interviewed for the study were more likely to mention characteristics of the teacher rather than performance of the teacher's students as indicators of quality. For example, one of the interviewed teachers described a good teacher as one who is outgoing, commits time to teaching, goes beyond the call of duty, is creative beyond the curriculum, and tries to use a variety of strategies to reach all learners. One of the literacy instructors said that when principals talk about Alverno graduates being effective, they usually refer to graduates' sense of confidence, their ability to take charge in the classroom, and their understanding of curriculum and child development. From her perspective as a former principal, the literacy instructor said that most principals would probably describe teacher effectiveness in terms of what happens in the classroom, emphasizing graduates' maturity and ability to deal with students and how well the students do. The latter does not refer to students' performance on tests, however. It is more likely to indicate that students seem open to learning, excited about their future, and have good self-esteem. She concluded by saying that, in general, principals are not in the habit of talking about teacher effectiveness in terms of student achievement data. Although several of the qualities mentioned by the teacher and the principal may contribute to students' performance, none is a direct measure of it.

Alverno graduates might be reluctant to attribute students' performance solely to their teaching because they recognize that many other factors, such as motivation, socioeconomic status, and multiple teachers, can affect performance. The chair of the Education Division, the director of Graduate Programs, two supervisors, and the three literacy instructors mentioned that candidates have, however, acquired skills to determine the effects of their teaching on student learning as part of their teacher education program. During student teaching, candidates are required to analyze their teaching. They choose a strategy, implement it, and collect data on its effects. Educational Research and Evaluation staff described this as an important feedback loop for collecting confirming data. If teachers know how to collect data to determine the effects of their teaching, then they will be able to provide the college with confirming data. Candidates cannot graduate from Alverno unless they can demonstrate a specific level of proficiency in each ability; therefore, all graduates should be able to provide data on the effects of their teaching.

A possible source of data about graduates' effectiveness is the professional development plans that new teachers will be required to develop under Wisconsin's teacher licensure policy, which will go into effect in 2004. As part of the process, new teachers have to

work with a higher education faculty member who evaluates their plan. The plan must include activities that will help the teacher meet the Wisconsin Standards for Teacher Development and Licensure. The law includes a provision that all new teachers have a mentor. The chair of the Education Division suggested that Alverno could collect data on the areas that its graduates include in their professional development plans, which may indicate areas of weakness, and how many of their graduates become mentors.

One of the cooperating teachers interviewed thinks the college could collect data about its graduates informally in several ways. For example, although it might be time consuming, someone could scan the news about education in local newspapers. Alternatively, graduates could be invited to submit information about their teaching accomplishments to the alumni newsletter. When asked what kind of data she thought the college could collect about her effectiveness, she suggested letters of recommendation from parents; awards she has won; information from principals, mentors, or others who have observed her teaching; and her students' portfolios.

Institutional Participants in Program Evaluation. At Alverno, the commitment to assessment at the student and institutional level begins with the president of the college. The associate dean for Academic Affairs described this commitment:

We've had very committed, focused leadership at the college. That begins with the president. . . . [She] is someone who is an educator herself, who really understands this program and is committed to it. . . . We have a president who has the vision that she keeps there but she leaves the details of it to the faculty, although she reads the minutes of every department meeting. . . .

There is a commitment to evaluating the ability-based curriculum in the Education Department and all other departments across the college. Because of this commitment, many Alverno faculty members participate in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the teacher preparation program.

Role of Arts and Sciences. Two Arts and Sciences faculty members acknowledged that the Arts and Sciences faculty recognizes that education majors make up a significant number of the students in their classes and feels responsible for helping them acquire as much content knowledge as possible to strengthen their teaching. This means that course design incorporates attention to state content standards for K–12 students and that instructors model good teaching. At Alverno, it is common for arts and sciences faculty to discuss why candidates are learning particular content and why it is important for them as teachers to acquire this knowledge. Arts and sciences faculty members also are involved in supervising secondary student teachers. This includes watching at least one of

the candidate's videotapes, conducting two on-site observations, meeting with the candidate to discuss lesson plans before and after observing a lesson, and reviewing the candidate's teaching portfolio prior to review by an outside assessor.

A structure that a member of the Arts and Sciences faculty, the chair of the Education Division, and the literacy instructors discussed was the Teacher Education Committee, which is another structure that connects the Arts and Sciences faculty with the teacher education faculty. This committee is comprised of education faculty members and faculty members from other departments in the college that support the education major, including the Arts and Sciences faculty who represent the content areas for secondary education majors (e.g., mathematics, science, English). The committee performs a variety of functions, including preparing for NCATE or North Central accreditation visits, working with state department of education representatives to ensure that Alverno is meeting the state's requirements for preparing teachers who can teach in a standards-based system, and discussing the needs of the various disciplines.

Members of the Arts and Sciences faculty and the education department faculty also meet informally to discuss design of courses. For example, a mathematics professor talked about discussions between members of the mathematics faculty and education faculty about changes in course requirements to prepare candidates for the pre-professional test. Two other Arts and Sciences faculty members mentioned that Arts and Sciences faculty ask members of the Education Department to serve as peer reviewers. In addition, the associate dean for Academic Affairs emphasized that the two groups are connected by the set of abilities, which provide a common framework. There is a common philosophy about the goals of an Alverno education and a common understanding of the abilities. Most important, student learning is the focus of discussions across all departments at the college, not just in the Education Department. The associate dean also said that Alverno faculty members think of themselves as educators, not just specialists in a discipline. All faculty members are concerned with helping students acquire a liberal education — in the first two years of their college education as well as at the advanced levels of their major.

Role of Education Research and Evaluation. The Educational Research and Evaluation office (ERE) plays a key role in the evaluation system. According to the ERE director, two ERE senior associates, and the chair of the Education Division, the office is seen as a partner that works collaboratively with departments on questions related to collecting, analyzing, and reporting data about how well the department helps students learn. For example, education faculty members asked ERE staff to help them revise the criteria for evaluating work samples from student teachers. ERE also assisted with a comprehensive examination of the education major field in the early 1990s.

The ERE also takes an institutional perspective and conducts large-scale studies of learning across the college. As described by the director of ERE, in the early days of the ability-based curriculum, it became clear that the kinds of questions that were appropriate to ask in a system built around an ability-based curriculum and performance assessment — questions about the system that were important to faculty and students at the college — needed to guide evaluation of the program. An important early question was how well the ability-based curriculum was doing. To answer this question, it was necessary to look across the college, which led to the realization that there was potential for generalizability, which meant that systematic research was needed. The ERE continues its studies of learning in an ability-based system through involvement in various consortia and projects with other higher education institutions.

Role of the Research and Evaluation Committee. The Research and Evaluation Committee, which is comprised of faculty members, administrators, and the chair of the Council for Student Assessment, was formed in the mid 1980s to serve in an advisory capacity to the Educational Research and Evaluation office. As described by the associate dean for Academic Affairs, the committee meets about once every two weeks to talk about a variety of issues, including the types of formal and informal studies that should be done about departments, majors, and programs. Two important studies that the committee assisted the Education Department with were an evaluation of the education major and a study of graduates that looked at their experiences with the education curriculum and assessments.

Role of the Department of Education Faculty. Candidates in their second semester in the Education Department are interviewed one-on-one by a faculty member to determine how they are progressing in their ability to self-assess in relationship to the five abilities they must develop to complete the education program. The chair of the Education Division and the literacy instructors described the process and their role in this process. Each faculty member in the department is assigned a number of candidates. The faculty member conducts the interview and then prepares summary notes on the interviewee's performance. The Education Department meets as a whole to decide whether each of the candidates is ready to go to the next level of the program. The group also looks for patterns in the candidate's performance and uses the information to determine if courses need to be changed.

Field supervisors interviewed described their role in the system as one that involved formal and informal data collection. During each field placement, Education Department faculty members collect the assessment form from the cooperating teacher and the lesson plan, self-assessment, and supervisor assessment of the lesson. There is a mid-semester and end-of-semester assessment of performance as well. Some faculty members have individual conferences with candidates at mid-semester and again at the end of the

semester and discuss growth over the semester. They also collect a human relations assessment each semester, which asks students to evaluate the course in relationship to how it addressed diversity and multiculturalism. Students complete an effective citizenship assignment and a field log for each field placement. The citizenship assignments and prompts for the field logs vary with each placement, becoming more complex with each succeeding placement.

Teacher education faculty members also gather information about various aspects of the teacher education program in informal ways. For example, they may notice that students in their classes seem to be weak in some areas. Through their own reflection and discussions in department meetings, they think about what they are doing and how they might make improvements. One supervisor described it as a problem-solving stance rather than a “blame-the-student” stance.

Role of the Council for Student Assessment. The role of the Council for Student Assessment is to articulate the theory of student assessment in relationship to the college’s developing theory of education as exemplified by the ability-based curriculum. The council’s work involves general monitoring of student assessment and assistance in the development of assessments.

The 16-member council is composed of representatives from every ability department and the discipline divisions, two individuals from the Educational Research and Evaluation office, and the director of the assessment center. Some members of the council represent more than one group. According to the chair of the council, members of the council serve as communicators between the council and the departments and divisions. They bring issues to the council and take information and feedback to the departments and divisions. The council has produced, and continues to refine, guidelines for designing and reviewing assessment instruments. It collects and critiques instruments from all departments, selecting some as model instruments for each discipline. The council also decides when an assessment workshop is needed for the whole faculty. For example, a recent faculty institute focused on faculty’s concerns about feedback and self-assessments. The council continues to contribute to the development of the theory of assessment by investigating electronic measures of learning and ways to effectively assess prior learning.

The ability departments view the council as a resource as they work to develop and refine assessments. Members of the council often assist departments outside their discipline to provide a different perspective. Sometimes this is done by invitation, but sometimes assistance is offered because the council thinks there is a need.

Role of the Peer Evaluation System. Two supervisors, two Arts and Sciences faculty members, and the associate dean for Academic Affairs provided details about the peer evaluation system and how it contributes to evaluation of the program. The process begins with self-assessing and setting goals based on criteria for advancement in academic rank that relate to teaching, scholarship, and contributions to the learning community within and beyond Alverno. The supervisors interviewed emphasized that the process helps faculty members deepen their understanding of what candidates experience in the Alverno assessment system. Since faculty members usually focus their goals around teaching or assessing the various abilities, the peer evaluation system helps to improve instruction and assessment within the department and across the college.

Funding. The director of the Educational Research and Evaluation office said that the college allocates two to three percent of the general budget of the college for education research and evaluation activities, a practice she characterized as unusual in higher education. She and the associate dean for Academic Affairs described the college's efforts to seek and receive grants to fund or help support specific evaluation projects or research about student learning in an ability-based system. The professional staff of ERE are not members of the teaching faculty. Their salaries are included in the two to three percent. The director of ERE said that it is somewhat difficult to separate out the cost of the education research and evaluation system because many of the activities are part of the faculty's "regular work." None of the interviewees placed a monetary value on the time allocated for faculty members to meet (e.g., the Friday afternoon sessions) or learn (e.g., faculty institutes).

Quality Assurance of Evaluation. As evident in several documents provided by staff from the Educational Research and Evaluation office, quality control of assessments for teacher education, as well as all other programs at Alverno, has been part of the Alverno culture for many years. These diagrams illustrate how institutional structures (e.g., Assessment Center, Ability Departments, ERE, and the Council for Student Assessment) and internal and external assessment processes contribute to quality assurance. Internal processes include gathering feedback on assessments from candidates and assessors and providing guidelines for designing student assessments. These guidelines are reviewed on a regular basis. Monitoring of external processes includes providing training for external assessors and keeping abreast of developments in the various disciplines and in assessment and evaluation theory.

Interviewees from the Educational Research and Evaluation office indicated that the college takes an approach of building up evidence of effectiveness over time. This means that there is continuity of evidence as well as a variety of sources of evidence. ERE works systematically at the institutional level, thinking about how the various studies link together and what else is needed to make the case for effectiveness.

The Council for Student Assessment also plays a monitoring role by collecting and analyzing assessment instruments from all departments, planning and conducting professional development for faculty, and working with other institutions to examine how student learning can best be assessed. The Council also conducts studies of modes of assessment, performance criteria, self-assessment, and feedback. The associate dean for Academic Affairs, the chair of the Council for Student Assessment, and the director of ERE emphasized that the college's approach to ensuring the quality of the evaluation system reflects its focus on operating in an inquiry mode in order to continuously improve.

The faculty institutes and Friday afternoon meetings provide forums for learning and for monitoring the system. There are structured opportunities during these meetings for all faculty members to provide input about the development and refinement of the self-assessment framework. For example, according to the chair of the Council for Student Assessment, during several past meetings, the faculty provided the council with feedback on assessment publications during the writing process.

According to the associate dean for Academic Affairs, monitoring the system means asking how well structures and processes are working. Alverno's associate deans are looking at all of the ways that faculty members meet and the structures of the college in order to determine whether structures and meetings can be reconfigured so that faculty members do not become overwhelmed by meetings. For example, over the last few years, the college has developed several cross-disciplinary majors. This requires faculty members from different departments to work together to develop the programs and keep them moving. In the past, Friday afternoons were designated either for discipline departments or ability departments. The cross-disciplinary teams, and other groups, such as the Experiential Learning Committee, also need time to meet. In 2001–2002, the faculty decided that not all of the ability departments would meet regularly. Those that had really important work to do would meet on the Fridays designated for ability departments, freeing up some faculty members to attend meetings of other groups. The associate deans recognize that faculty members' desire to be involved in a variety of collaborative efforts may mean that the faculty as a whole needs to identify a few significant priorities and collectively work on those. Departments and divisions would then have to make some decisions about whether to pursue additional priorities and goals.

In addition to formal structures for monitoring the effectiveness of the teacher education program, there are informal structures. For example, the associate dean for Academic Affairs, a member of the Council for Student Assessment, and two Arts and Sciences faculty members talked about several voluntary groups that faculty formed to address specific issues of teaching and learning. These groups include (1) the Teachers of New Students group, which discusses ways to help new students adjust to the college, (2) the

Intermediate Student group, which addresses ways to help students (third through fifth semester) make the conceptual leaps necessary to go to higher levels of the ability that involves creating relationships and connections among ideas, and (3) the Pedagogy group, which shares information about effective instructional strategies. These groups are not restricted to the Education Department. In fact, their existence is an example of the connectedness across the college and the concern for student learning that transcends departmental boundaries. Faculty members in the Intermediate Student group studied the issue across the divisions and disciplines and came to understand that there is a set of capacities that will help students make the conceptual leap needed to go to higher performance levels of the abilities. Each faculty member then took what was learned back to his or her department and applied it to the appropriate courses, making changes to the courses as necessary.

The Influence of Stakeholders on Evaluation

Alverno's Stakeholders. Interviews indicated that Alverno's major stakeholders include K–12 schools, the business and professional community, and other institutions of higher education. The chair of the Education Division, literacy instructors, and field supervisors spoke of their close relationships with K–12 schools both in terms of working with cooperating teachers and principals and in participating with them in collaborative projects, such as the Southeastern Wisconsin Assessment Consortium. The director of ERE and the chair of the Council for Student Assessment spoke of the summer assessment institute, which Alverno hosts for other higher education institutions, and various consortia that Alverno participates in with K–12 and higher education institutions. Participation in these networks reflects Alverno's commitment to helping others learn about the ability-based curriculum as well as the college's efforts to validate its approach against external benchmarks.

How Stakeholders Influence Evaluation. One way that members of the K–12 and larger community play a role in the evaluation system is through their participation on the Advisory Council. Members of the council provide input and feedback about issues that the department or council members have identified. For example, after the evaluation of the education major was conducted, results were shared with the advisory council. Council members were asked to share their opinions about what the study revealed and to give feedback about the department's interpretation of the results. Their input also led to changes in how the department addressed technology in the curriculum and helped the faculty develop the masters in reading program.

A primary way for K–12 teachers to be involved in the evaluation system is by serving as a cooperating teacher. According to the cooperating teachers interviewed, they have a

direct link into the system by completing evaluation forms on individual candidates' performance. In addition, they (and principals) have opportunities to suggest changes to the program informally through conversations with field supervisors and when completing evaluation forms for candidates. Both cooperating teachers and the principal interviewed for the study mentioned that this informal communication was effective for making suggestions for changes to the program, but one teacher mentioned that it might also be nice to be provided with a form that specifically asked for suggestions. One field supervisor also suggested that it would be a good idea to have a specific form that included such questions as, What more should our students do in their field placement or student teaching? What areas or activities should receive more emphasis? She also suggested that it might be beneficial to hold a focus group to obtain more feedback about specific elements of the program. Cooperating teachers receive information about elements of the teacher education program through the cooperating teacher manual and through newsletters and flyers that the college sends to them. Usually this information does not specifically address the performance of Alverno teacher candidates or the effectiveness of the program.

K–12 teachers also serve as external assessors who review candidates' portfolios before they enter student teaching. (External assessors receive training in how to review the portfolios prior to doing so.) The review, which occurs on a Saturday morning, includes meeting one-on-one with the candidate and helping the candidate reflect on her field experiences by watching her videotape and discussing other entries in the portfolio. As each assessor finishes and hands in his or her materials, a member of the Education Department asks open-ended questions about the experience and what might be done better. This provides assessors with an opportunity to suggest changes to the portfolio or the review process. One teacher who served as an external assessor said that the biggest incentive for volunteering is the creative ideas and useful information she finds as she reviews the portfolio. Volunteering as an assessor also is a way for her to give back to her profession.

Some K–12 teachers and principals are invited to make presentations to methods or other education classes to share an area of expertise or provide advice and a sense of the realities of teaching to candidates. In some cases, these presentations help the teacher education faculty think about ways to improve courses.

External Influences on Program Evaluation

State Influences. State policy has affected the development and evaluation of Alverno's teacher education program in various ways, including how outcomes for each department are defined. According to the chair of the Education Division, outcomes are

continually evaluated in light of state requirements and changes in how the discipline is viewed or taught.

Courses in the Education Department have changed as expectations for meeting the Wisconsin Standards for Teacher Development and Licensure have increased. For example, according to supervisors, candidates are now required to identify in their field placement log entries what teaching standard they are addressing. State policy also requires that candidates have coursework that addresses various cultural groups and students with disabilities. This means that candidates are assessed in these areas as well.

State mandates for broad field majors also have affected Alverno's curriculum. For example, under the new mandate, those who want to teach history must be licensed to teach social studies. In order to become licensed, teachers need courses in history, political science, geography, economics, psychology, and sociology. Similarly, becoming licensed to teach English language arts will require courses in English as well as journalism and additional writing classes. Arts and Sciences faculty members and teacher education faculty members interviewed said that they will work together to design appropriate courses and ways of determining if students have mastered the content.

The state will soon require that teacher candidates demonstrate their knowledge by passing an exit exam. As one Arts and Sciences faculty member noted, this new requirement may force faculty to rethink how they assess students in some of the upper-level courses. Another Arts and Sciences faculty member said that in response to the exit test requirement, the English department aligned its program outcomes with the Wisconsin standards for language arts teachers and determined where and how the outcomes were being addressed and assessed. Through this process, it became clear that changes were needed.

National Influences. The director of the Educational Research and Evaluation office mentioned that the college has been very active in the higher education assessment movement and has worked on the issue with a number of national associations (e.g., American Association of Higher Education, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education) and other institutions. The college has influenced others through these relationships and, in turn, has been influenced by them. For example, Alverno collaborated with the American Psychological Association on learner-centered education, contributing a chapter for a book on the topic (Mentkowski, 1998). As mentioned previously, Alverno has participated in several consortia that focus on assessment (e.g., Consortium for the Improvement of Teaching, Learning and Assessment, 1989–1992; Faculty Consortium for Assessment Design, 1994; National Center for Restructuring Education, School, and Teaching [NCREST] Study of Departments of Education, 1997; Teaching for Tomorrow Project; 1998).

Participating in such consortia is a way for the college to carry out institutional-level evaluation and benchmark itself against the approaches that other institutions take to higher education in general and to teacher education in particular. For example, one of the questions that guided the evaluation of the education major at Alverno was, “What external standards, criteria, and measures not designed by Alverno faculty may be applied to evaluate the major?”

Local Influences. The Milwaukee schools have a strong influence on the evaluation of the teacher education program at Alverno because one of the goals of Alverno’s teacher education program is to prepare teachers for urban schools. Alverno candidates carry out their field experiences in Milwaukee schools, many of Alverno’s graduates teach in Milwaukee schools, and many faculty members work on projects with Milwaukee’s K–12 faculty. Through cooperating teachers’ evaluations of candidates, principals’ evaluations of graduates, and interactions between Alverno and K–12 faculty, the teacher education program receives feedback about the effectiveness of the experiences it provides for candidates and the needs of the K–12 system.

The business and professional community also influences the program through its involvement in the external assessment program at Alverno. Through that program, assessors judge candidates’ performance in the eight abilities identified by the college and provide feedback on the design of the assessment.

Other External Influences. The college also considered participation in the National Awards Program for Effective Teacher Preparation as an opportunity to examine Alverno’s program from another perspective. The director of ERE mentioned the awards program as an example of outside criteria against which Alverno could measure the effectiveness of its teacher preparation program.

The Culture for Program Evaluation

Incentives. Alverno’s culture of continuous improvement serves as a primary incentive for participating in the systematic evaluation of the teacher education program. As the director of Graduate Programs remarked, “One of the things that is part of the culture here is continuous improvement and expectations. I don’t think faculty are reluctant at all to evaluate the program. They really want to know what could work better.” The expectations for faculty reflect the abilities the college has defined for its graduates. These include the ability to work collaboratively with others to solve problems and appreciate multiple perspectives. There is a belief in faculty members’ ability to live up to expectations, which encourages people to take risks and to work together.

Two interviewees, the director of ERE and a member of the mathematics department, noted that the need to validate Alverno's ability-based curriculum is another incentive for participating in evaluating the teacher education program. As the mathematics professor said, "We have been doing something quite different . . . so we really have to validate that it's worth our effort and all of the work that people are doing as well as all of the time that faculty from this institution spend with faculty from other institutions. If we're going to spend time explaining to other institutions our assessment process and the way in which we teach, we better know that [our approach] is worthwhile."

Alverno has a continuous appointment system for faculty members, which means that faculty members who perform according to the criteria for academic rank during their first five years essentially have tenure. According to the director of Graduate Programs and the associate dean for Academic Affairs, the criteria for faculty advancement at Alverno reflect what is valued — collaborative and integrative work, how one is growing in his or her ability as a teacher and contributing to the quality of teaching across the institution and higher education in general. For example, one of the requirements for advancement to full professor is that the person has an impact on the curriculum outside his or her own department. This requirement encourages faculty members to work across disciplines, team-teaching courses, acting as an external assessor, or serving as mentors. Each of these activities provides opportunities to examine teaching and learning, which leads to program improvement. A member of the Council for Student Assessment noted that the mentoring process also gives faculty members a chance to fulfill another requirement for promotion — to assist others in learning the Alverno learning process.

The peer review system also supports program evaluation because it focuses on helping faculty members become better teachers and assessors. This system is a year-long process in which the faculty member sets goals and receives feedback from one or more faculty members about his or her progress toward these goals.

The associate dean for Academic Affairs mentioned several incentives for participating in the evaluation system. One of those is the opportunity to receive fellowships to support summer work. Another is opportunities to travel and to develop expertise, which expands one's potential to serve as a consultant. Working on program evaluation also opens up opportunities to become involved with organizations on a national level (e.g., AACTE, AAHE). Perhaps the greatest reward is having extended conversations with other faculty members about teaching. In the associate dean's words, "Being able to spend your time talking about what you love is a pretty good benefit. And to know that people value it as opposed to thinking you should be doing something else." Participating is part of the work of being a faculty member and it's valued. As an interviewee from ERE said, "It's part of the 'life of the mind' at the college." Another teacher education faculty member described participating in the evaluation system as appealing because it yields practical

results — an improved program. In the words of the chair of the Education Division, “Faculty are motivated by the prospect of making things better.”

Attitudes. Collaboration is a hallmark of the Alverno culture. This feature of the culture was mentioned in interviews with all Alverno faculty members. One of the Arts and Sciences faculty members described the collaborative process as “built in.” She added, “It’s not that someone from on high is saying that you’ve got to do this. It’s that you witness it and you are part of it.”

Communication goes hand in hand with collaboration at Alverno. All Alverno interviewees mentioned that Alverno’s norms of communication and collaboration and a shared sense of mission support the collection of data to determine effectiveness. The director of Graduate Programs made comments that emphasized the importance of this norm to what the program is able to accomplish. For example, she commented, “If people really care about producing good teachers and they are willing to work together and they talk to each other in an ongoing way, then almost anything is possible.” She added that having specified meeting time to work together is important, as is setting goals and persevering to meet them. She emphasized that this requires a “whatever it takes” attitude.

Another characteristic of Alverno’s culture is a willingness to share information and expertise. As described by the director of Graduate Programs, people are very invested in the work they do, but there is an informal agreement that nobody “owns” anything. This means, for example, that when one faculty member passes a course on to another, he or she gives the new person a box full of all of the materials that have been developed for that course. She added, “Our scholarship is not cubby holing ourselves into articles that aren’t connected, but it’s really working on the scholarship of our teaching together and sharing that.”

The ability-based curriculum affects faculty attitudes toward data collection. For example, an Arts and Sciences faculty member remarked that the developmental nature of the curriculum adds a level of accountability that enhances data collection. She described this as “like signing a contract” with the instructor in the next level class that says, “If you have these students, it’s because I have evidence [of their abilities] in the form of their work and my feedback on their work and self-assessments.” She added that if students can’t perform at the expected level of the abilities addressed in her course by the end of the course, then she hasn’t done her job. She noted that because Alverno does not give grades, faculty members need to gather a great deal of data to provide evidence that students can actually demonstrate the abilities.

Alverno faculty members also are reflective practitioners. They engage in self-assessment, individually and collectively. For example, the associate dean for Academic Affairs noted that faculty members are always thinking about their programs and how well candidates are achieving as a result of that program. He added, “We consider it a sign of strength to talk about the things that you might be struggling with as much as what you are doing well. So the point of our peer evaluation program is to identify things we want to work on, not just have somebody come in and tell you how good you are as a teacher.” Two of the Arts and Sciences interviewees also talked about this aspect of the culture. As one of them explained:

Here people do not hide their failures because the spectacular failure can be a moment for the breakthrough. So people standing out in the halls or in department meetings will just say, “I tried this, and it was a disaster. What should I do?”

These faculty members suggested that people feel comfortable admitting their “weaknesses” because through collaboration to co-design or co-teach courses, their strengths also are known. According to these two faculty members, the physical layout of offices, which features intermingling of departments (e.g., a history professor is across from an English professor and just down the hall is someone from philosophy), encourages people to seek others’ perspectives and lessens expectations that one should have all the answers.

Comfort with ambiguity also is characteristic of Alverno’s culture. According to the two members of the Council for Student Assessment interviewed, although faculty members are very clear about what students are to learn and other core aspects of the program, they prefer not to write down program or course specifics because they don’t want them to be viewed as “cast in stone.” They are clear about the value of ambiguity and certainty. One of the Council members provided this example:

In nursing, the major revision of the syllabus occurs toward the end of May. We say, “You should try to make this so it will work for the whole next year.” That way we have all our criteria and that kind of thing, but in October there is still a chance to fix it differently for January. So there’s a sense of here’s the certainty, but know that we can change it if we need to.

Although faculty members are willing to examine and modify structures and processes, it is still difficult for some to have conversations about radical transformations of the system. As the associate dean for Academic Affairs noted, there is a high level of collaboration across departments and an increasing number of interdisciplinary majors;

many faculty members would still find it difficult to contemplate a change that might mean the end of their current department and, as a result, a re-definition of their role as faculty members. For example, the associate dean for Academic Affairs said that he would agree to eliminating the philosophy department as long as students were given the opportunity to learn how to think philosophically.

Training. One way that the culture supports the evaluation system is by providing training for new faculty members. Several interviewees (the chair of the Education Division, two members of the Council for Student Assessment, two teacher education faculty members, the director of ERE, and an Arts and Sciences faculty member) mentioned the support for new faculty. According to the chair of the Education Division, new faculty members receive an orientation to the curriculum framework (i.e., the eight abilities) and attend a series of workshops that help them implement the framework. These workshops include sessions on self-assessment, on how to teach collaboratively in the classroom, on working with students with learning differences, and on giving feedback.

New faculty members are supported in learning about the goals of the program and performance expectations for students through other formal and informal methods. For example, the chair of the Education Division, an Arts and Sciences faculty member, and a teacher educator mentioned that new faculty members are able to work closely with someone who has previously taught the course and sometimes team-teach the course with a colleague. Department meetings provide additional opportunities to develop a shared understanding of the abilities since how the abilities are taught and assessed in particular courses is generally the topic of discussion in these meetings. Two members of the Council for Student Assessment talked about the formal mentoring program for new faculty as well as faculty new to an ability department

Faculty members have other opportunities for learning through the Friday afternoon sessions and the faculty institutes, which are held three times a year (two days in August, three days in January, and for about a week in May). As one Arts and Sciences faculty member explained, the Friday afternoon sessions present an opportunity to share strategies or raise questions about particular aspects of teaching. The associate dean for Academic Affairs described the faculty institutes as opportunities to update faculty on one another's work and to focus in depth on issues that affect the entire college. For example, there have been institutes to learn more about giving feedback and addressing major curriculum changes. The director of ERE described the institutes and department meetings as opportunities to pose questions about evaluation of the major and other issues related to determining the effectiveness of the teacher preparation program.

Faculty Research. The emphasis at Alverno is on teaching, but that doesn't mean that research is not valued. An Arts and Sciences faculty member, the director of ERE, the associate dean for Academic Affairs, and the director of Graduate Programs commented on the role of research at Alverno. According to the director of Graduate Programs, Alverno faculty members try to make their research fit with their teaching and service:

We are interested in people who are more interested in teaching than they are in their own research agendas, which is not to say that we don't do research. I think we do a ton of research, but it's all kind of integrated into the package of who we are and what we do.

She added that faculty members have the attitude that if they are working in K–12 schools, that's where their research should be.

The associate dean for Academic Affairs explained that the criteria for promotion focus on how the faculty member is growing in his or her effectiveness as a teacher and how he or she is contributing to the quality of teaching across the institution and higher education in general. He emphasized that research expectations at Alverno are consistent with this focus on improvement of teaching. He added that this does not mean that “traditional” research can't feed into effective teaching but, rather, that the connection should be purposefully made.

The director of ERE commented that all faculty members are involved in the ongoing research the college conducts to validate the ability-based curriculum. Faculty members participate in evaluations of the major as well as discussions of curriculum and assessments within the department and across the abilities.

Institutionalization. Members of the Educational Research and Evaluation office specifically addressed institutionalization in their interviews. They rated all of the indicators of institutionalization (i.e., formal descriptions about evaluation in documents, routine timelines for data collection activities, funding allocations, time allocations, rewards for faculty participation, shared faculty understandings of candidate assessments and performance concepts) as being “much in evidence” or “a great deal in evidence.” “Shared faculty understandings of candidate assessments and performance concepts” was rated as being “a great deal in evidence.” They also provided several other indicators of institutionalization as described in the following paragraphs.

According to the director of ERE, Alverno has been examining its program long enough and purposefully enough to have identified the elements of its program that are generalizable or transferable to other institutions. She considers this another indicator of institutionalization. For example, the curriculum and the components for the self-assessment process are transferable. These elements have been written about and shared

at the regional and national level by Alverno faculty members and by others. In addition, Alverno has tested the transferability of these elements through its work with other institutions and through various projects (e.g., Teaching for Tomorrow).

Alverno's approach to evaluating its program makes it clear that institutionalization should not be equated with stagnation. Although there are routines that occur on a regular basis, such as the graduate and principal surveys, there also is an inquiry stance that involves continually questioning those routines and how they are carried out. According to staff of the Educational Research and Evaluation office, such flexibility within a structure and an expectation that everything is open to examination also indicate institutionalization of the system.

Advice About Program Evaluation

Fourteen interviewees gave advice about using systematic evaluation to guide continuous improvement of teacher preparation. These included the director of Graduate Programs, the associate dean for Academic Affairs, the chair of the Council for Student Assessment, two field supervisors, a K–12 teacher, a principal, three staff from ERE, two Arts and Sciences faculty members, and two teacher education faculty members. Their advice, provided in the bulleted list that follows, ranges across a number of topics, from identification of outcomes and ways to assess them to relationships within and outside the college.

- Know your students on a personal level, and care about them.
- Have open, two-way communication between the college and K–12 partner schools.
- Find time for people to get together to identify the issues of concern to them. Work from these issues to help people seriously rethink what they are doing and become better at what they are doing.
- Articulate beliefs or assumptions early in the process because they guide decisions and are a standard against which decisions can be examined.
- Be willing to move away from traditional ways of educating people and to really work at doing so.
- Be open. Have an openness and willingness to make a change. Think about what prompts openness in individuals. Be willing to “roll up your sleeves” and work hard at making change happen. Be willing to work with others at the national, regional, state, and local levels. Seek information about what quality teaching is.

- Build reflection into the teacher preparation program for candidates, faculty members, departments, and the institution.
- Be flexible and open to feedback.
- Focus on teaching and assessing identified abilities university wide. (Large universities may need to start on the department level and expand from there.)
- Think as a department rather than as individuals. Work collaboratively rather than competitively.
- Focus on what really matters — how and what students are learning. Instead of complaining about students, figure out how you can help them learn.
- Once you have a process for looking at things that matter to you, build structures (such as regular faculty meetings) that recognize and support collaboration around questions of improvement of student learning.
- Set time aside to communicate and share, particularly about what you expect students to know and be able to do.
- Know what you want as outcomes for students, and create a curriculum that developmentally provides opportunities for them to reach the outcomes.
- Develop a conceptual framework, and design the program to be coherent with it.
- Examine the INTASC standards for their deeper meaning and take a developmental approach (i.e., think about how to help candidates develop abilities over time through various courses) rather than a “checklist” approach that just assigns standards to courses.
- Be very well organized. Have specific forms for cooperating teachers to complete on student teachers and those in field placements before student teaching. Work with cooperating teachers to design and revise the forms.
- Have a schedule for candidates in field placements, and keep cooperating teachers informed about what candidates should do and when they should do it.
- Know what your students are learning. Identify and examine different sources of evidence to determine what students know.
- Ensure that your assessment system provides for developmentally increasing expectations (i.e., expectations for performance are greater at

the end of the program than at the beginning of the program.)

Appropriately balance developmental assessment (used to determine where a candidate is in terms of his or her learning and what the candidate needs to progress in his or her learning) and high-stakes assessment (used at key decision points — e.g., the candidate has to reach communication Level II before she can go into the first field placement, Level III before the third placement, and Level IV before student teaching).

- Use assessment to develop the learner.
- Help students develop their ability to monitor their learning and to communicate that learning.
- Have a portfolio system that is well organized and comprehensive (i.e., it includes self-assessments as well as assessments by university supervisors and cooperating teachers). Involve a diverse group of outside assessors in assessing the portfolio.
- Make sure that evaluation is done for the purpose of improving teaching and learning — not just for its own sake.
- Base program evaluation on inquiry and the questions that faculty members have.
- Gather information about how successful your graduates have been, especially in the contexts for which you have specifically prepared them (e.g., urban schools), how well they function when they finish the program, and whether they are prepared for the “real world.”
- Make the processes for evaluating the effectiveness of the program part of the regularly occurring processes of the institution.

Alverno Case Summary

Structures. Interviews and documents identified a number of structures that support evaluation of teacher preparation at Alverno. These structures can be categorized as data collection strategies, offices/committees, meetings/training, and consortia/projects. Program evaluation also is influenced by NCATE accreditation standards, INTASC standards, and teaching standards defined by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Structures for collecting data on groups of students include longitudinal studies of graduates, evaluation of the major, graduate and principal surveys, and external assessments of the abilities identified by the college. On the individual level, primary data collection structures include portfolios, videotapes, K–12 student work samples, logs from field placements, supervisor and cooperating teacher evaluations of performance,

and a behavioral event interview. Evaluation of candidate performance is based on criteria established for the abilities being addressed by the performance. Each ability and its developmental levels have been clearly defined with public criteria and are addressed systematically in the curriculum.

Various offices and committees provide support for the evaluation system. These include the Educational Research and Evaluation office, which conducts studies to demonstrate the value, impact, validity, and effectiveness of the ability-based curriculum. ERE assists departments with periodic evaluations of their majors and studies students' and graduates' performance over time. The Assessment Center administers assessments, coordinates training for external assessors, and keeps assessment records for each student. The Research and Evaluation Committee is an interdisciplinary group that advises ERE and publishes books and articles about findings. The group reviews, refines, and communicates guidelines for college research and evaluation, ensures that research findings are implemented, and elicits involvement and feedback from faculty members on data interpretation. The Curriculum Committee reviews course and program proposals and looks more broadly at what is happening with curricula across the departments, raises issues, and shares promising innovations. The Teacher Education Committee (an internal group that includes representatives from Arts and Sciences, the ability departments, and teacher education faculty) and the Teacher Advisory Committee (an external group mandated by the state that includes representatives from K–12, teacher education, and Arts and Sciences) assist in the development of the teacher education program and provide feedback about its effectiveness. The ability departments also play a role in program evaluation by conducting studies of how the abilities are being taught and assessed across the college. Perhaps most influential is the Council for Student Assessment, which oversees assessment across the college. The council designs and implements guidelines and processes for developing assessments and publishes articles and books that synthesize what the faculty has learned about student assessment.

As mentioned previously, communication and collaboration are characteristic of Alverno's culture. These attributes are exercised in a variety of meeting structures. Of particular note are the faculty meetings held each Friday afternoon and the faculty institutes held three times a year. These institutes, along with a mentoring program for new faculty members, provide opportunities to examine the effectiveness of the curriculum as well as learn ways to improve it. In addition, teacher education faculty members meet weekly as a department, and subgroups, such as the field supervisors, meet on a regular basis. Faculty members from across the college meet in informal groups, such as the New Student Group and the Pedagogy Group, to discuss how to improve various aspects of teaching and learning.

The chair of the Education Division and an Arts and Sciences faculty member specifically mentioned that the ability framework is a structure that supports evaluation because it provides coherence across the college. The Arts and Sciences professor remarked:

Knowing where we expect the students to start in terms of the abilities we're focusing on, and having a sense of where we're trying to go with those particular students in terms of outcomes for a particular course, help us identify what we need to see to be convinced that the student is ready to move to the next level in the curriculum. The fact that we do that across the college in terms of abilities creates a kind of coherence for data collection.

For example, faculty members collect samples of the student's ability to communicate at a certain level in a communications course, in a science course, in a history course, in an education course. The student receives feedback about how she is able to communicate within different disciplinary contexts. When faculty members make decisions at the end of a semester about how a student performed, the decision is made in relationship to outcomes that are coherent across the curriculum.

The Alverno faculty considers participation in consortia and projects with other institutions of higher education, K–12 districts, and state departments of education as another way to support program evaluation. These partnerships allow the college to explore the validity of the ability-based curriculum more fully, to compare its program to others' standards, and to deepen its understanding of student assessment as learning. Partnerships with K–12 provide an opportunity for Alverno faculty members to have first-hand knowledge of K–12 issues and the types of skills Alverno students and graduates will need to function effectively in the K–12 system.

Processes. As described previously, one of the most important processes that supports evaluation of the teacher preparation program is collaboration. Faculty members collaborate within and across departments. As described by the associate dean for Academic Affairs, "Faculty are involved in a level of collaboration that is institutional and not just their own work or even their own department's work." This means that there is a common understanding of the curriculum and what is expected of students as well as a sense of shared responsibility for assisting students in achieving the outcomes.

Almost all of the Alverno interviewees mentioned the importance of the hiring process in supporting the evaluation system. The college is very clear with applicants about the importance of the abilities and the role that assessment plays. The college seeks faculty members who are dedicated to teaching rather than to their individual research and who

want to engage in collaborative work. Because those hired must be student focused and willing to work across disciplines, hiring committees are usually cross disciplinary. The hiring process usually consists of an interview that lasts several days and includes a performance assessment. For example, one Arts and Sciences faculty member said she had to give feedback on a stack of papers as part of the hiring process. Another said he had to design three courses.

All interviewees directly or indirectly mentioned the college's emphasis on continuous improvement as something that contributes to evaluation of the program. Alverno's continuous improvement stance means faculty members are always questioning how they help students acquire the abilities defined as essential. This stance allows them to examine the way departments are defined and how disciplines are taught. The chair of the Education Division said, "We're continually improving and changing, and that's the culture here." This stance also means that faculty are willing to participate in evaluation activities. The director of Graduate Programs phrased this commitment as, "They really want to know what could work better."

Arts and Sciences faculty, the associate dean for Academic Affairs, and the chair of the Education Division attributed the culture of continuous improvement and collaboration to the ability-based curriculum. In the words of the associate dean:

When you're not just comparing students to one another but you're committed to helping every student try to reach the level that is expected, when teaching means giving feedback to students, when students have to perform consistently, show what they can do, and receive feedback from faculty on both their strengths and weaknesses, and [have to] learn to continue to develop, I think when you're doing that with students and you're talking with each other all the time about that, that it can't help but affect the way that the faculty starts to think about their own performance and their own improvement. So I think there is something about the way that we approach teaching that affects the way we think about our own development as faculty. . . .

The chair of the Council for Student Assessment noted that all of Alverno's structures and processes that support evaluation of the teacher preparation program can be traced back to what the faculty believes about education. For example, because they believe that learning has to be active, there are performance assessments. Because they believe the learner is important and they respect learners, they make their criteria public. She emphasized that articulating beliefs is important because they guide decisions and provide a standard against which decisions can be judged.

Issues. One issue for Alverno is the increasing complexity of collaboration and cross-disciplinary work in which the faculty is engaged. Time is set aside for departmental meetings, ability meetings, and whole faculty meetings, but as more departments develop interdisciplinary majors, it is becoming harder for faculty members to attend the number of meetings that are required for collaborative course and assessment development.

Another possible issue according to the associate dean for Academic Affairs is that the ability-based system has been around long enough that some faculty members may be reluctant to question it too deeply at this stage:

We have had a very clear and coherent sense of what we want students to learn because of the ability-based program. And because of that, people are very clear also about what they want their majors to do. That's been very good. It has served us very well but has the danger of making us think that we're still doing exactly what we should be doing.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, the associate deans for Academic Affairs will push the faculty to explore the following questions: "What are the ways of thinking that are most characteristic of our discipline and what are the controversies about that?" The next question will be, "How do you engage students in those ways of thinking?" These questions will allow faculty members to think in different ways about how their discipline might be taught.