

# **Davidson College**

## **Focused Report**

Response to the Report of the Reaffirmation Committee  
in Preparation for the On-Site Review September 19-21, 2006

For further information, please contact:

Linda M. LeFauve  
Director of Planning and Institutional Research  
Box 7146  
Davidson, North Carolina 28035  
704-894-2124  
[lilefauve@davidson.edu](mailto:lilefauve@davidson.edu)

## Davidson College

### Focused Report

In its report to Davidson College, the Reaffirmation Committee found some areas to be not in compliance with the Principles of Accreditation. We have provided our response to each of these determinations as well as additional documentation where relevant.

- Course credit. Davidson's method for calculating course credit has not been an issue in the past, and is neither indefensible nor idiosyncratic. The questions the committee had regarding course credit accounts for non-compliance with three principles.
- Evaluation of the president and college officers. Evaluations of the president and college officers is regular and thorough.
- Physical plant inventory. The College maintains a detailed fixed asset listing that supports the balances recorded on the general ledger/financial statements. We have never had any concerns expressed or errors noted by the auditors regarding fixed assets.
- Use of technology to enhance learning. The use of technology in the academic area at Davidson is wide-spread, accessible, well-documented, well-integrated, and has an established relationship with learning objectives on campus.
- Qualifications of faculty. The five faculty members identified in the report now have their CVs available for review.
- Name, address, and telephone number for accrediting agency. This was available on the web site but the catalog went to print before they could be added. They will appear on the next edition, which will be printed prior to the on-site visit.
- Dismissal of trustees for cause. This has been an oversight that is now being corrected.
- General education. Davidson has never engaged in testing at the college-wide level whereby all students undergo an inventory of general skills and knowledge. Rather, the capstone experiences at Davidson provide the final and thorough assessment of the core competencies required for graduation.
- Institutional effectiveness. By any measure, Davidson College succeeds in its mission of educating students for lives of leadership and service. We do so through a stellar academic program, good stewardship of resources, careful attention to life outside the classroom, and a campus culture that continues to ask "what next?" The Reaffirmation Committee found no fault with our articulation of the planning process or learning outcomes, and so this report contains further examples of continuous improvement for the areas cited by the Committee.

## Core Requirements

**Core Requirement 2.5:** The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services that (a) results in continuing improvement, and (b) demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. (Institutional Effectiveness)

**Judgment of the Reaffirmation Committee:** Non-Compliance

**Comment from the Committee:** The Compliance Report contains an abundance of data regarding the planning process and tools of evaluation used by the College, but the report lacks a history of evidence of using the results for continuous improvement. For example, the identified academic programs of music and theatre have strategic plans with associated goals, but no evidence that the actions identified have taken place and how this has “closed the loop” within the assessment process. The same is true of athletics, general education, the library, and academic support services.

**Davidson College Response:** Although the Reaffirmation Committee has identified particular areas for which we need to provide more evidence of continuous improvement, it is important first to step back and provide a general understanding of the Davidson College environment with respect to evaluation. Davidson is a place that depends on—and can count on—vigilance in communication. An unspoken understanding is that part of any job description is the expectation that follow-up is continuous and proactive. When Information Technology Services completes an installation, someone will make a phone call the next day to see if everything is working as expected. When a workshop is offered, participants talk afterwards about the best ways to apply what was learned. When data are provided to the grants office, an e-mail will follow to see if a better format would be more useful. We are a campus where everyone, from the President on through the entire organizational chart, is expected to be accessible and responsive to feedback, indeed to actively pursue it. So it is the exception rather than the rule that an issue reaches the point where it has been documented before being addressed.

That the planning and evaluation processes are integrated and institution-wide may be seen in the planning process itself. As described in our original response to Core Requirement 2.5, all the divisions of the College—Academic Affairs, Admission and Financial Aid, Athletics, Business and Finance, College Relations, and Student Life—begin each year by meeting as a group to review the previous year and determine or modify courses of action for the year to come in order to reach objectives or goals. Activities in a vacuum are simply not part of how the campus operates, nor are assumptions that are not solidly based on proven performance. Davidson tracks comparative peer data for virtually every area of the campus and continually performs at or beyond established benchmarks of excellent performance.

With overall respect to continuous improvement and meeting the mission of the College, we would point to a number of institution-wide improvements and initiatives related to academics and co-curricular activities, the physical campus, technology, diversity, and financial aid aimed at making Davidson accessible to the widest range of students. There will be more team-taught classes and interdisciplinary programs and funds have been raised for trial professorships in areas where there is demonstrated need for classes or increased depth. In addition, an ambitious leadership program is near beginning as a direct result of the College’s mission to educate students to lead and serve. As part of the on-going improvement of campus technology, we

recently completed installation of Banner 7 and will soon implement a content management system for the Web site. Finally, fundraising is continuous so that the physical plant can be upgraded and scholarships funded for students with need or special talents.

Davidson participates in both the Cooperative Institutional Research Program First-Year Student Survey and the College Student Survey given at the end of the senior year. Comparing students' experiences and assessments at the beginning and end of their time at Davidson—and comparing the experiences and assessments of Davidson students with students at peer institutions—enables us to evaluate growth, identify areas that require more attention, and focus on issues related to our mission. We have, for example, committed to additional attention to developing leadership in our students (see appendix for a description of this program) and have developed more ambitious diversity goals for both incoming students and faculty.

With respect to the areas cited by the Reaffirmation Committee, we respond as follows.

#### *Music and Theatre*

Music and Theatre went beyond the development of their mission/goals/outcome statements as documented in Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1. As a result of their strategic planning processes, Music added a Fellow position and additional information technology support, and repairs have been made to Cunningham, the building in which Theatre is located in a first step toward improving performance space. Most of the ambitious goals included in these plans, however, are multi-year projects that cannot yet be assessed right now, and both departments will continue to track the goals articulated in their plans.

#### *Athletics*

The mission statement for Athletics at Davidson College (included in the appendix) is clear about priorities and responsibilities. These include access to physical education, recreational sports, and intercollegiate athletics as integral parts of students' education; compliance with the NCAA and Title IX; and consistency of athletic policies with the educational goals and objectives of the College.

Athletics has been extraordinarily successful in fulfilling its mission. Not only do large numbers of students participate in club level and intercollegiate sports, but “student athlete” is a true depiction of the culture on campus. Athletes graduate at (and sometimes above) the already high rate for the campus as a whole and, in fact, Davidson has been the recipient of the Southern Conference's Barrett-Bonner Award honoring the highest percentage of student athletes on the league's honor roll for 12 of the 13 years it has been awarded. Davidson has also received the Graduation Rate Award for the fourth straight year.

The department maintains its focus on its mission through effective communication and administrative oversight that includes regular and thorough assessment activities. Surveys of faculty, and surveys and meetings with varsity athletes at the end of each competition season are critical components that have led to improvements and changes. These include expanded access to the Baker Sports Complex for athletes now able to use student identification cards for some previously restricted areas, and social events hosted by Athletics by which faculty and athletic staff have increased opportunities to interact and better understand each others' roles. Additionally, Davidson's Division I athletic programs are subject to review by the NCAA, a very thorough assessment activity in itself. Three specific changes are being made as a result of the most recent (2005) review:

- Athletics will create an education process for donors to the Davidson Athletic Foundation to make them more familiar with NCAA rules and regulations. This will include a compliance column in each issue of the DAF publication "Track of the Cat" and an insert to be mailed with our season tickets purchases explaining important NCAA guidelines.
- Performance evaluation procedures will be modified to document the College's emphasis on compliance with NCAA rules and regulations for all Athletics Department staff and any other College staff involved in Athletics procedures (e.g. Registrar, Financial Aid). Each employee's job description will be attached to the Performance Evaluation Form to ensure a discussion occurs regarding compliance and its importance.
- There will be documentation of external reviews of camps and clinics performed every three years by the Southern Conference.

We also include in an appendix a presentation developed by the senior men's administrator that summarizes not only the extensive evaluation activities that are part of the Davidson athletics culture, but that also shows the attention given to results. That Davidson athletes perform so well academically means that Athletics can focus on other improvements, including better communication with faculty. We would note that Athletics does, in fact, have good relationships with the faculty as evidenced by the 86% who attend at least one athletic event annually and the 79% who agree that intercollegiate athletics contributes to the mission of the College. Still, the department takes seriously its communication with individual faculty and so has implemented strategies to improve it, including the goal of increased participation on campus committees and the establishment of a faculty liaison program. Other strategies are included in the appended presentation.

#### *General education*

As is the case with all aspects of the Davidson educational program, the general education core is monitored and periodically reviewed. That no major changes have taken place in recent years is not an indictment of that review process; rather, the general education core had served the College well and impetus for change was negligible. Within the past two years, however, there has been a building interest in a review of general education, an interest that led directly to Davidson's proposed Quality Enhancement Plan which includes proposed activities for improving both the writing and humanities programs. The Quality Enhancement Plan is provided as a separate document.

Within each department, the capstone experiences that bring together assessment of core competencies and the major are also continually under review by the faculty. We discuss the capstone experience more fully in our response to Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1.

#### *The Library*

The Library engages in regular surveys of and discussions with students, faculty, and staff to improve its services and programs. Assessment tools are included in an appendix. Over 100 library usage classes a year are conducted with a total of over 2,000 students attending (some, of course, attend more than one subject class) followed by follow-up sessions with faculty members to determine effectiveness of these sessions; refinements are made based on these evaluations for future classes. Special meetings are held with new faculty and each student in each Davidson 101—a class that provides new students with the facts and skills necessary for safe and healthy lives at Davidson (please see description in appendix) and which includes a library component--completes an evaluation. One of the most useful evaluation tools is an invitation to comment sent to each faculty member; the Library Director personally responds to questions and suggestions. Information gleaned from all these evaluations and assessment tools to improve library services

and resources have led to important improvements and change. The Library provides here a recent list as follows:

- For Davidson 101, student evaluations are now completed immediately after sessions. Students are asked the most important thing they have learned, what one question they still have, and how we can improve the session for next year's incoming class. All of those forms—almost 500 every year—are reviewed and the Library acts on the students' comments, particularly the questions they still have and their suggestions for improvement. For example, after the first year, we discovered that the students really were anxious about finding their way round the Library. We hadn't included any opportunities for them to explore the building, so we added an exercise the following year that got them out into the Library. After reviewing student comments the following year, we refined the exercise still more. We also offered optional, in-depth tours after the session. Also, we routinely encountered problems using Blackboard, so after the second year, the Library created a Web site for the Davidson 101 exercises and information. In addition, in response to student feedback, sample topics were more closely integrated in the session so that all of the exercises were on the same theme. Finally, after three years of students expressing concern about the length of the session (scheduled for two hours although it normally only took an hour), we reduced the scheduled time to an hour, so that the students could plan their time better. (This also helps the librarians keep to the schedule better.)
- In discussions with faculty members and in working with students at the reference desk, we discovered that students were still having problems evaluating citations to determine the potential quality of a given resource. Last year, the Library therefore included another short exercise that required students to look at two short bibliographies and assess the quality of the items listed in each one. This has worked extremely well.
- The annual inventory helps us account for every book and enables us to put every book in its correct place. In addition, it helps us identify missing materials so that we can replace them promptly without having to wait for a user to report a missing book.
- For collection development, we go through the Inter-Library Loan (ILL) reports to see what classes are using ILL heavily and what subject areas are most frequently requested to look for patterns and unusual requests. In response to these reports, we regularly contact students who are using ILL heavily to make sure that they are aware of resources we have here and to help them identify the best materials if they are not already doing so; have built up the collection in specific areas in response to patterns of ILL requests; acquire specific titles that are requested multiple times by different people (including some that were out of print but which we were able to find from antiquarian booksellers).
- Collection development includes reviews of new course applications and approvals. The Library checks to see if we have materials to support the course and, if necessary, contact the faculty member to talk strategy and to plan for building up the collection where needed.
- Database usage statistics are reviewed to see how the resources are being used. If a particular resource is being underused, we'll put more emphasis on it in library sessions and advertise it more widely on campus. We also note exceptionally high use for a resource; in the case of JSTOR, our statistics are consistently high, and faculty members have complained that students tend to rely on JSTOR for everything. We've therefore made a point to talk about JSTOR's strengths and limitations in library sessions and at the reference desk so that students are aware that it is not the answer to everything. Turnaways are also reviewed (which can be an indication that we need to increase the number of simultaneous users) and, if possible, we use the statistics to identify potential

- problems or sources of confusion (that is, to identify databases that users may be struggling with; this indicates a need for more instruction and support.)
- For collection development, we regularly check our holdings against standardized lists, which helps us to fill in gaps. With the publication of the new *Resources for College Libraries*, we'll be able to do this more easily.
  - To better serve students with disabilities, we did a survey—with the Dean of Students' help and with careful consideration for students' confidentiality—to find out what services and equipment were needed, then purchased that equipment and designed services and training in response to the information we received.
  - Noting that students were often overlooking important print reference tools because they didn't know how to find them and therefore went online instead, the Library created the Web-based course research guides for classes that include both print and online reference sources. As a result, the in-house usage statistics for the print sources has increased.

#### *Academic support services*

As noted in the Reaffirmation Committee's response to Comprehensive Standard 3.4.9, Davidson has relevant and adequate academic support services. One measure of the effectiveness of academic support is, of course, the academic success of students. Certainly students come to Davidson with impressive academic backgrounds but they are also entering a high-pressure academic environment and we want to ensure that they have support structures in place. We find evidence for that in our retention rate (the most recent five year average is 95.7%), our graduation rate (the most recent five-year average is 89.4%), and the fact that virtually no students are dismissed for academic reasons. Our graduation and retention rates are among the highest nationally for private liberal arts colleges.

With respect to the use of assessment of academic support services to improve them, there are several regularly occurring evaluations of major components of academic support that led to improvements.

*Davidson 101.* As noted above with respect to the Library, many changes have been made to Davidson 101 (see evaluation form in appendix) as a result of assessment activities in the Library. There is also a general survey that included an assessment of learning outcomes tied to the Library, drawn from ACRL information literacy standards. The results led to a redesign of the Library section of Davidson 101. Students in courses designated as writing courses have been asked follow-up questions in which virtually all provide correct information based on learning in Davidson 101.

*Support to students of color.* Related to the Dean of Students Office goal of providing services and support to students of color, the following changes were instituted as a result of its assessment activities:

- Development of a session entitled "Making the Most Out of Your Davidson Experience" that was conducted by two Davidson alumni, giving students the chance to have a dialogue with people who had been at Davidson and hear what they went on to accomplish as a result of that experience.
- Addition of a Minority Outreach Counselor to assist in facilitating needs of students of color.

*Academic advising.* All faculty advisors were surveyed in 1998. As a result of the survey, we:

- Lengthened the orientation period for new advisers
- Included veteran advisers in the training
- Prepared a comprehensive academic advising notebook
- Instituted the Comprehensive Academic Plan
- Moved from mixed gender advising to single sex to simplify hall counselor interactions

In addition, Cole Barton (Professor of Psychology) and Tom Shandley (Dean of Students) attended an academic advising assessment workshop that resulted in the development of a new advising assessment instrument for students and advisers that will be forwarded to the faculty for approval in 2006/07.

*Pre-College Enrichment program.* This program provides academic and personal support for minority students at Davidson. As a result of participant surveys, the following changes have been made:

- The orientation has expanded to include all entering minority students
- The academic support workshops were expanded and the students were given choices based on their particular needs (i.e. writing, math, science, etc)
- A session on the purpose of the liberal arts and understanding the honor code was instituted
- A session for parents on the academic and personal support available was included
- The program was expanded to include year-long academic and personal support, including the use of a peer mentor.

*Academic Tutoring.* The academic tutoring program has not been evaluated but this will be done during the 2006/2007 academic year.

*Counseling Center.* Annual reports from the counseling center identified a need that resulted in hiring a third counselor with specific duties related to supporting students' academic life.

*New student orientation.* Three forms of assessment are used to determine the effectiveness of this initial stage of the students' experience at Davidson, as we consider it critical for support of their academic endeavors and their full participation in the campus community:

- Orientation evaluation forms completed by students and parents (appendix)
- Information gleaned from a committee of staff and students that review orientation
- Informal conversations with first-year Hall Counselors

As a result of these assessments, the following changes were implemented:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Response</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New students receive too many mailings from various Davidson College offices over the course of the summer. It is confusing to the students and increases the likelihood that important information is lost or overlooked.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under the leadership of the College Communications Office, mailings will be consolidated so that students get clear information about the Dean of Students Office, Residence Life Office, Business Services, Auxiliary Services, Office of Admission and Financial Aid, and the Registrar's Office.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Student Orientation did not offer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation now includes a session</li> </ul>

information to students that would be helpful to them as they begin their academic experience at Davidson.

entitled “Academics at Davidson.” Panelists include the Registrar, an Advisor, the Associate Dean of Students, and a current student. Each panelist offers tips and suggestions to ease the transition to college-level work.

- The Day of Service during Orientation was minimally successful in accomplishing stated goals.
- A new plan for the Day of Service, a service walk, fulfills the following goal: “Facilitate an event, grounded in the institution’s values and mission, that models a commitment to service while introducing students to each other, members of the Davidson College community, members of the Town of Davidson Community, and a local community issue/need as part of a larger global context. This one-time/short-term service event functions as a window into the potential for service over the course of the next 4 years and is a ceremony that also highlights Davidson’s strong relationship with the community.”
- The schedule for the first day of New Student Orientation is too full, leaving students and parents too tired and overwhelmed to remember much of what they had learned.
- Several changes were implemented to reduce the pressure and strain resulting from too many sessions on the Thursday of Orientation, namely: The speeches during the Opening Session were shortened. Two sessions for parents (Meet the Deans and Academics at Davidson) have been consolidated into one session. The number of student sessions during Davidson Resources was reduced from five to four.
- New students arrive on campus with many questions regarding computer set-up.
- Assistance with computer set-up is now offered all day on Friday, instead of just Thursday morning.

*Instructional Technology.* We address instructional technology separately below in our response to the Reaffirmation Committee’s question regarding Comprehensive Standard 3.4.14.

**Core Requirement 2.7.1:** The institution offers one or more degree programs based on at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level; or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level. The institution provides a written justification and rationale for program equivalency. (Program Length)

**Judgment of the Reaffirmation Committee:** Non-Compliance

**Comment from the Committee:** The College offers baccalaureate degrees in 20 departments with some departments also offering minors. Davidson College uses a course-credit system instead of a credit-hour system to award course credit. The College did not provide adequate rationale for its conversion of credits and its awarding of four semester hours credit for courses which would appear normally to carry three credit hours credit. Therefore, it is not possible to determine whether the degree programs are equivalent to 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent. (See comments also under Comprehensive Standard 3.4.6 and Federal Requirement 4.4.)

**Davidson College Response:** In 1968, Davidson went from a semester curriculum, with credit based on semester hours, to a three-term curriculum, with each course counted as a single course credit. Each term was ten weeks, exclusive of examination periods. Under the old curriculum, 120 semester hours credit (plus four semester hours of then-required ROTC) were required for graduation. Under the new curriculum, 32 courses -- eight per year -- were required for graduation, along with one "Extended Studies" component required each year: exams in the several general areas during the first two years, exams or analogous activities in the major during the second two. It should be noted that in the old curriculum, if the average course (non-lab) was a 3-hour course, the average student load was five courses (15 hours) per semester, 10 courses (30 hours) per year. Such seems the norm among current schools using semester-hour credits. Under the three-term curriculum, the course norm (exclusive of "extended studies") was eight courses per year -- two in one of the three terms, three in the remaining two terms.

Difficulties soon emerged in the "extended studies" component and, for a few years, the number of courses required for graduation went to 36, with students taking three courses in each of the three terms.

The SACS Self-Study of 1985 recounts the history, but notes only that semester hours (in contrast to course credits) represent a preferred approach for a minority of the faculty, not that the matter of course credits was in any fashion suspect or indicative of inadequate educational solidity. No objection to the approach was raised at the time of the 1985 study sufficient even to have the matter on the table for the 1995 SACS Self-Study.

When Davidson returned to a semester curriculum in the late 1980s, the normal course load went to four per semester, eight per year, with 32 courses required for graduation. Technically, the increase in value per course over the old semester system (five courses per semester) would be  $5/4 = 1.25 = 3.75$  (rounded to 4) equivalent semester hours.

It should also be noted that Davidson's semesters are 14.5 weeks long, exclusive of exam periods and vacations, a figure that is on the high side of calendars in comparable institutions.

Many selective colleges use the same approach to credit as Davidson, though often without a semester having as many class days. Each has, like Davidson, elected not to engage in discriminating different course requirements or course types by measures of semester hours. At

Davidson, for instance, most science courses meet not three hours per week, but six (including a 3-hour lab); most basic foreign language courses meet for five; finite mathematics, elementary economics, and economic statistics meet for four. Professors in other courses seem to find few barriers to requiring meetings outside of ordinary class time for video screenings, event attendance, conference participation, and the like.

For almost 40 years, our underlying philosophy has concerned the content of courses, not solely the number of minutes during which the student and the teacher occupy the same room. Our record of success in sending students well prepared for professional or graduate schools, a documented piece of evidence, leads us to have continuing confidence in that approach. That our approach is shared by not just a few, but seemingly the majority, of top liberal arts colleges indicates that we are neither contrarian nor idiosyncratic in this regard.

## Comprehensive Standards

**Comprehensive Standard 3.2.5:** Members of the governing board can be dismissed only for cause and by due process.

**Judgment of the Reaffirmation Committee:** Non-Compliance

**Comment from the Committee:** The College's assertion that it meets this standard by reliance on North Carolina General Statute 3.2.5 appears to be inconsistent with the SACS-COC standard that members of the governing board can be dismissed only for cause. Paragraph (A1) of the cited section specifies that absent other provisions in the College's Articles of Incorporation, directors may be removed with or without cause.

**Davidson College Response:** The President and the College's legal counsel have developed language to codify Davidson's policy on the dismissal of members of the Board of Trustees for cause and by due process. The following language has been proposed as Article I.7 of the By-Laws of the Trustees of Davidson College:

The Trustees may remove any Trustee, but only for cause and only by vote of a majority of Trustees then in office at a meeting called with notice that the purpose, or one of the purposes, of the meeting is removal of the Trustee.

This change would be made effective as of the February 2007 Board meeting.

**Comprehensive Standard 3.2.10:** The institution evaluates the effectiveness of its administrators, including the chief executive officer, on a periodic basis.

**Judgment of the Reaffirmation Committee:** Non-Compliance

**Comment from the Committee:** Policies and procedures for the evaluation of the effectiveness of “all staff employees” are set forth in the College Employee Guide and the Compliance Report outlines procedures followed in the annual review of the College’s senior officers by the President and the President of the Board of Trustees. However, the Compliance Report lacked evidence of application of these policies and procedures with respect to senior officers and the President.

**Davidson College Response:** As noted in the College’s response in the Compliance Certification, the President is evaluated as per the policies and procedures in [Article II.4 of the Bylaws of the Trustees of Davidson College](#) (appended). That Article specifies an annual review at minimum and is an assessment of all major aspects of the College, including but not limited to the academic program, athletics, fundraising, administrative policies and functions, and fiscal stewardship. The Executive Board then convenes a meeting with the President. That this process is not constrained to a particular written format has worked to the benefit of both the College and the effectiveness of its chief executive officer, as evidenced by the College’s success in those areas—academic, athletic, fiscal, and administrative---by which the College as a whole is judged. We have appended the [memo](#) that was sent to members of the Board by its Chair prior to the most recent evaluation and the [agenda](#) for that meeting. The evaluation itself can be made available to the on-site committee during its visit.

With respect to the other officers of the College, Davidson’s response also specifically includes the process by which they are evaluated. It is the President directly who reviews their performance, on an annual basis at the close of the academic year, with a thorough examination of goals from the past year, and assessment of the officer’s success in meeting them. The development of goals for the coming year is included in this discussion as well as ways in which priorities identified by the Trustees and the President will be met. We would also note that each officer meets with the President every week. Progress toward goals is thus assessed on a regular basis in addition to the more formal annual evaluation. In addition, the President discusses the performance of the College officers with the trustees during the presidential review.

The [schedule](#) of the President’s annual evaluation meetings with the Principal Executive Staff for the past two years is included in the appendix, and their files will be available should the on-site committee wish to review them.

**Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1:** The institution identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results.

**Judgment of the Reaffirmation Committee:** Non-Compliance

**Comment from the Committee:** Planning and expected outcomes are readily available and well-formed. The Compliance Report provides evidence that programs and services are involved in planning and assessment processes. However, the report does not include evidence which documents actual use of results for improvement. For example, supporting documentation did not include any evidence of evaluation for improvement to ensure that the academic support services are adequate. While some evidence is found regarding assessment of academic support services in the documentation for 3.3.1 on Institutional Effectiveness (outcomes and assessment plans), there is little or no evidence of the results of the assessment or the use of the results for ensuring or improving academic support services.

**Davidson College Response:** The Reaffirmation Committee approved the planning process and noted the appropriateness and availability of expected outcomes, so we won't repeat the process by which they are developed and communicated. Before we respond to the issue of academic support, however, it is important to describe the evaluation culture on the Davidson campus and the ways in which all offices, departments, and programs evaluate their contributions to the Davidson mission. Access and communication to and among administrators is frequent and open, and there is a close working relationships among the College officers who meet weekly. For that reason, issues can be resolved quickly and courses altered as need be in order to better achieve goals. Each division of the College incorporates a retreat into its planning process, bringing together offices in such a way that staff that will be working across offices to achieve goals understand their joint responsibilities and all staff know and appreciate what each division is doing. It is not an uncommon occurrence at Davidson for a staff or faculty member without formal responsibility for a project to offer ideas or resources to the office with responsibility. There is a mixture of annual reports, discussion, shared observations, informal feedback, and formal assessments but the common thread is "what next?" An important part of the way Davidson views the planning process is that it includes two kinds of forward momentum: 1) successful achievement of goals that now provides a foundation for new goals and 2) implementation of changes to better achieve goals not yet achieved.

The comment from the Committee focuses on academic support services, which we assume refers to educational support services as per the standard. The problem, as the Committee saw it, seemed to be on two fronts: Adequacy of academic support services, and evidence of improvement based on assessments.

#### *Academic support services*

As noted in its judgment of compliance with Comprehensive Standard 3.4.9 ("The institution provides appropriate academic support services"), the Reaffirmation Committee agreed with Davidson's own assessment of relevant and adequate academic support services. One measure of the effectiveness of academic support is, of course, the academic success of students. Certainly students come to Davidson with impressive academic backgrounds but they are also entering a high-pressure academic environment and we want to ensure that they have support structures in place. We find evidence for that in our retention rate (the most recent five year average is 95.7%), our graduation rate (the most recent five-year average is 89.4%), and the fact that virtually no students are dismissed for academic reasons. Our graduation and retention rates are among the highest nationally for private liberal arts colleges. Davidson continues to assess the

effectiveness of academic support services and there are several regularly occurring evaluations of major components of academic support that have, in fact, led to improvements.

*Support to students of color.* Related to the Dean of Students Office goal of providing services and support to students of color, the following changes were instituted as a result of its assessment activities:

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- The program was expanded to include year-long academic and personal support, including the use of a peer mentor.

*Academic Tutoring.* The academic tutoring program has not been evaluated but this will be done during the 2006/2007 academic year.

*Counseling Center.* Annual reports from the counseling center identified a need that resulted in hiring a third counselor with specific duties related to supporting students’ academic life.

*New student orientation.* Three forms of assessment are used to determine the effectiveness of this initial stage of the students’ experience at Davidson, as we consider it critical for support of their academic endeavors and their full participation in the campus community:

- Orientation evaluation forms completed by students and parents (appendix)

- Information gleaned from a committee of staff and students that review orientation
- Informal conversations with first-year Hall Counselors

As a result of these assessments, the following changes were implemented:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Response</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New students receive too many mailings from various Davidson College offices over the course of the summer. It is confusing to the students and increases the likelihood that important information is lost or overlooked.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under the leadership of the College Communications Office, mailings will be consolidated so that students get clear information about the Dean of Students Office, Residence Life Office, Business Services, Auxiliary Services, Office of Admission and Financial Aid, and the Registrar’s Office.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Student Orientation did not offer information to students that would be helpful to them as they begin their academic experience at Davidson.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation now includes a session entitled “Academics at Davidson.” Panelists include the Registrar, an Advisor, the Associate Dean of Students, and a current student. Each panelist offers tips and suggestions to ease the transition to college-level work.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Day of Service during Orientation was minimally successful in accomplishing stated goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new plan for the Day of Service, a service walk, fulfills the following goal: “Facilitate an event, grounded in the institution’s values and mission, that models a commitment to service while introducing students to each other, members of the Davidson College community, members of the Town of Davidson Community, and a local community issue/need as part of a larger global context. This one-time/short-term service event functions as a window into the potential for service over the course of the next 4 years and is a ceremony that also highlights Davidson’s strong relationship with the community.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The schedule for the first day of New Student Orientation is too full, leaving students and parents too tired and overwhelmed to remember much of what they had learned.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several changes were implemented to reduce the pressure and strain resulting from too many sessions on the Thursday of Orientation, namely: The speeches during the Opening Session were shortened. Two sessions for parents (Meet the Deans and Academics at Davidson) have been</li> </ul>

consolidated into one session. The number of student sessions during Davidson Resources was reduced from five to four.

- New students arrive on campus with many questions regarding computer set-up.
- Assistance with computer set-up is now offered all day on Friday, instead of just Thursday morning.

*Instructional Technology.* We address instructional technology separately below in our response to the Reaffirmation Committee's question regarding Comprehensive Standard 3.4.14.

**Comprehensive Standard 3.4.1:** The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded (a) is approved by the faculty and the administration, and (b) establishes and evaluates program and learning outcomes.

**Judgment of the Reaffirmation Committee:** Non-Compliance

**Comment from the Committee:** The Compliance Report includes considerable evidence that a process of assessment has been initiated. However, the report does not include evidence that the institution has achieved institution-wide evaluation of student achievement. For example, the report did not include information (such as minutes) documenting faculty or administrative meetings and oversight with regard to assessment or outcomes.

**Davidson College Response:** Comprehensive Standard 3.4.1 requires each academic program to establish and evaluate program and learning outcomes. Davidson entrusts evaluation of its programs to the departments involved.

Each academic program is responsible for the establishment and evaluation of its learning outcomes. As noted in the Report of the Reaffirmation Committee, the “Compliance Report includes considerable evidence that a process of assessment has been initiated.” Further, in its assessment of Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1, the Report finds that planning “and expected outcomes [including those for academic programs] are readily available and well-formed. The Compliance Report provides evidence that programs and services are involved in planning and assessment processes.” Faculty are aware of how often and to what graduate programs their students are accepted and make substantial effort to maintain an open dialogue with alumni in professional positions who often provide important feedback on the skills required for success after graduation. It was in part due to such conversations, for example, that the Economics program now requires a course in econometrics. Evaluation of the latest disciplines in the biological sciences led the Biology department to expand its curriculum with the addition of a genomics course and a genomics concentration.

With respect to oversight: All academic departments report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs, whose office oversaw the development of each department’s mission, process, and learning objectives, all of which were then approved by the Vice President. Each department chair oversees all administrative processes within the department. As noted in our original response to Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1, every seven years “each academic department and program reporting to the Dean of Faculty must undergo a thorough review by external professionals. These reviews are then assessed by the department’s faculty, the Dean of Faculty, and the President. Recommendations from the external evaluators then inform changes within a department and assist, within the budget process, in allocating needed resources to academic programs.” Davidson considers these reviews critical to the determination of the appropriateness of its curriculum and activities with respect to its overall mission, and the mission of each department, and to the evaluation of how well its goals are met. All of these reviews, and the full set of departmental mission and goals statements, will be available to the committee.

At the first department chairs meeting of each year, chairs report on the previous year, including departmental goals. We have also included summaries from the meetings at which the development and refinement of departmental goals was discussed in the appendix. These meetings took place on [September 14, 2004](#); [February 2, 2005](#); [March 10, 2005](#); and [April 28, 2005](#). Finally, at each meeting of the Board of Trustees, the Vice President for Academic Affairs reports to the Academic Affairs Committee on the progress of departmental goals and, if appropriate, changes that have been made to stay on course.

Given this oversight, the importance of the external peer review process, and the acceptability of the learning outcomes themselves to the Reaffirmation Committee, we believe there is evidence that the degree of institutional supervision is appropriate.

**Comprehensive Standard 3.4.6:** The institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery.

**Judgment of the Reaffirmation Committee:** Non-Compliance

**Comment from the Committee:** Davidson College awards credit on a course credit system as opposed to a semester hour system. While converting course credits to semester hours, the College uses a standard conversion factor of 4, while at many comparable institutions those same courses would carry 3 semester hours of credit. For this reason, the College should provide a clear rationale for use of this conversion factor (based, for instance, on the amount of contact time faculty members have with students per course, the amount of out-of-class research required per course, or other generally accepted standards).

**Davidson College Response:** (As the issue with respect to Comprehensive Standard 3.4.6 is based on the issue with respect to Core Requirement 2.7.1, the same response applies.)

In 1968, Davidson went from a semester curriculum, with credit based on semester hours, to a three-term curriculum, with each course counted as a single course credit. Each term was ten weeks, exclusive of examination periods. Under the old curriculum, 120 semester hours credit (plus four semester hours of then-required ROTC) were required for graduation. Under the new curriculum, 32 courses -- eight per year -- were required for graduation, along with one "Extended Studies" component required each year: exams in the several general areas during the first two years, exams or analogous activities in the major during the second two. It should be noted that in the old curriculum, if the average course (non-lab) was a 3-hour course, the average student load was five courses (15 hours) per semester, 10 courses (30 hours) per year. Such seems the norm among current schools using semester-hour credits. Under the three-term curriculum, the course norm (exclusive of "extended studies") was eight courses per year -- two in one of the three terms, three in the remaining two terms.

Difficulties soon emerged in the "extended studies" component and, for a few years, the number of courses required for graduation went to 36, with students taking three courses in each of the three terms.

The SACS Self-Study of 1985 recounts the history, but notes only that semester hours (in contrast to course credits) represent a preferred approach for a minority of the faculty, not that the matter of course credits was in any fashion suspect or indicative of inadequate educational solidity. No objection to the approach was raised at the time of the 1985 study sufficient even to have the matter on the table for the 1995 SACS Self-Study.

When Davidson returned to a semester curriculum in the late 1980s, the normal course load went to four per semester, eight per year, with 32 courses required for graduation. Technically, the increase in value per course over the old semester system (five courses per semester) would be  $5/4 = 1.25 = 3.75$  (rounded to 4) equivalent semester hours.

It should also be noted that Davidson's semesters are 14.5 weeks long, exclusive of exam periods and vacations, a figure that appears on the high side of calendars in comparable institutions.

Many selective colleges use the same approach to credit as Davidson, though often without a semester having as many class days, including many Davidson peers. Each has, like Davidson, elected not to engage in discriminating different course requirements or course types by measures

of semester hours. At Davidson, for instance, most science courses meet not three hours per week, but six (including a 3-hour lab); most basic foreign language courses meet for five; finite mathematics, elementary economics, and economic statistics meet for four. Professors in other courses seem to find few barriers to requiring meetings outside of ordinary class time for video screenings, event attendance, conference participation, and the like.

For almost 40 years, our underlying philosophy has concerned the content of courses, not solely the number of minutes during which the student and the teacher occupy the same room. Our record of success in sending students well prepared for professional or graduate schools, a documented piece of evidence, leads us to have continuing confidence in that approach. That our approach is shared by not just a few, but seemingly the majority, of peer colleges indicates that we are neither contrarian nor idiosyncratic in this regard.

**Comprehensive Standard 3.4.14:** The institution’s use of technology enhances student learning, is appropriate for meeting the objectives of its programs, and ensures that students have access to and training in the use of technology.

**Judgment of the Reaffirmation Committee:** Non-Compliance

**Comment from the Committee:** The College has a very comprehensive program of technology that appears to be well integrated into academic programs. Nevertheless, the Compliance Report does not provide any evidence that the use of this technology has been effective in enhancing student learning or that the College uses the results for continuous program improvement.

**Davidson College Response:** In a document provided to the Reaffirmation Committee, Davidson’s Instructional Technology Group detailed its mission, structure, resources, and evidence of Academic Development work directly related to the enhancement of student learning. We have provided that [document](#) in its entirety in the appendix. We believe it does, indeed, provide evidence that the use of technology on the Davidson campus enhances student learning. From that report:

As a way of sharing teaching innovations and ideas, ITG established the “Teaching with Technology Showcase”, a series that runs once or twice each semester, as well as in the summer. Sample event titles from the series are:

- *Teaching with Technology in French, German and Biology* (February 2003): 3 faculty members from different departments presented pedagogical methods they had developed using instructional technology.
- *Teaching with Technology: Blackboard Summer Fall Institutes:* 45 faculty participants were selected and received Blackboard training in summer 2002. Approximately half (75) of Davidson faculty are now using Blackboard to enrich instruction.
- *Blackboard: Teaching with Technology Showcase* (May 2002). 4 faculty were selected to share their experiences and showcase the courses they reshaped with Blackboard.
- *Exemplary Models in Teaching and Learning*” (March 2002). 3 Faculty showcased Associated Colleges of the South (ACS) funded Information Fluency projects.
- *Just-in-Time Teaching and Interactive Curricular* (November 2001). Physics faculty showcased Just-in-Time Teaching (JiTT), an interactive pedagogy constructed around current Internet technologies.

In addition, instructional technology underwent an external review performed by Dr. Bryan Alexander of the Center for Educational Technology at Middlebury College in May-June 2003. In his report, Dr. Alexander noted: that “Davidson is at the leading edge of its peer institutions, due to its energy, combination of leadership and coalitions, and growth across disciplines and the curriculum.” With respect to learning, the external review also stated: “Additionally, Davidson faculty currently use Blackboard to track student learning behavior (an underutilized feature of that software). While studies show that faculty tend to prefer using a CMS as a publication tool, Davidson instructors report using the application to track student participation and patterns of resource usage, deepening their understanding of student learning practices.” We believe this assessment functions as a very effective example of the impact of technology on learning at Davidson. The entire [external review](#) is appended.

Davidson faculty members have been involved in detailed evaluations of the contribution various technologies have made to learning in their courses and faculty/student research collaborations. An excellent example was the assessment of the technologies in The Neuron Connection Project headed by Professor Julio Ramirez. Reviews by faculty at three peer institutions, as well as surveys of students *by* students in Professor Tonidandel's Psychological Research course, showed a positive impact. The report, "[Evaluating Davidson College's Information Technology Training Program on Webpage Design](#)," is appended. The others can be made available to committee members during the visit.

Although the standard itself does not require documentation of continuous improvement, the comment from the Reaffirmation Committee has included a question about it. We would note that the organizational structure of Information Technology Services, the Instructional Technology Group, the Academic Computing Committee (a faculty committee), and the Joint Committee on Information Technology (a committee composed of faculty and staff) all ensure that problems are addressed immediately and completely, that new ideas are implemented with a minimum of fuss, and that the feedback loop is effective and continuous. Continuous assessment is standard operating procedure; the Instructional Technology Group's primary responsibility is to provide effective tools and seamless technical support. Further, it is part of the faculty culture to share successes, via, for example, the above noted "Teaching with Technology Showcase," enabling faculty to build on each others' implementation of technology.

The Instructional Technology Group not only provides faculty with "access to the technology that enables new methods of instructional delivery, collaboration, and resource sharing" ([ITG mission statement](#)), it provides, via the Center for Instructional Technology, ways for faculty to test emerging technologies prior to implementing them in the classroom. An ITS staff member is assigned to academics, and the ITS Help Desk generates an automated follow-up survey for each case that it handles, allowing ITS to determine training needs and/or systematic issues.

**Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1:** The institution identifies college-level competencies within the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have attained those competencies.

**Judgment of the Reaffirmation Committee:** Non-Compliance

**Comment from the Committee:** The Compliance Report does not address the standard by providing evidence that specific competencies are actually assessed at the College. Rather, the Compliance Report merely restates the core requirements in this section.

**Davidson College Response:** As noted in our Compliance Certification response to Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1, the Core Curriculum was adopted by the faculty in 1987. The composition requirement was amended in October 1998 to encompass courses with a “W” designation. The relevant documents are appended. The faculty continue to assess content; two recent retreats focused on a comparison of Davidson’s curriculum with five peer institutions (May 2000), and vocation and the liberal arts (May 2001).

The cornerstone of a Davidson College liberal arts education, the core curriculum encompasses courses in six major disciplinary areas. All students must complete the ten-course set of core requirements intended to introduce them to “the challenge and excitement of different academic disciplines; contribute to an understanding of different methods of intellectual inquiry; encourage a multi-dimensional approach to issues and problem-solving.” In addition, students are required to meet the composition requirement and, consistent with its strong commitment to a global perspective in its academic program, each student must reach a level of proficiency in a foreign language consistent with three semesters of Davidson course work. Global perspective is also encouraged by the requirement that each student completes at least one course emphasizing societies or cultures different from the majority cultures of the United States, Canada, or western Europe. These academic regulations are appended.

The Report of the Reaffirmation Committee finds that Davidson did not provide sufficient evidence that the competencies are assessed. In fact, foreign language competency is assessed by testing that the student has reached proficiency necessary to pass the third semester (or equivalent) of a foreign language. Students may also show proficiency based on placement tests: locally written tests are used for German and Latin; testing through widely used web-based testing developed at Brigham Young (used here for French and Spanish with cutoff scores established by Davidson); or interviews for Russian and Chinese (as these are languages in which we get very few entering students with prior classroom background). In French, Spanish, and German, a score of 4 or 5 on an AP test (or comparable performance in higher-level IB exams) gives credit for the third-semester level (201), a condition subsumed in the regulation's phrase "successfully completing the third-semester level."

With respect to the other competencies, Davidson has never instituted college-wide testing for any academic purpose and instead has successfully relied on its faculty to make the determination of whether students are achieving the intended goals of courses in the general education core. As these competencies are critical to the completion of a major course of study, the faculty from all academic areas have an investment. As noted in our Academic Regulations:

An evaluation of each student's work at the end of each course will normally include a written final examination of no more than three hours in length

covering the work of the entire semester. Other types of evaluation may be employed, such as: a. Oral final examinations to be completed before the end of the examination period; b. Take-home final examinations to be completed during the examination period; or c. Major term papers and research projects completed by the end of the examination period.

Faculty members are expected to engage in evaluation of student work in every course, and such evaluation ordinarily is to include a final examination or analogous major project. The import accorded a written final examination or term paper clearly underscores the importance of writing throughout the curriculum, from the required composition course through the last senior seminar.

Most important, however, is the capstone experience at Davidson. Whether in the form of a thesis, seminar, performance or exhibit, it is dependent on students' ability to communicate effectively, judge fairly, think critically, analyze objectively, and to do so in the context of a perspective that encompasses awareness of other, and sometimes competing, points of view. Our students continue to synthesize these competencies and the subject matter of their major discipline at a high level.

All capstone experiences, regardless of major, share characteristics consistent with the development of value judgment, historical understanding, critical thinking, communication, empirical analysis, intercultural awareness, and appropriate research methods. There is an emphasis on presentation, both oral and written, and many departments support student presentations at the level of professional conferences. In order to complete any Davidson major, students must demonstrate competency in all of the core requirements. A description of the capstone experiences for each department is appended.

**Comprehensive Standard 3.7.1:** The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline in accordance with the guidelines listed below. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty.

**Judgment of the Reaffirmation Committee:** Non-Compliance

**Comment from the Committee:** The institution employs a traditional and thorough process of hiring to ensure that faculty meet the goals of the College as excellent teachers with potential for scholarship and commitment to service. Almost all of the faculty hold the terminal degree, with most of these being the earned doctorate from a regionally accredited institution. Qualifications for faculty teaching during the 2005-06 Fall and Spring Semesters were verified via the roster of faculty found on the compliance website and the curriculum website. No or inadequate data were provided to verify qualifications for 5 faculty to teach the courses to which they are assigned. (See attached list).

**Davidson College Response:** Regarding the five faculty members for whom documentation of qualifications were not found:

Copies of the [CVs for each of these faculty members](#) are included in the appendix as well, and will be available for review by the on-site review team.

**Comprehensive Standard 3.10.4:** The institution exercises appropriate control over all its financial and physical resources.

**Judgment of the Reaffirmation Committee:** Non-Compliance

**Comment from the Committee:** The College has implemented policies, procedures, and reporting which demonstrate that appropriate control is provided over financial resources. As confirmed by the latest auditor's letter to management, the College has not implemented appropriate control measures over its physical resources through the implementation of a detailed inventory of fixed assets.

**Davidson College Response:** The auditor's letter to management contained recommendations but not requirements. The College maintains a detailed fixed asset listing that supports the balances recorded on the general ledger/financial statements. We have never had any concerns expressed or errors noted by the auditors regarding fixed assets. The entire report from the auditors can be made available to the on-site committee.

Davidson has developed an internal control system, in which we capitalize all fixed assets with an original cost of \$5,000 or more and a useful life of three years or more. In order to purchase such assets, including construction-related purchases, the purchaser must get approval on a Capital Project/Purchase Authorization form. The [form](#) may be found in the appendix along with the applicable [policy](#).

After the form is approved, the purchase is assigned a unique project number. Completed purchases/projects are capitalized on a quarterly basis and added to our fixed asset listing. This system is very effective in ensuring that we capture all fixed asset purchases. Annual procedures are in place to verify with the applicable departments the continued use of fixed assets as well as any disposals that were made during the fiscal year. The listings are also reviewed in detail by Business Services staff to identify any assets that seem to be no longer in use.

Most academic assets are located within the sciences, especially since we do not capitalize individual faculty or staff PCs (they meet neither the \$5,000 nor the greater than 3-year useful life thresholds). While they are not capitalized because of their cost and life span, we do have an inventory of all desk top and lap tops on campus.

Federal law requires that we conduct a bi-annual physical inventory of assets purchased with Federal grant monies. At least one science department conducts a detailed annual inventory as well, and the other science departments will begin doing so this summer. In the past, we have relied more on the applicable departments but, beginning in FY 2006, Business Services staff will perform annual physical inventories in the sciences. (One, in fact, was completed this June/July.) The dean of faculty and the Vice President for Business and Finance have also met with science department chairs to discuss a replacement process for equipment and computers. We have compiled a list of all the equipment in our science departments, the age of the equipment, the lifetime of the equipment, and the approximate replacement cost of that equipment at the end of its life. We will be building up reserves to help to fund the replacement of that equipment.

While a complete physical inventory across the institution would definitely assure 100% accuracy of the existence of fixed assets, we do not plan to do so because we believe the costs far outweigh the benefits we would gain. We believe that our capital projects/purchase authorization process provides us with sufficient accurate information on this small campus that we believe that we do have sufficient control of our physical assets at Davidson College.

## Federal Requirements

**Federal Requirement 4.4:** The institution demonstrates that program length is appropriate for each of the degrees.

**Judgment of the Reaffirmation Committee:** Non-Compliance

**Comment from the Committee:** The College awards credit on a course credit system as opposed to a semester hour system, requiring 32 credits for graduation. When converting course credits to semester hours, it uses a standard conversion factor of 4, while at many comparable institutions those same courses would carry 3 semester hours of credit. The Compliance Report did not provide a clear rationale for the use of this conversion factor. Students at the College thus appear to take the equivalent of 32 courses, whereas students at comparable institutions may have taken the equivalent of approximately 40 courses (120 semester hours with a standard 3-credit system). In addition, the Compliance Report provides no rationale for the program length of majors within the degrees offered or the variation between the Bachelor of Arts and the Bachelor of Sciences.

**Davidson College Response:** (As part of the issue with respect to Comprehensive Standard 4.4 is the same as the issue with respect to Core Requirement 2.7.1, the same response applies. We then address the question of program length for majors and variation between the degrees offered.)

### *Course Credit*

In 1968, Davidson went from a semester curriculum, with credit based on semester hours, to a three-term curriculum, with each course counted as a single course credit. Each term was ten weeks, exclusive of examination periods. Under the old curriculum, 120 semester hours credit (plus four semester hours of then-required ROTC) were required for graduation. Under the new curriculum, 32 courses -- eight per year -- were required for graduation, along with one "Extended Studies" component required each year: exams in the several general areas during the first two years, exams or analogous activities in the major during the second two. It should be noted that in the old curriculum, if the average course (non-lab) was a 3-hour course, the average student load was five courses (15 hours) per semester, 10 courses (30 hours) per year. Such seems the norm among current schools using semester-hour credits. Under the three-term curriculum, the course norm (exclusive of "extended studies") was 8 courses per year -- two in one of the three terms, three in the remaining two terms.

Difficulties soon emerged in the "extended studies" component and, for a few years, the number of courses required for graduation went to 36, with students taking three courses in each of the three terms.

The SACS Self-Study of 1985 recounts the history, but notes only that semester hours (in contrast to course credits) represent a preferred approach for a minority of the faculty, not that the matter of course credits was in any fashion suspect or indicative of inadequate educational solidity. No objection to the approach was raised at the time of the 1985 study sufficient even to have the matter on the table for the 1995 SACS Self-Study.

When Davidson returned to a semester curriculum in the late 1980s, the normal course load went to four per semester, eight per year, with 32 courses required for graduation. Technically, the

increase in value per course over the old semester system (five courses per semester) would be  $5/4 = 1.25 = 3.75$  (rounded to 4) equivalent semester hours.

It should also be noted that Davidson's semesters are 14.5 weeks long, exclusive of exam periods and vacations, a figure that appears on the high side of calendars in comparable institutions.

Many selective colleges use the same approach to credit as Davidson, though often without a semester having as many class days. Each has, like Davidson, elected not to engage in discriminating different course requirements or course types by measures of semester hours. At Davidson, for instance, most science courses meet not three hours per week, but six (including a 3-hour lab); most basic foreign language courses meet for five; finite mathematics, elementary economics, and economic statistics meet for four. Professors in other courses seem to find few barriers to requiring meetings outside of ordinary class time for video screenings, event attendance, conference participation, and the like.

For almost 40 years, our underlying philosophy has concerned the content of courses, not solely the number of minutes during which the student and the teacher occupy the same room. Our record of success in sending students well prepared for professional or graduate schools, a documented piece of evidence, leads us to have continuing confidence in that approach. That our approach is shared by not just a few, but seemingly the majority, of top liberal arts colleges indicates that we are neither contrarian nor idiosyncratic in this regard.

### *Program Length*

Although Federal Requirement 4.4 makes no reference to justification of what constitutes an appropriate major course of study, the Reaffirmation Committee has included a question related to it. We note that the requirements for each major at Davidson College have all undergone external review in the past seven years and have been found to be appropriate. In addition, the principle that the number of courses in the major is approximately one-third the number of courses required for graduation was articulated in the report "An Environment for Learning: The Davidson Curriculum and Calendar" adopted by the Faculty on May 5, 1987. From page 4 of that report: "In the proposed Davidson curriculum, a student's program consists of three approximately equal areas of study: (1) a core curriculum... (2) [a] major field of study... and (3) elective courses."

### *Degrees Offered*

There is no difference in program length for the AB and BS degrees. Both require that the student satisfactorily complete 32 courses, at least one half of which must be in residence at Davidson College. The period of residence must include the senior year. From the College's academic regulations:

**Degrees** A student completing graduation requirements with a major in Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, or Psychology shall receive a B.S. (Bachelor of Science) degree. A student with a major in the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies may receive a B.S. degree if recommended by the Director of the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies. Other students with majors in the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies receive the A.B. (Bachelor of Arts) degree, as do students completing graduation requirements with a major in any department not listed above. To receive the B.S. degree a Center major must have credit for six courses at or above the 300 level in departments currently offering the B.S. degree.)

**Federal Requirement 4.7:** The institution publishes the name of its primary accreditor and its address and phone number. (The publication of this information is presented so that it is clear that inquiries to the Commission should relate only to the accreditation status of the institution, and not to general admission information.)

**Judgment of the Reaffirmation Committee:** Non-Compliance

**Comment from the Committee:** Print and electronic versions of the College Catalogue prominently display the name of the primary accreditor, the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, but does not include the listing of the address and telephone number of the Commission.

**Davidson College Response:** As noted in our response to [Federal Requirement 4.7 in our Compliance Certification](#), Davidson does follow the SACS guidelines on “Representation of Accredited Status” as per the section on “Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status” (June 2004), by publishing the name of its primary accreditor, together with its address and phone number, on the College’s Web site. A hardcopy of the relevant page is [appended](#). The College has included its accreditation status in the catalog and, as noted in our original response, the address and phone number for the Commission on College will be added to its next publication (which will also appear as the on-line catalog) and will be available for review by the on-site review team at the time of its visit. Copy of the [correspondence](#) to this effect is included in the appendix.