IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIVERSITY-WIDE ASSOCIATE OF ARTS DEGREE/UNIVERSITY ADVISING IN THE ARTS AND SCIENCES

INTRODUCTION:

The NNNNN Higher Education Commission (HEC) approved a university-wide associate of arts degree in September of this year. This approval represented the first and most crucial stage in the implementation of Strategic Directions Charter Item #9, development of a university-wide associate of arts degree. As part of the process in developing the HEC proposal, six campuses of NNNNN University made significant strides in aligning their campus associate of arts degrees to a common model, and, through the same HEC approval, XU City requested and was granted an associate of arts degree to allow its participation in the university-wide program. Thus, a significant amount of preliminary work was done by seven campuses to bring Strategic Directions Charter Item #9 to the current point of implementation. This proposal begins the second phase of that initiative-- the implementation of the initiative at all eight campuses of NNNNN University. The implementation strategy will include three major components and a two-year time line. The first component is the establishment of a central information and administrative site that will coordinate all student advising, faculty participation, structural development, and other elements that give the program a functional reality. This will begin with the identification of an individual whose first task will be to develop and coordinate the substantial university-wide advising process crucial to the successful implementation of a university-wide program. The second component will involve the enhancement of the existing degree audit system, XUCARE, that will for the first time create a university-wide, online catalogue of all 100- and 200-level courses across the system, establishing equivalents for those courses and links to specific campus course descriptions. Enhancements to the XUCARE system for students and advisors will be added that will allow user-oriented access to evaluate progress and to link the University-Wide Associate of Arts Degree Program to Bachelor of Arts degree options. The third component will include developing strategies to strengthen advising by bringing advisors and faculty together with policymakers to continue to identify and resolve specific requirement and transfer issues. This process will assist faculty who will specialize in the degree's concentration areas to serve as mentors, helping students explore their options as expansively as possible, not only with the Associate of Arts degree but to more advanced degree programs.

A STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM: IMPLEMENT THE UNIVERSITY-WIDE ASSOCIATE OF ARTS DEGREE PROGRAM, ITS ARTS AND SCIENCES ADVISING COMPONENT, SUPPORT TECHNOLOGY, AND THE NECESSARY STAFF AND FACULTY DEVELOPMENT TO ASSURE A UNIVERSITY-WIDE PROGRAM OF MAXIMUM ACCESS AND BENEFIT FOR STUDENTS OF THE STATE OF NNNNN.

The general purpose of the University-Wide Associate of Arts Degree Program is to unify the associate of arts degrees currently offered by the NNNNN University campuses in terms of transferability among the campuses and to improve the recognition and value of the associate's degree throughout the state of NNNNN. The objectives are to increase

accessibility, enhance support, and aggressively market an associate degree program that serves as an initial educational goal and also facilitates transition to four-year degrees. The program is intended to serve lower division, undergraduate students who may attend the university either on a part-time or full-time basis. For most of these prospective students, the associate degree will represent a milestone on their way to a four-year degree. The program will typically require 60-62 credit hours divided among fundamental skills, especially communication, language, math, and computing; distribution areas of the humanities, fine arts, behavioral and social sciences, natural sciences and mathematics; 15 credit hours in an area of concentration; and the remainder in electives. The program is designed to have the associate of arts degree serve as the first half of a bachelor of arts degree, commonly known as 2+2, which could be completed not only at the associate of arts degree granting campus but on any NNNNN University campus. It would similarly be expected to move directly to bachelor of arts degree programs at other institutions.

To achieve program goals, a new level of university-wide planning, coordination, and academic degree interaction will have to be designed and implemented. The plan will reflect new fundamental thinking on ease of access and support to facilitate students from the point of first contact through degree completion. Students must be able to function in an environment of intelligible information, facilitated by well-trained and committed professional staff and faculty. Students will, then, feel a part of the learning community created not only their by degree program, not only on their specific campus, but in relationship to the whole of NNNNN University. In that spirit, students will know they have available to them all the options and resources of a substantial international institution to meet their needs no matter where they engage the degree or what their educational goals in terms of continued higher education, particularly within NNNNN University.

IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM:
A substantial majority of students expected to be served by the University-Wide Associate of Arts Degree Program will be non-traditional students accessing the program through the seven commuter-oriented campuses of NNNNN University. Non-traditional students usually have lives made up of jobs, families, and all those other elements that make life a continuum of important challenges and responsibilities. Higher education is another challenge such students must contemplate adding to an already complex mix. They may have little understanding or information about the basic workings of higher education. Such students need to know that the university understands their anxieties and insecurities and has the sensitivity to patiently and empathetically help them. The university has to thoughtfully provide information and assistance in the decision-making process that can move the prospective student to a comfortable commitment and that emphasizes through staff and faculty attitude and appropriately designed information that the student is welcomed into the learning community. The student should know clearly what lies ahead in terms of the program structure, its intentions, the rationale for its elements, and the support mechanisms that are available to facilitate success. Through staff, faculty, and support components the student should know unequivocally that the university is committed to the student's success.

NNNNN University has paid a good deal of attention over the last several years to achieving with its students the kinds of relationships that foster success. Such a goal is recognized as crucial, for example, at XYZ, XU Kokomo, and XYZ Columbus where another SDC proposal is winding its way through the second phase, focussing on exactly how the university can do a better job in dealing comprehensively with our newest and sometimes most fragile students as they proceed through the introduction to and interaction with the general learning community. This Personal Completion Compact (PCC) and the analysis of advising/mentoring models represents the kind of initiative that could be a powerful development to help move the university closer to the goal of higher-quality, committed, longer-range relationships with such students. That initiative seeks to examine carefully the array of advising models and how professional advisors connect requirements for graduation to the individual strengths and aspirations of the student.

There is a strong interest on all NNNNN University campuses in increasing the persistence rates of students. Many of the students who will engage the University-Wide Associate of Arts Degree Program may drop in and out of school and, if so, will present significant retention challenges. They may find the length of commitment sometimes daunting. To counter this, the program will have built-in strategies to help students view their degree work in terms of personal and professional goals, another component providing assurance that the university is committed to their success. The advising model that will be developed for the University-Wide Associate of Arts Degree Program will be one of the models evaluated as part of the advising/mentoring models for the Personal Completion Compact (PCC) proposed as part of this round of the SDC funding. If both proposals are successful, the Associate of Arts degree proposal will benefit from the assessment and evaluation that the other will provide, particularly after the first year of the proposed project.

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN:
Element 1: Coordination
The President's Council on the Arts and Sciences will assume responsibility for the implementation of the University-Wide Associate of Arts Degree Program. Coordination will originate in a council with cross-campus authority in advising and other policy and procedural areas to parallel those which have been established in the professional schools. This council will be charged with maintaining the goal of providing a high-quality, two-year Associate of Arts degree program and to assure its articulation with four-year Bachelor of Arts degree programs throughout the university. The council will also establish a mechanism for a centralized information and administration site that will include extensive and topical information and data that not only students but any staff or faculty member inside or outside the program can have access to and interact with in an efficient and effective way. This will hinge on the creation of a Program Coordinator position to develop and coordinate university wide all the processes and the advising/mentoring component. The Program Coordinator will be charged with the general oversight of the program. Responsibilities will include facilitating the training and development of the advisors and faculty involved in the program, playing a lead role in facilitating the technological and programming development necessary to facilitate real time online degree audit capabilities (XUCARE), and facilitating and initiating ongoing evaluation and

assessment of the program. The Program Coordinator will report to the university-wide coordinating council through the chair of the President's Council on the Arts and Sciences.

Element 2: Advising
A university-wide advising team will be set in place to provide support to all students entering the Associate of Arts degree program anywhere in the university. Each member of the university associate of arts team will have extensive knowledge of each campus's Associate of Arts degree and each campus's Bachelor of Arts degrees. These advisors will be linked to each other, to the coordinator, and to the various university information systems by the latest technology and communication available. Access to any one campus and the advising support structure will give the students access to any other part of NNNNN University for support and information. The advising component will be coordinated and supported by the Program Coordinator charged with the oversight and direction of the program.

Element 3: Faculty Involvement
Each campus will also recruit Arts and Sciences faculty who have demonstrated an interest in working with first- and second-year students and who have experience, background, and philosophical orientations that allow them to link the academic community to the individual student through one-on-one relationships. These faculty will become the concentration advisors as well as mentors for the new associate of arts students. They will participate in development activities that further undergird their knowledge bases in the various Arts and Sciences areas and also develop their ability to share with students the significance and opportunities available through their areas of concentration. In short, this cadre of faculty will provide the kind of interaction that further substantiates the reality of the learning community and what it can do to enhance the students' self-empowerment and success.

The advising team and the faculty cadre will work together as a larger team to assure that each component is thoroughly articulated and that the kinds of relationships are developed to allow for efficient, effective communication, all with an eye toward maximizing the students' interests. They will share in training and development activities, and they will share in assessing policies and procedures that need to be adjusted, realigned, or established to facilitate the success of their students. They will participate in the design and development of the assessment component to ensure it will be appropriate to evaluate the success of the program and its students.

Further, an intake assessment component will be developed which will draw upon successful assessment efforts and initiatives already operating within the university to provide expanded initial student information and data for advising and for the students' own critical self-assessment.

Element 4: XUCARE
The current degree audit system (XUCARE) needs to become more sophisticated and to function as an interactive tool, not only for matching degree requirements with a student's courses, but to facilitate a student's exploration of options within the associate of arts

degree and in relationship to a Bachelor's degree. Like the XYZ SDC proposal referenced earlier, which relies heavily on a more advanced degree audit system than is currently available on most campuses, the University-Wide Associate of Arts Degree Program will by necessity require each campus to have a much enhanced degree audit capability. Any one campus must be able to articulate with the university-wide, online catalogue of virtually all 100- and 200-level courses across the system, establishing equivalents for these courses and links to specific campus course descriptions. Some 300- and even 400-level courses will likely be included. The system will also need to provide advisors and students with the capability for exploring options, asking "what if," ideally from any computer linked to the World Wide Web. Most campuses have not had the resources available to develop the XUCARE degree audit system to the extent required to facilitate the kinds of opportunities that should be available through this initiative or other initiatives, most specifically the XYZ proposal.

Element 5: Articulation Handbook
In the interim, an Articulation Handbook will need to be developed to facilitate immediate program needs as well as program training. At a basic level the Handbook will be an information source for advisors and students by providing a university-wide perspective on the associate of arts degree program. The Handbook will be developed concurrently at the seven campuses and then synthesized into a single document that will provide each of the advising team members and faculty cadre fundamental but integrated information necessary to support students.

Element 6: Training and Development
The sixth will be a training and development component designed by the university-wide associate of arts Program Coordinator. The goal of this component is to realize the potential strength of the university-wide approach and the team/cadre approach. This component will be implemented in the summer of 1997 in preparation for a more fully expanded program to be implemented in the fall of 1997-98. It will involve bringing the advisors and the faculty together in multiple sessions to provide information about the program, introduce the philosophy of the program, and enhance the one-on-one mentoring skills needed to support the students. Those sessions will also engender the kind of commitment envisioned as necessary to make the program a success. The training component will be an ongoing activity to assure continued information flow and to provide a feedback mechanism for continuous assessment and enhancement of the program.

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT:
Finally, an assessment and evaluation component will be developed that will build upon innovations throughout the university in assessment protocols. The goal of assessment will be to determine student success and to continually upgrade the program.

Departmental and general education assessment plans have been developed or are being developed in accordance with the requirements of the North Central Association accrediting standards. In addition to the measurement of students, particularly in competence within a major field, campus-level guidelines also require that there be some evaluation of the students' abilities at the general education level. The forms of assessment

will be multiple and may include student portfolios, standardized tests, or other measurement strategies designed specifically for the college or division. Another component will be the standard, quantitative measures that review student progress toward degree completion and mobility.

Program assessment will include a yearly satisfaction survey designed to measure both student expectations and program goals against perceived program outcomes. This measure, in particular, will be used to modify program objectives and components. In general the assessment component will draw upon much of the work that has been completed or is underway and will be articulated and coordinated by the coordinating council, the university-wide Program Coordinator, and the campuses. The goal will be to provide for maximum overview of the effectiveness and success of the program in relationship to student success.

RESPONSE TO STRATEGIC DIRECTION INITIATIVES:
This proposal sets out the implementation plan for Strategic Direction Item #9, development of a university-wide associate degree program. This past summer President Brand gave a high priority to the development of such a program with the goal of submitting a proposal for the program to the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in September 1996. This goal was met through a great deal of effort on the part of all XU campuses, and it successfully passed the HEC without alteration and with enthusiastic support. That approval brought with it certain commitments that the university made to the HEC to implement this program as quickly as possible.

I.1. The proposal places student learning, intellectual exploration, persistence, and attainment at the center of the university's missions and requires a unified approach in terms of dealing with the student as a participant in the university learning community. The design of the support mechanisms, advising mechanisms, and mentoring initiatives will be tailored to the particular student engaged in the program. (XYZ Goal, "Student Learning," #1-6)

I.5. The proposal supports students' success through student-oriented policies and practices, special tutorial programs, and expanded mentoring and advising. At the very core of the proposal's implementation strategy is the development of an intensely student-centered advising team and cadre of faculty advisors/mentors specifically trained to respond to the needs of the Associate of Arts degree students. (XYZ Goal, "Student Learning," #4)

I.7. The proposal increase[s] access to the university's traditional academic programs for all who are qualified by talent and motivation by providing a two-year program constructed on a solid general education core that appends a support structure and information network uniquely designed for its constituents. It focuses on ease of student interaction with the university from the moment of first contact and interest through degree completion. (XYZ Goal, "Student Learning," #2 and 3)

II.17. The proposal increase[s] the connections among campuses to encourage faculty members to collaborate in developing programs that will facilitate transferability of credit.

One of the defining characteristics of the university-wide Associate of Arts degree is a high level of program commonality among campuses and the ability to transfer courses between campuses. This Charter item would have been addressed even if not required in order to validate the concept of the university-wide degree program. Implicit in such a program is the commonality of requirements and ease of transfer, not only within the first two years in terms of course work but in relationship to bachelor degree programs throughout the university. (XYZ Goal, "Responsibilities of Excellence," #1B)

III.23. The proposal address[es] the issues of centralization and decentralization in academic and organizational matters to promote flexibility and effective coordination. Once again, by its very definition, this is a university-wide program created through the best efforts and good will of all campuses participating, the end goal of which is the provision of the best possible state-wide service to students interested in an Associate of Arts degree program. At the same time, individual campus's degree programs will retain their character as constitutive of that campus culture. (XYZ Goal, "Accountability and Best Practices," #2)

III.28. The program necessitates the development of a comprehensive strategy for marketing the university and undertak[ing] rigorous market research. Over the long range, the state and the citizens of the state of NNNNN will be best served by the program facilitated by this proposal if the concept and the values of that program are effectively marketed to as many citizens of this state as possible. Currently, a marketing plan is being developed to achieve not only a state-wide profile for the program but elements that are campus-specific and related to the communities and areas served by each of the campuses. (XYZ Goal, "Accountability and Best Practices," #5)

PROGRAM TIMETABLE:
Proposed time line for January 1997-Fall 1998:
January 1997
Establish organizational structure; recruit and hire coordinator.
Develop first iteration of compiled Articulation Handbook.
Develop training program, schedule space, make other resource arrangements for implementation in summer 1997.
Identify and recruit faculty and professional advising staff for participation in program.
Develop specific advising and mentoring strategies.
Develop plan for upgrading campus-based XUCARE system to accommodate associate of arts degree requirements and translations (Jan/Feb 97). Complete enhancements by July 1, 1997.

Summer 1997
Implement training and development workshops for advising team and faculty cadre to initiate program in fall 1997.
Finalize assessment/evaluation plans.
Start Phase I of XUCARE upgrade (campus-based).

Fall 1997

Implement program as designed
Finalize requirement and course articulation issues
(President's Council on Arts and Sciences)
Complete Phase I of XUCARE upgrade (campus-based)

Spring 1998
Initiate program assessment plan
Publish program articulation guide

Summer 1998
Continue training and development workshops for faculty/advisors
Review program assessment data and create and implement ongoing program review
practices and procedures
Start Phase II of XUCARE upgrade (system-based)

Fall 1998
Implement second year of program
Complete Phase II of XUCARE upgrade (system-based) Begin preparation for review and
evaluation of program

BUDGET NARRATIVE:
The general rationale behind the budget and the split between SDC funds and Match is to
have the SDC funding source provide initial start-up money and other one-time money
which are generally more difficult for the campuses to provide but crucial to the initiation
of the project. The campuses, on the other hand, would cover initial costs that would then
have to be ongoing, specifically the advising and faculty components. The salaries and
fringes were calculated as follows:

BUDGET:

		Salary	Fringe Benefits	Total
AA Degree Coordinator		$35,000	x 26.68 = $9,338	$44,338
Clerical		$11,500	x 25.01 = $2,876	$14,376
8 Faculty x $10,000	$80,000		x 38.73 = $30,984	$110,984
8 Advisors x $8,000	$64,000		x 26.68 = $17,075	$81,075