

*Assistant Dean Gayle Williams' Performance Review*

*University College, IUPUI, May 2005*

**Introduction**

In August of 2004 Scott Evenbeck, Dean of University College at IUPUI, formed a committee charged with producing a performance review for Gayle Williams, Assistant Dean of University College. The committee membership consisted of Robert Osgood, School of Education, Chair; Jane Lambert, School of Business; and Karen Black, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Planning and Institutional Improvement. The committee was asked to produce a formal performance review of Dr. Williams by the end of the 2004–2005 academic year. Cathie Carrigan, University College, provided excellent support services in a variety of ways throughout the process; her efforts were instrumental in helping the committee put a report together in a timely fashion. Consequently, the committee wishes to first express its great thanks and admiration for Ms. Carrigan's hard work and thoughtful contributions.

Committee members engaged in multiple activities in order to assess the nature and quality of Dr. Williams' job performance, to generate suggestions for further professional development for Dr. Williams, and to suggest opportunities for enhancing her current responsibilities in University College and additional opportunities for her job description. These included personal interviews with Dr. Williams, Dean Evenbeck, Associate Dean Barbara Jackson, staff members in the University College office, and representatives from other units on campus. In addition, the committee conducted a written survey of appropriate University College faculty and staff that invited Likert scale

ratings as well as narrative comments related to Dr. Williams' performance. The committee also reviewed thoroughly a formal and extensive professional dossier prepared by Dr. Williams. The results of these various activities were discussed at meetings, coded and tabulated, and are presented in this report.

### **Background on the Position**

The position that Dr. Williams holds in University College is Assistant Dean; for all intents and purposes, her responsibility is to oversee the academic aspect of UC operations, while Assistant Dean Seabrook is responsible for working with P-12 schools and other external operations. Dr. Williams has been with UC since its inception, and she has been directly involved in the evolution of her job description to where it is today. Although the position itself does not have clearly defined, detailed requirements, Dr. Williams generally is responsible for working on a wide range of academic initiatives related to academic support and retention of new IUPUI students as they enter through University College. These include Orientation, the Bridge Program, learning communities, course scheduling, and data collection. In addition, she has been involved in the development of the UC courses (U110 and U112) and the various academic support services necessary to operate these courses. Finally, she serves as a representative for University College within IUPUI and represents the unit on a national level at conferences as well. She reports directly to Associate Dean Barbara Jackson.

### **Strengths and Accomplishments**

After gathering the evidence generated by the methods noted above, the committee concludes that there is near-universal appreciation of and support for Dr. Williams in terms of her job performance. This satisfaction and appreciation spans all categories of personnel and all aspects of her job description. After detailing the nature of these strengths and accomplishments, this report will present a few concerns that impact Dr. Williams' performance and some recommendations to make her work even more effective and appreciated.

To begin with, Dr. Williams' dossier reveals the accomplishments and productivity of a dedicated professional in the academy. Her personal statement is clearly organized, well-written, truly reflective, and honest. She carefully outlines her views on her work as an Assistant Dean at UC, noting what she believes are her significant strengths and accomplishments as well as areas in which she sees room for improvement. The various reports she has authored or co-authored included in the dossier demonstrate her skills as a scholar and as a visionary for a developing and extremely important unit of IUPUI. It is clear from reviewing the dossier (and from speaking with other personnel, as will be noted later) that Dr. Williams is extremely well-versed in the literature on traditionally underrepresented student populations in higher education: who they are, what their needs are, and how best to reach and retain them. She also is an accomplished scholar in the history of higher education in this state, having published an important article in a respected history journal. She has done an effective job of compiling a dossier that clearly and effectively presents her many successes in her work.

Second, Dr. Williams is especially adept at communicating that knowledge and expertise to others both within and beyond University College. Many faculty and staff

commented on her ability to present, in both small and large group meetings, information taken from her knowledge of the literature, and to use that information to assess a situation or issue and make recommendations for addressing it; as one staff member put it, “She can see both the forest and the trees.” One individual noted that Dr. Williams is an “especially good storyteller” in the sense that she hears what others have to say regarding an issue or problem and can communicate not only the facts but also the context surrounding such statements, thus helping everyone determine an effective course of action. She is valued particularly for her strong conceptual and creative skills that effectively solve problems. In short, Dean Williams is a welcomed, active, and valued member of committees and other working teams because of her knowledge, insight, and foresight, especially on internal work being conducted at UC.

As one might expect given these observations, Dr. Williams has been involved directly in the continuing successes of academic programs at University College. The noteworthy development and expansion of first-year seminars (U110) has been, in the review committee’s opinion, largely (but not exclusively) a result of Dr. Williams’ drive and skill. She has played important roles in the development of the Summer Bridge Program and learning communities, which now serve as a model for the first-year experience at IUPUI. She has been a central figure in the development of UC’s second core course, Critical Inquiry U112, as well as in the recent initiation of the online U110s. Dr. Williams has also played a major role in developing the mentoring program for first-year seminars, working with Dean Evenbeck to arrange for mentors to be compensated through scholarships rather than hourly pay—a model much more suited to UC’s needs and interests. Most UC academic initiatives have proven quite successful in achieving

objectives related to retention and the Principles of Undergraduate Learning, and Dean Williams can and should, in the committee's view, take a large portion of the credit for such success.

Another of Dr. Williams' widely recognized strengths is her ability to represent University College favorably and effectively in its relations with other units on campus. Faculty and senior staff from a range of schools—especially Liberal Arts, Business, Education, and Nursing—were unanimous in their commendation of Dr. Williams' ability to not only explain UC's objectives and positions related to programs and issues but also to listen attentively and respond effectively to their concerns and ideas about UC. This is important work. As a relatively new unit, University College has had to be careful and deliberate in developing its programs in ways that do not threaten, alienate, or ignore the needs and goals of other units. Carving a strong academic and course-based niche in the first-year experience of IUPUI has required a great deal of diplomacy and care. Dean Williams has been especially effective in showing others outside UC exactly what the nature of the UC initiatives have been and explaining to students and faculty and staff in other units the long-term effects and benefits of such programs. Many faculty and staff noted that when they have a question or concern about UC, Dean Williams "is the first person they call" because they know she will address their concern promptly and honestly. Personnel from other units also commented extensively on the fact that Dean Williams is highly knowledgeable, and that they would greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with her more often in order to benefit their own units. In focus groups with faculty outside of UC, Dr. Williams' relations with such faculty were seen as very strong. In fact, a survey of University College faculty revealed that Dean Williams enjoys

overwhelming support of and rapport with faculty across campus. On a Likert-type scale in which 5 is the highest, faculty scores averaged above 4.5 in all items, and above 4.7 in most (see Appendix A for faculty survey results). She is widely respected and greatly appreciated for her ability to “explain” UC to the rest of IUPUI and represent its interests with integrity.

Perhaps the most notable role—and one that is not explicitly a part of her job description—lies in her strong advocacy and support for UC staff. Many UC staff comment in interviews as well as on surveys that Dr. Williams was the one person they could rely on to listen to their concerns about work and to offer helpful, constructive advice and direction (see Appendix B for staff survey results). Many staff expressed their strong gratitude for Dr. Williams’ availability for such consultation. Staff reported that she is an excellent listener, colleague, and mentor. While this is undoubtedly a very time-consuming role that Dr. Williams has assumed, the degree to which staff appreciate it leads the committee to believe that it has become an essential and highly important feature of Dr. Williams’ work. According to staff she has effectively settled issues, “put out fires,” and reassured staff of their value and respect within the UC work environment.

In summary, the committee concludes that Dr. Williams is doing an excellent job in her performance as Assistant Dean for University College. She has been instrumental in shaping the position to best suit the needs of the unit. She has been deeply involved in developing successful academic policies and programs for the College that significantly promote and enhance the initial experiences of entering IUPUI students. She is widely respected outside University College for her knowledge, skills, and personal qualities. In addition to providing vision and practical solutions, Dr. Williams has consistently

demonstrated professionalism, honesty, reliability, and a willingness to collaborate in a fundamentally “team-oriented” work environment. Her efforts have been essential to the success that UC has enjoyed over the years: UC would be a much different, and arguably less effective, place without her knowledge, skills, and effort.

### **Areas of Concern**

Even in light of such success and achievement, the committee believes that there are some areas of concern related to the position and to Dr. Williams’ performance that could and should be addressed. Dr. Williams made it very clear at the beginning of this review process that she eagerly awaited constructive critique of her job performance as well as suggestions to improve her ability to do her job even better. It is with these goals in mind that the committee offers the following comments.

The primary concern expressed by those who were contacted for interviews was that Dean Williams should be given and take advantage of opportunities to demonstrate her skills and become more involved professionally beyond University College and IUPUI. The nature of her work, and perhaps to a certain extent her preference, has kept most of her activities confined to within UC (or to UC business when working with other constituencies). Many observed that Dr. Williams has much to offer outside the unit and would like to see her talents used in this way. One individual outside of UC commented that she would be delighted to have the opportunity to make use of Dr. Williams’ knowledge and skills more often, even on a consulting arrangement, to assist with that unit’s concerns and issues regarding recruitment and retention because Dean Williams “knows so much.” Another suggested that she become more involved with an external

professional assessment organization such as the North Central Association to enable her to get her name, and that of University College, out beyond IUPUI. Others suggested that Dr. Williams make more effort to publish in the professional literature, either in her particular area of research (the history of higher education) or in journals and other venues that would be appropriate for professional writing related to her work and accomplishments in UC. Finally, the issue of assertiveness and proactivity was also raised, specifically that Dr. Williams should feel more comfortable taking steps such as those suggested above and asserting her expertise and authority in appropriate situations.

It was also suggested that Dean Williams should become involved more actively in generating external funding for the work of University College. It was noted that there are significant funding opportunities related to the very work on which Dr. Williams focuses, specifically the academic dimensions of working with underrepresented groups in the first and second year of college. Given her expertise, writing skills, and experience, some noted that if she chooses to, she would likely be quite successful in procuring external funding.

### **Reflection**

The committee has considered the expression of such concerns, and believes that each of the suggested steps would in fact benefit Dr. Williams and University College. However, during the course of its review the committee became acutely aware of certain structural and interpersonal realities of University College that in our opinion have either prevented Dean Williams from acting in such a manner or have created a situation such that some steps suggested may not even be advisable, given the nature of her work.

To begin with, the lack of clarity regarding the specific job description for Dr. Williams' position as Assistant Dean obviously affects both the nature and emphasis of her work. It is certainly understandable that the description of this particular position has evolved along with University College, and that as a consequence some degree of vagueness, generality, and uncertainty is unavoidable (and perhaps even necessary, given the needs and demands of a relatively new and rapidly growing academic unit). However, it is the committee's belief that such uncertainty has compromised significantly Dr. Williams' ability—and desire—to engage in some of the activities noted above. If the specific job description required the seeking of external funding, or publication, or involvement with assessment and other professional organizations beyond IUPUI, there is no doubt that Dr. Williams would have done so on a regular basis, and done it well. Instead, she has chosen to engage in other activities that she has seen as essential to the effective operation of the academic side of University College, and there is no doubt that in almost every instance that time has been seen as well-spent by everyone involved. The committee did not encounter any sense whatsoever that Dr. Williams is not giving at least 100% to the job. Even so, some aspects of her job may not seem to be as appropriate to the position as others. For example, she spends a significant amount of time advising, mentoring, and counseling UC staff regarding professional issues; staff feel very comfortable approaching her, and she is widely seen among the staff as someone who is easy to talk with and can be trusted to offer sound advice. Although the committee acknowledges that this may not be an appropriate function for an Assistant Dean responsible for academics, it also concludes that Dr. Williams performs an essential and highly valuable function in doing so, more valuable perhaps than working with a

professional organization or publishing certain articles related to UC's work. One must consider which has the broadest, most positive effect on the smooth and efficient operation of University College; it became clear to the committee during the course of this review that Dean Williams' role as mentor and advisor for staff does just that.

Another issue that seriously affects Dr. Williams' job performance is the lack of clarity in University College regarding who reports to whom. In examining previous reviews of Dean Evenbeck and Associate Dean Jackson, the committee noted that such uncertainty has been a concern for years. The committee regrets to report that this situation has not yet changed to a significant degree. We found some confusion as to who certain people report to and don't report to in our effort to solicit survey data from UC staff, and in fact that uncertainty affected the committee's ability to streamline the survey process. Because of this uncertainty about reporting lines, Dr. Williams, who clearly reports to Associate Dean Jackson, often ends up struggling with problems and issues that result from such lack of clarity: inefficient operation, administrative confusion, and potentially missed opportunities. Without such clear lines of authority and reporting extending vertically and horizontally throughout the unit, Dr. Williams is faced with the often daunting task of tracking information and task accomplishment.

Another concern raised by some staff, and some faculty as well, is that Dr. Williams lacks the clear authority to make decisions and offer advice that she is clearly in the best position to make. Because the specific responsibilities and *authority* of her position are not clearly articulated, Dr. Williams is careful to verify such decisions and advice with Associate Dean Jackson or Dean Evenbeck prior to acting. While this demonstrates her clear respect for authority and the proper operation of University

College, staff and faculty commented that because she feels obligated to verify that her decision will be validated, she is less efficient. One staff member reported that this amounted to unnecessary and virtual “micromanagement” that is inappropriate for someone with Dean Williams’ expertise and experience. These conditions, the committee has concluded, unfortunately consume an inordinate amount of Dr. Williams’ valuable time.

### **Recommendations of the Committee**

Based on the above information and analysis, the committee makes the following recommendations in concluding this performance review.

- Confer with Dr. Williams about appropriate and meaningful ways in which she can engage in work beyond University College and IUPUI. The committee sees such activity as a valuable opportunity for her, but limited time makes it essential that she be involved in external activities that are professionally appropriate *and* personally important. One aspect was agreed to by most if not all parties: Dean Williams should take a leadership role in establishing and solidifying through IPAS the articulation and coordination of work between University College and Ivy Tech.
- Clarify leadership and reporting lines for UC, especially among the Bepko Learning Center, advising, Orientation, and the Dean’s office, so all have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The lack of clarity in this regard leads to confusion and unnecessary waste of time, as persons seek to ensure that their decisions, recommendations, and concerns are presented to—and solicited

from—the right people. With a firm, clear, reliable line of reporting established in University College, Dr. Williams and all other personnel can make the most efficient and effective use of their time and have a better understanding of the extent of their authority in any given situation.

- Prioritize and institutionalize responsibilities for the Assistant Dean for Academics, with input from Dr. Williams. The committee believes that the time is now appropriate to put down in writing the specific duties, responsibilities, and expectations for this position (including affirming an official title). The focus should be on establishing areas of autonomy, where Dr. Williams (and any future holder of the position) feels comfortable making binding decisions and where her areas of authority are authentic and accepted across and outside the unit. Of particular interest is Dean Williams' valued role as mentor, colleague, and advisor within the unit. The question of whether that is an appropriate role for this position needs to be determined. At the same time, the committee strongly believes that Dr. Williams' current involvement and success in that role should be respected and affirmed.
- Generate opportunities for Dean Williams to share her expertise and experience with other IUPUI units who value her insight and would like to have better access to her knowledge. This too is complicated given time constraints, but the committee heard from many individuals outside the unit that this would be extremely helpful to her and the campus. This could be done through Orientation, the Bepko Learning Center, Themed Learning Communities, or other programs and initiatives in which UC and other units collaborate.

- Finally, and most importantly, recognize the excellent work that Dr. Williams has done for University College over the years and the vital, central role she has played in its great success, both at IUPUI and in achieving national stature. The story of University College is one of remarkable growth and widespread respect, and Dr. Williams, in the committee's unanimous and strong opinion, has been responsible for so much of UC's strong reputation and academic accomplishments.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Osgood, School of Education, Chair

Jane Lambert, School of Business

Karen Black, Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Institutional Development

May 27, 2005

Appendix A: Staff Survey Results, by Unit

**Deans' Suite Support Staff** (Excluding Stephanie and Marsha)

2 Responses

Gayle lets me adjust my schedule so that I can participate in training opportunities	NA
I receive adequate guidance from Gayle to succeed in my job	5 [1]
I am satisfied with the amount of information I receive about what is going on in my unit	4 [1]
There is a climate of trust in my unit	4 [1]
I am satisfied with the recognition I receive for doing a good job	4 [1]
Gayle provides feedback and coaching to me on a consistent basis	NA
Staff morale in my unit	2.5 [2]
Staff development opportunities in my unit	5 [2]
My overall job satisfaction	3 [2]

**Development & Operations**

4 Responses

Gayle lets me adjust my schedule so that I can participate in training opportunities	NA
I receive adequate guidance from Gayle to succeed in my job	NA
I am satisfied with the amount of information I receive about what is going on in my unit	NA
There is a climate of trust in my unit	NA
I am satisfied with the recognition I receive for doing a good job	NA
Gayle provides feedback and coaching to me on a consistent basis	NA
Staff morale in my unit	1.5
Staff development opportunities in my unit	1.5
My overall job satisfaction	1.5

**Advising**

16 Responses

Gayle lets me adjust my schedule so that I can participate in training opportunities	5 [1]
I receive adequate guidance from Gayle to succeed in my job	4.71 [7]
I am satisfied with the amount of information I receive about what is going on in my unit	4.25 [12]
There is a climate of trust in my unit	4.18 [11]
I am satisfied with the recognition I receive for doing a good job	3.75 [10]
Gayle provides feedback and coaching to me on a consistent basis	4 [7]
Staff morale in my unit	3.75 [14]
Staff development opportunities in my unit	3.82 [14]
My overall job satisfaction	4.03 [14]

**Fiscal**

2 Responses

Gayle lets me adjust my schedule so that I can participate in training opportunities	NA
I receive adequate guidance from Gayle to succeed in my job	NA
I am satisfied with the amount of information I receive about what is going on in my unit	3 [1]
There is a climate of trust in my unit	3 [1]
I am satisfied with the recognition I receive for doing a good job	5 [1]
Gayle provides feedback and coaching to me on a consistent basis	NA
Staff morale in my unit	3 [1]
Staff development opportunities in my unit	5 [1]
My overall job satisfaction	5 [1]

**Honors**

1 Response

Gayle lets me adjust my schedule so that I can participate in training opportunities	NA
I receive adequate guidance from Gayle to succeed in my job	NA
I am satisfied with the amount of information I receive about what is going on in my unit	NA
There is a climate of trust in my unit	NA
I am satisfied with the recognition I receive for doing a good job	NA
Gayle provides feedback and coaching to me on a consistent basis	NA
Staff morale in my unit	NA
Staff development opportunities in my unit	NA
My overall job satisfaction	NA

### Pre-College Programs

3 Responses

Gayle lets me adjust my schedule so that I can participate in training opportunities	NA
I receive adequate guidance from Gayle to succeed in my job	5 [1]
I am satisfied with the amount of information I receive about what is going on in my unit	4.5 [2]
There is a climate of trust in my unit	4.5 [2]
I am satisfied with the recognition I receive for doing a good job	3.5 [2]
Gayle provides feedback and coaching to me on a consistent basis	5 [1]
Staff morale in my unit	4 [2]
Staff development opportunities in my unit	4.5 [2]
My overall job satisfaction	4 [2]

### Career Center

5 Responses

Gayle lets me adjust my schedule so that I can participate in training opportunities	NA
I receive adequate guidance from Gayle to succeed in my job	4 [1]
I am satisfied with the amount of information I receive about what is going on in my unit	4 [1]
There is a climate of trust in my unit	5 [1]
I am satisfied with the recognition I receive for doing a good job	5 [1]
Gayle provides feedback and coaching to me on a consistent basis	4 [1]
Staff morale in my unit	4 [1]
Staff development opportunities in my unit	5 [1]
My overall job satisfaction	4 [1]

### Assistant Deans

2 Responses

Gayle lets me adjust my schedule so that I can participate in training opportunities	NA
I receive adequate guidance from Gayle to succeed in my job	NA
I am satisfied with the amount of information I receive about what is going on in my unit	NA
There is a climate of trust in my unit	NA
I am satisfied with the recognition I receive for doing a good job	NA
Gayle provides feedback and coaching to me on a consistent basis	NA
Staff morale in my unit	NA
Staff development opportunities in my unit	NA
My overall job satisfaction	NA

### Gayle's Direct Reports

5 responses

Gayle lets me adjust my schedule so that I can participate in training opportunities	4.75 [4]
I receive adequate guidance from Gayle to succeed in my job	4.75 [4]
I am satisfied with the amount of information I receive about what is going on in my unit	4 [5]
There is a climate of trust in my unit	4.1 [5]
I am satisfied with the recognition I receive for doing a good job	4.2 [5]
Gayle provides feedback and coaching to me on a consistent basis	4.75 [4]
Staff morale in my unit	3.8 [5]
Staff development opportunities in my unit	4.3 [5]
My overall job satisfaction	4.1 [5]

### Appendix B: Faculty Survey Results

#### Faculty Survey

28 Responses

1. Provide productive leadership for curriculum planning for first year seminars.	4.8 [25]
2. Provide productive leadership for curriculum planning for Critical Inquiry courses.	4.67 [21]
3. Coordinate and communicate room and course scheduling information effectively.	4.72 [18]
4. Respond effectively and in a timely fashion to concerns, requests, and questions regarding appropriate issues.	4.8 [26]
5. Provide effective support for new faculty and other participants in the first year seminars, Themed Learning Communities, and the Bridge program.	4.67 [24]
6. Coordinate assessment and assessment result dissemination of appropriate University College programs.	4.73 [26]
7. Facilitate and ensure the success of Orientation programs.	4.77 [22]
8. Understand and communicate the interconnected nature and role of University College with that of your unit.	4.53 [26]