AC 2008-2038: A 5-YEAR BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN ENGINEERING CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS ENTERING AT THE COLLEGE ALGEBRA LEVEL

Richard Ruhala, University of Southern Indiana

Richard Ruhala earned his BSME from Michigan State in 1991 and his PhD in Acoustics from The Pennsylvania State University in 1999. He has three years industrial experience at General Motors and three years at Lucent Technologies. He has been an Assistant Professor rank in the Engineering Department at USI since 2002, and has taught some of the freshmen engineering courses, including ENGR 103, 104, and 108, and has been involved in curriculum development. Currently course load includes Introduction to Design, Statics, Vibrations, Modeling Dynamic Systems, and Machine Design. He is a member of ASEE, the Acoustical Society of America, and the Institute for Noise Control Engineering, and does research in acoustics and mechanics.

Laura Ruhala, University of Southern Indiana

Laura Ruhala earned her BSME from GMI Engineering & Management Institute (now Kettering University) in 1991 (as Laura Wilson) and her PhD in Engineering Science & Mechanics from The Pennsylvania State University in 1999. She has three years industrial experience at General Motors, served as Director of Safety at Pride Mobility, and taught at Lafayette College. She has been an Assistant Professor rank in the Engineering Department at USI since 2002, and has developed and taught many of the freshmen engineering courses, including ENGR 107 (Intro to Engineering) and ENGR 108 (Intro to Design). Other courses she is teaching are Dynamics, Dynamics of Machinery, and Engineering Materials. She is a member of ASEE and is developing a biomechanics laboratory as a center for research in bone and joint care.

Eric Sprouls, University of Southern Indiana

Eric Sprouls has been the Chair of the Department of Engineering at the University of Southern Indiana (USI) since 2002, where he has been teaching engineering technology and engineering courses since 1977. He holds a MS in Civil Engineering from the University of Illinois. Prior to coming to USI he was at Dames & Moore Consulting Engineers in Denver, Colorado. He has been an Associate Professor of Engineering since 1983. Current course load includes soil mechanics, engineering materials and estimating, and geotechnical design. He also does consulting work for the local coal industry in the area of testing and underground mine design. He is a member of ASEE and the Society of Mining Engineers.

A 5-Year Bachelor of Science in Engineering Curriculum for Students Entering at the College Algebra Level

Abstract

In 2002 a new engineering program was started culminating in a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering. In addition to a 4-year program, a 5-year program was developed to accommodate students who show interest and potential in engineering, are not yet ready for calculus their first semester, but whose math placement exams scores are strong enough to begin their college experience with college level algebra. The goal of the five year program is to increase the number of engineering students who enroll and graduate without sacrificing program rigor. Those students whose math skills are below the college algebra level may enter the 5-year engineering program once they have completed the necessary math courses. This 5-year curriculum includes two 100-level engineering courses, an algebra-based physics course, and a college algebra course. Otherwise, all other courses they take are the same as those offered in the 4-year curriculum. The 5-year program also has the advantage of a lower credit load per semester which allows these students more study time per course. The three main goals of the freshman curriculum developed for this program are to provide these students with (1) the skills they will need to compete with their peers in the 4-year program, (2) immediate contact with the engineering faculty and peer students, and (3) an introduction to the rigor and commitment required to successfully complete an engineering program. The first 100-level engineering course focuses on the principles of problem solving, while the second course focuses on the application of problem solving. The learning objectives of these courses, direct measures, indirect measures, are presented. Finally, an analysis is conducted on the student population that began the 5-year engineering program in 2003, including retention rates.

Introduction

The University of Southern Indiana (USI) started civil, electrical and mechanical engineering technology programs in 1975. These programs were accredited in 1980, and had helped to serve the needs of the region for over twenty years. However, due to changes in states professional licensing requirements, ABET requirements, and the changing needs of the regional employers, it became clear that a bachelor of science in engineering at a public university was needed. An internal study was done in May 2000, which recommended phasing out the three engineering technology degree programs (electrical, civil, and mechanical) and starting an engineering program[1]. In May 2002 the Indiana Commission for Higher Education approved degree-granting authority for USI to offer the Bachelor of Science in Engineering (BSE) degree. The University began offering this program in 2002 and had its first graduating class last May. In August 2007 the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology accredited this engineering program.

All students take 30 credits of engineering core courses. Students meet with their engineering faculty advisor to select courses for each semester, starting their freshman year. At the end of their sophomore year, students meet with an engineering faculty advisor to select 30 credits of engineering electives, emphasizing in electrical, civil, or mechanical engineering. Further details about the program can be found on its website[2].

Starting a new engineering program provides wonderful opportunities for curriculum development. One problem area addressed in the 2000 self-study was that a significant population of the engineering technology students entered the program without the necessary mathematics and science background[1]. Although these students were advised by engineering technology faculty, they were not enrolled in engineering courses their first year. This was identified as a reason that more than half of the incoming freshman left engineering after the first year. It was anticipated that this problem could worsen since the mathematics and science requirements are more rigorous in the upcoming engineering program. One engineering program in the United States indicated that a reason for low success among the pre-calculus engineering student population is that they "lack early exposure to engineering and, therefore, lack socialization within their declared engineering programs"[3]. The 5-year plan of study at USI exposes students to engineering their first year in class sizes normally less than 30 students, which should facilitate socialization with their peers, and hopefully increased retention rates.

Overview of the first two years

The recommended plan of study for students in the five-year engineering program is shown in Figure 1. Physics 101 is an algebra based physics course that focuses on concepts, and is strongly recommended for students who did not take physics in high school. To enter the five-year program, students must achieve a math placement level of either MATH 118 - College Algebra & Trigonometry or MATH 111 - College Algebra. If the latter, students must also take an additional math course their second semester before they can begin their calculus courses. If the students test into MATH 230 - Calculus I, they can start the traditional four-year program. If they test lower than MATH 111 – College Algebra, such as MATH 100 – Intermediate Algebra, then those students are classified as "pre-engineering" students at USI until they can take MATH 118 – College Algebra & Trigonometry.

ENGR 101 – Engineering Orientation – is a seminar class that all first year engineering students are required to take, whether they are in the 4-year program, 5-year program, or pre-engineering program. In this way all first year students intent on pursuing engineering get some exposure to the study and careers in engineering. Reference 4 describes the details on the ENGR 101 – Engineering Orientation course. This course is in the process of being updated, including changing from 0 credits to 1 credit to encourage more student participation.

Two engineering courses – ENGR 103 and ENGR 104 - have been developed solely for the five-year students to take during their freshman year. These courses are described in the following section. The five-year program also has the added benefit of providing a reduced load. These students take 12-15 credits per semester, as compared to their peers in the four-year program who take 16-18 credits per semester. This should provide the five-year students more time to study per course than their peers in the four-year program.

The five-year students who are on track will take chemistry, statics, and thermodynamics during fall semester of their third year. The last three years for the five-year student plan is very similar (with the exception of a reduced credit load) to the last three years for the student in the four-year plan[2,4].

Fall Semester – First Year	Spring Semester – First Year
ENGR 101 – Engineering Orientation ENGR 103 –Principles of Problem Solving MATH 118 – College Algebra & Trig PHYS 101 – Introduction to Physics OR General Education course ENG 101 – Rhetoric & Composition I PED 1XX – Physical education activity class	ENGR 104 – Applied Problem Solving MATH 230– Calculus I CMST 101 – Introduction to Public Speaking PED 186 – Physical education health class General Education Course
Fall Semester – Second Year	Spring Semester – Second Year
ENGR 107 – Introduction to Engineering MATH 330 – Calculus II PHYS 205 – Intermediate Physics I ENG 201 – Rhetoric & Composition I	ENGR 108 – Introduction to Design PHYS 206 – Intermediate Physics II MATH 335 – Calculus III Ethics/Philosophy General Education Course
Fall Semester – Third Year	Spring Semester – Third Year
ENGR 235 – Statics ENGR 225 – Thermodynamics CHEM 261 – General Chemistry General Education Course	ENGR 255 – Electrical Circuits (w lab) ENGR 275 – Dynamics MATH 433 – Differential Equations General Education Course
Fall Semester – Fourth Year	Spring Semester – Fourth Year
ENGR 235 – Strength of Materials (w lab) ENGR elective ENGR elective ENGR elective General Education Course	ENGR 375 – Fluid Mechanics ENGR 335 – Engineering Economics ENGR elective ENGR elective General Education Course
Fall Semester – Fifth Year	Spring Semester – Fifth Year
ENGR 235 – Engineering Statistics ENGR elective ENGR elective General Education Course	ENGR 491 – Senior Design ENGR elective ENGR elective ENGR elective

Figure 1: Plan of study for the five-year engineering program at the University of Southern Indiana.

Course descriptions and objectives for the pre-calculus engineering courses

Two engineering courses unique to the five-year program are described.

ENGR 103 – Principles of Problem Solving

This is a 3-credit course that has two hours of lecture and two hours of recitation/laboratory per week. This course introduces problem-solving methods using geometry, trigonometry, force vectors, curve-fitting, and unit conversion. Math 118 (College Algebra & Trig) is the co-requisite for this course. The current textbook required is in reference 5.

The course objective for ENGR 103 is for student to learn a problem solving method consisting of logical, step-by-step, organized solutions in fundamental areas of math, physics and engineering. ENGR 103 has evolved since first taught in 2002, and each instructor who teaches it is allowed a certain amount of academic freedom. During spring semester 2005, twenty-two Course Learning Objectives (CLOs) or Course Outcomes were identified and evaluated. Seven of these course learning objectives are discussed in this paper. They are:

1. list organized steps of a problem solving method,
2. identify the known and unknown variables in complex problems,
3. select the correct trigonometry principles to solve a problem,
4. obtain straight line function (y = mx + b) coefficients,
5. construct hand drawn semilog graphs,
6. obtain exponential function (y = K emx) coefficients,
7. participate as a group member and/or leader in a study group.

ENGR 104 – Applied Problem Solving

This is a 3-credit course that has two hours of lecture and two hours of computer laboratory per week. This course introduces computer problem solving methods using flowcharts and computer programming. ENGR 103 and Math 118 (College Algebra & Trig) are the pre-requisite for this course. The textbook are required include the same text for ENGR 103[5] plus a new text for using Microsoft Excel[6].

The course objective for ENGR 104 is for student to learn how to organize a problem for logical, step-by-step, organized solutions using common engineering software, and to graph these solutions. ENGR 104 has evolved since first taught in 2002, and each instructor who teaches it is allowed a certain amount of academic freedom. During spring semester 2006, ten Course Learning Objectives (CLOs, i.e., Course Outcomes) were identified and evaluated. Five of these course learning objectives are discussed in this paper. They are:

1. prepare documented problem solutions within the software application Excel and TK Solver,
2. construct flowcharts and algorithms,
3. write and debug software using Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) within Excel,
4. determine the sequential, selective and repetitive steps of a computer program,
5. participate as a group member and/or leader in a study or laboratory group.

Evaluation for the pre-calculus engineering courses

The CLOs for each course were measured directly by evaluating students' work, and indirectly from a student survey at the end of the semester. Results of those measures provide feedback as to which Course Learning Objectives are being met, which need more attention, and which ones should be added, removed, or changed. In addition, retention statistics are presented.

Direct Measures

Each CLO was evaluated for each student on a 1-5 scale according to a metric created by the instructor. Description of each metric for each CLO and the average score for one recent class are shown in Table I for ENGR 103 and Table II for ENGR 104. The goal was a class average of 3.0/5.0 or higher. From these measures, more attention is needed for CLOs 1, 2, 3, and 6 for ENGR 103; and CLOs 1 and 5 for ENGR 104.

Indirect Measures

Each student who was present for class during the last week of the semester completed a survey of how strongly that they agree, on a 1-5 scale, that they have met each CLO. The average score for each CLO are all above an acceptable level of 3.0/5.0, as shown in Table III for ENGR 103 and Table IV for ENGR 104.

It is interesting to note that the rating for each CLO was higher using the indirect measures (student surveys) compared to the direct measures. There are several possible reasons for this; most obvious is that the metrics for each scale are different. The adequate rating on the direct measure scale is a 2.0/5.0, but using a different metric one could set that as 3.0/5.0.

Table I: Direct Measures for ENGR 103 from Fall Semester 2005.

Course Learning Objective	5 Exemplary	4 Very Good	3 Proficient	2 Adequate	1 Poor	Average Score of Class
1. List organized steps of a problem solving method.	Does this on all work, without being asked.	Checks answer to see if it makes physical sense.	Draws good sketches and diagrams and presents in organized, neat manner.	Uses Given, Find Relationship, Solution and verifies answer and units.	Does not show written work, or is sloppy and hard to follow.	2.5
2. Identify the known and unknown variables in complex problems.	Converts unlike units to same before starting.	Lists all variable units in sketch.	Has all variables shown in the sketch.	Has all variables listed.	Leaves out key variables.	2.0
3. Select the correct trigonometry principals to solve a problem.	Does this on all work, without being asked.	Checks answer to see if it makes physical sense.	Can solve force vector problems using the law of sine, etc. Converts radians to degrees.	Uses sine, cosine, tangent (and inverse) to find side or angle or a triangle.	Demonstrates no knowledge of trig functions.	2.0
4. Obtain straight line function (y = mx + b).	Does this on all work, without being asked.	Graphs are clearly labeled. Tabular data are checked against formula calculation.	Draws good graphs (with straight edge) in neat manner.	Draws good linear graphs in neat manner, and calculates m and b.	Does not show written work, or is sloppy and hard to follow.	3.0
5. Construct hand drawn semi log graphs.	Does this on all work, without being asked.	Graphs are clearly labeled. Tabular data are checked against formula calculation.	Draws good graphs (with straight edge or French curve) in neat manner.	Draws good semi-log graphs in neat manner.	Does not show written work, or is sloppy and hard to follow.	3.0
6. Obtain exponential function ($y = k e^{mx}$) coefficients.	Does this on all work, without being asked.	Graphs are clearly labeled. Tabular data are checked against formula calculation.	Draws good graphs (with French curve) in neat manner.	Draws good log y vs. x graph in neat manner and calculates m log k, and k.	Does not show all written work, or is sloppy and hard to follow.	2.8
7. Participate as a group member and/or leader in a study group.	Leads by collaboration and consensus.	Contributes in class. Takes charge in a group.	Contributes in class. Does delegated tasks.	Does delegated tasks minimally.	Poor attitude. Does not contribute and watches others do the work.	3.2

The direct measures were based on selected assignments evaluated throughout the semester, while the indirect measures were all done at the end of the semester. It could be that some students did poorly on a CLO assignment early in the semester but then mastered the material later. The students on average may feel that they have learned more than what they really can do.

In 2007 the assessment method at USI was changed to evaluating Performance Criteria for each Student Learning Outcomes, which are the same as the BSE Program Outcomes at USI, which in turn relate directly to ABET Criterion 3, (a) through (k). Each instructor now identifies Performance Criteria for each Leaning Outcome covered in a course. This is the method recommended by the 2007 ABET review, and described in the 2007 ABET Faculty Workshop on

Table II: Direct Measures for ENGR 104 from Spring Semester 2005

Course Learning Objective	5 Exemplary	4 Very Good	3 Proficient	2 Adequate	1 Poor	Average Score of Class
1. Prepare documented problem solutions within the software application Excel.	Does this on all work, without being asked.	Uses Excel documentation format with clear input and output.	Good format for input and output.	Gets input and output.	Misapplies formulas/logic taught.	1.7
2. Construct flowcharts for use in computer programming.	Flowchart correct and well labeled.	Does flowchart at the start and revises after the code is changed.	Flowchart is done first, but not revised.	Flowchart is drawn after code is complete.	Does not turn in flow chart.	3.1
3. Write and debug software using Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) within Excel.	Debugged for items above and beyond requested.	Efficient code writing with organized indents and comments.	Uses flow chart for writing code. Code is debugged for foreseen input variations.	Code too long or in- efficient, or written by trial an error. Not de-bugged for all input.	Code not debugged.	3.1
4. Determine the sequential, selective and repetitive steps of a computer program.	Does all coding correctly with no intervention.	Can write own code for arrays, For…next sequences, Do Loops, and If and Else statements.	Can write own code for Do Loops, If and Else statements.	Can write own code for If and Else statements.	Cannot write own code for If and Else statements.	3.1
5. Participate as a group member and/or leader in a study or laboratory group.	Leads by collaboration and consensus.	Contributes in class. Takes charge in a group.	Contributes in class. Does delegated tasks.	Does delegated tasks minimally.	Poor attitude. Does not contribute, and watches others do the work	2.5

Assessing Program Outcomes.

Hence, assessment of ENGR 103 and ENGR 104 have evolved. Instead of evaluating 32 CLOs related to many Program Outcomes, only 11 Performance Criteria are used to assess two Student Learning Outcomes (related to ABET 3e and 3g). Assessment of these courses has not been completed at this time as ENGR 104 is still in progress at the time this paper was written. However, many of these new Performance Criteria are very closely related to the CLOs listed in Tables I and II.

Retention

Although the program has not been in existence long enough to establish a five-year graduation rate, two retention studies have been done and are presented here.

Table III: Indirect Measures for ENGR 103 (Principles of Problem Solving) from student survey at the end of Fall Semester 2005.

After completing this course, students were asked anonymously how strongly they feel they have the ability to:	Number of Responses from the 12 Students Who Participated Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Line Total Responses	Weighted Assessment
1. List organized steps of a problem solving method	4	8	0	0	0	12	4.3
2. Identify the known and unknown variables in complex problems	3	9	0	0	0	12	4.3
3. Select the correct trigonometry principals to solve a problem.	3	7	2	0	0	12	4.1
4. Obtain straight line function (y = mx + b) coefficients	4	8	0	0	0	12	4.3
5. Construct hand drawn semi-log graphs	3	7	2	0	0	12	4.1
6. Obtain exponential function ($y = k\ 10^{mx)}$ coefficients	3	8	1	0	0	12	4.2
7. Participate as a group member and/or leader in a study group	3	8	1	0	0	12	4.2

Table IV: Indirect Measures for ENGR 104 from student surveys at the end of Spring Semester 2005.

After completing this course, students were asked anonymously how strongly they feel they have the ability to:	Number of Responses from the 11 Students Who Participated Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Line Total Responses	Weighted Assessment
1.Prepare documented problem solutions within the software application Excel	0	10	1	0	0	11	3.9
2.Construct flowcharts for use in computer programming	2	8	1	0	0	11	4.1
3.Write and debug software using Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) within Excel	1	9	1	0	0	11	4.0
4.Determine the sequential, selective and repetitive steps of a computer program	0	8	3	0	0	11	3.7
5.Participate as a group member and/or leader in a study or laboratory group	2	7	1	1	0	11	3.9

Students who started in the engineering program in 2002 and who also took ENGR 101 their first semester were tracked for three years. These students were grouped as 4-year, 5-year, or pre-engineering students. (Recall that pre-engineering students at USI are those who start below the college algebra level.) These results are presented in Table V, and show that the three-year retention rate for the 5-year students is 30%, compared with 43% for the 4-year students and 4% for the pre-engineering students.

Table V: Retention of engineering students who started Fall 2002 and were enrolled in ENGR 101.

Engineering Level	Number of Student in Engineering 101 (Fall 2002)	Number of those Student still in engineering (Fall 2005)	Retention Rate (After three years)
Pre-engineering (starting math level is less than college algebra)	25	1	4%
5-year plan (starting math at college algebra & trig)	27	8	30%
4-year plan (starting math at calculus I or higher)	21	9	43%

A second investigation in retention of students in the 5-year program involved tracking students who started ENGR 103 in the fall of 2004. These results are shown in Figure 2. Students were tracked if they were on schedule with the 5-year plan during the next two years. This is a more stringent retention statistic compared to tracking if they are still in the engineering program, as it does not count the students who have fallen behind schedule but are still enrolled in the engineering program. Experience from the faculty at USI, especially those who had developed a rigorous engineering technology program, conjure that students who pass ENGR 235 - Statics on schedule have a very high success rate for completing their engineering degree within the next three years. Five of the 28 students who started ENGR 103 were enrolled in ENGR 235 – Statics - in the fall semester of their third year. This is a small but significant number of students who may not have been in the engineering program without the 5-year plan. In is interesting to note that 3 of those 5 students are women, which is significantly higher percentage than all women enrolled in the engineering program at USI. Unfortunately, only three of the five students passed statics their first time, and only one went on to pass Strength of Materials the following year. This would mean that only one of the 28 students who started the five-year engineering program in 2004 is on schedule to graduate in 2009.

The same population of engineering students who started the five-year program in 2004 were evaluated another way, as shown in Figure 3. This time each student's record was looked-up to see "where are they now." These numbers are more encouraging, in that 26% are still in the engineering program, but behind schedule. It is estimated that at least half of these students will graduate with a BSE degree, but it will take them longer than five years. Some delay is due to engineering coops, but most are due to determined students who are willing to repeat several courses in order to get their BSE degree. It is not surprising that 15% of these students are still at USI working on a business degree. What is surprising is that only 4% of these students are in our Industrial Supervision degree program. This program is administered through the Department of Engineering, and is a mix of business and technology courses. Because of the ties of Industrial Supervision with engineering, and because Industrial Supervision also requires students to take ENGR 103 and ENGR 104, it was thought that a larger number of students who start in engineering in the five-year plan but struggle with the higher math and physics course would switch to Industrial

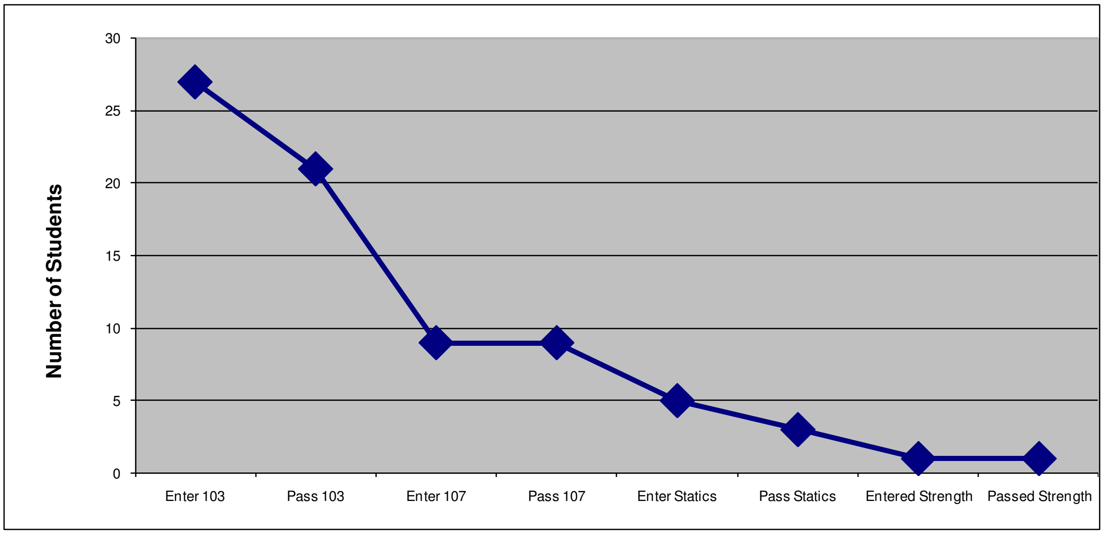

Figure 2: Tracking benchmarks for 28 students who started the Five-year Engineering program in 2004.

Supervision. Another interesting statistics is that half of these students have left the university by their 4th year of study. This may seem like a high number, but this is consistent with a regional university with low entrance requirements but high achievement requirements. It is unclear how many of these students have transferred to another university. A new 4-year degree program in Advanced Manufacturing is planned to start in fall 2008. This program would also require students to take ENGR 103 and ENGR 104, and may lead to better university-wide retention rate.

Summary

A five-year plan of study leading to an ABET accredited Bachelor of Science in Engineering (BSE) degree has been developed at the University of Southern Indiana for students who are not ready for calculus their first semester, but are ready for college algebra. Two pre-calculus engineering courses have been taught at USI as part of this five-year engineering program since 2002: ENGR 103 - Principles of Problem Solving and ENGR 104 – Applied Problems Solving. These courses are designed to acclimate these students into the engineering program their first year and provide them with the skills they will need to succeed in the engineering curriculum if they choose to do so. Direct and indirect measures show that many of the students met the Course Learning Objectives (CLOs) for these two courses taught in 2005. However, the class average ratings from the direct measures (evaluated by the instructor) were consistently lower than the indirect measures (evaluated by the students) for each CLO when evaluated in 2005, and many CLOs did not meet their metric using the direct measures. This year the metric was changed to evaluating six Performance Criteria for two Learning Outcomes in ENGR 103, and five Performance Criteria in two Learning Outcomes in ENGR 103. Assessment of these courses has not been completed at this time as ENGR 104 is still in progress at the time this paper was written.

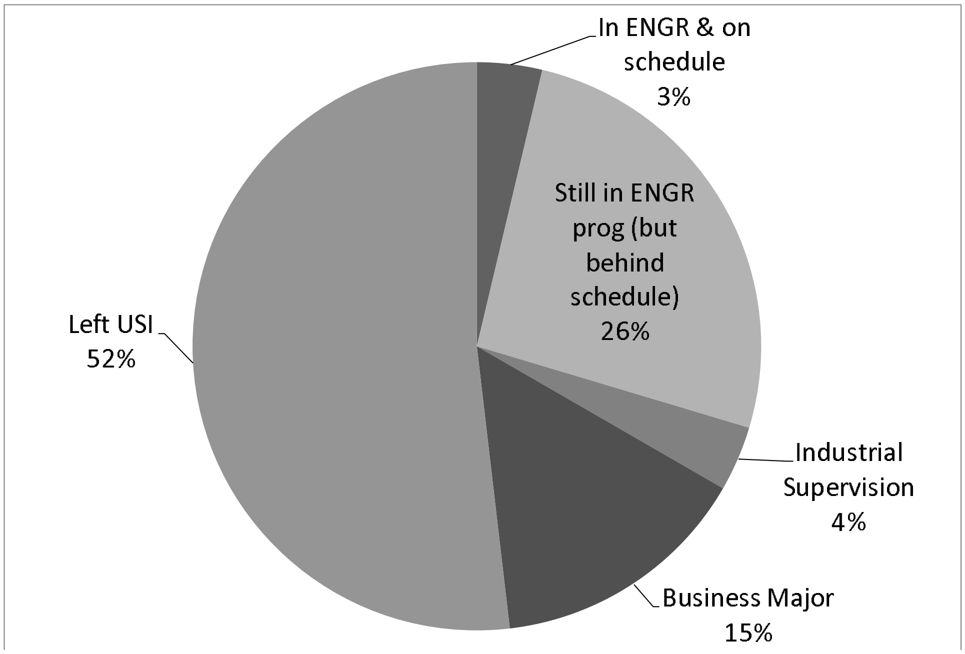

Figure 3: Current status of student who started as engineering students at USI in 2003.

Retention statistics show that approximately 30% of students who started the 5-year plan are still in the engineering program after three years, and nearly 20% are on target with earning their BSE in five years. Unfortunately that number dropped to 3% (or one of 28 students) when the 4th year of the student population was evaluated. However, approximately 30% of the students are still in the engineering program after four years, although most will have difficulty completing their degrees in five-years, and some may not graduate with a BSE degrees. However, half of the students who started the five-year engineering program are still enrolled in the university after 4 years, with some switching majors to business. Without a five year engineering program, it is perceived that many of these students would have gone to another university.

Acknowledgements

The authors are greatly indebted to David Ellert, Instructor of Engineering at USI, who has taught ENGR 103 and ENGR 104 since 2004; and who wrote the Course Learning Objectives and performed the direct and indirect measure evaluations. Jay Fredrich, Chair Emeritus of the Engineering Technology Department, was instrumental in developing the new engineering program, including the 5-year plan of study. We would also like to acknowledge Abigail Rosendale, former Instructor of Engineering at USI who taught ENGR 103 and ENGR 104, and was involved in developing the five-year curriculum.

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