



West Chester University

Middle States Commission on Higher Education



SELF-STUDY



Table of Contents

Glossary of Acronyms	2
Executive Summary	4
COVID-19 Addendum	9
Introduction	20
STANDARD I: MISSION AND GOALS	25
STANDARD II: ETHICS AND INTEGRITY	33
STANDARD III: DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE	42
STANDARD IV: SUPPORT FOR THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE	59
STANDARD V: EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT	70
STANDARD VI: PLANNING, RESOURCES, AND INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENT.....	82
STANDARD VII: GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, AND ADMINISTRATION.....	92
Conclusion	102
Steering Committee and Working Group Members	104



Glossary of Acronyms

UNIVERSITY

- WCU.....West Chester University
- PASSHEPennsylvania State System of Higher Education
- BOGBoard of Governors
- COTCouncil of Trustees

COLLEGES

- CAH.....College of Arts and Humanities
- CBPM.....College of Business and Public Management
- CESW.....College of Education and Social Work
- CHSCollege of Health Sciences
- CSMCollege of Sciences and Mathematics
- UC.....University College
- WSMWells School of Music

UNIONS

- AFSCME.....American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
- APSCUFAssociation of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties
- OPEIUOffice and Professional Employees International Union
- SCUPAThe State College and University Professional Association
- SPFPASecurity, Police and Fire Professionals of America

COMMONLY USED ACRONYMS IN THE SELF-STUDY

AES	Administrative and Educational Support	CIM	Curriculum Inventory Management	PCAB	President’s Corporate Advisory Board
ASL	Assessment of Student Learning	CPE	Council of Professional Education	PEC	Provost’s Executive Cabinet
BRC	Budget Review Committee	DCCC	Delaware County Community College	RNL	Ruffalo Noel Levitz
CAE	Committee on Advising Excellence	FYE	First Year Experience	SGA	Student Government Association
CAPC	Curriculum and Academic Policies Council	GSA	Graduate Student Association	SRIS	Student Rating of Instructor Surveys
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement	IEP	Institutional Effectiveness Plan	SURI	Summer Undergraduate Research Institute
CCIT	Campus Climate Intervention Team	LARC	Learning Assistance and Resource Center	UAAC	University Assessment Advisory Committee
CDIO	Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer	ODEI	Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	USH	University Student Housing
CELT	Committee for Excellence in Teaching and Learning	PACT	Pennsylvania Association of Councils of Trustees		



WE, THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT
ASSOCIATION OF 2003 - 2007,
BESTOW THIS RAM STATUE
TO WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY
OF PENNSYLVANIA
IN SEPTEMBER OF 2007.

Executive Summary

West Chester University (WCU) is one of the top regional comprehensive public universities in the nation, and the flagship institution in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. The university's excellence is demonstrated by impressive four and six-year graduation rates, by the high quality of the faculty, staff, and students, and by the value it places on both teaching, research and creative activity.

Innovation in administrative practices has allowed the institution to flourish while peer institutions have often struggled. Reorganized beginning in 2015, WCU has grown consistently, enrolling 14,711 undergraduate and 3,008 graduate students in the Fall 2020 semester and adding four doctoral programs since the last self-study. Resources are carefully aligned with the university's mission and strategic plan, allowing the addition of 188,000 square feet of classroom and office space in order to accommodate growth, all while assuring the financial stability of the institution and leveraging every opportunity to make the campus both economically and environmentally sustainable.

Standard I – Mission and Goals

The University's mission, written and approved in 2017, is lived by our community of educators, who work continuously to support WCU students. The mission emphasizes our commitment to creating a better world, along with our commitment to graduating students who are prepared to succeed both personally and professionally.

Strengths

- The University's mission is represented in strong, succinct language; however, more importantly, it is lived by our community of educators through continuous support of students.
- WCU's commitment to diversity is clearly articulated and increasingly recognized, as evidenced by our recent 2020 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- WCU should continue to enhance awareness and visibility of the mission statement in order to create greater intentionality with regard to our community's use of the mission language. This can be achieved through facility signage and planning, website prominence and consistency, inclusion within course syllabi, and in official university communications.

Standard II – Ethics and Integrity

Both the structures and the traditions of our institution support a culture of transparency that helps WCU remain faithful to its principles. A strong practice of shared governance undergirds this culture, and while events occurred during the process of this self-study that forced us to test these structures and traditions, we remain steadfast.

Strengths

- Emphasizing and supporting diversity has been a longtime value for WCU, and many of our successful initiatives continue this legacy. The reorganization of diversity initiatives under the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has increased communication and created programming opportunities that were not possible before.
- Two recent initiatives have successfully increased accessibility for students with disabilities: The Real Achievement Matters (RAM) Initiative brings small numbers of non-degree students with intellectual disabilities to WCU. The Dub-C Autism Program provides direct and indirect support to degree-seeking WCU students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- Multiple facilities changes have increased access to diverse groups: single-occupancy, non-gender specific bathrooms have been added to many buildings, lactation rooms are available in most classroom buildings, and space on campus for meditation and prayer has been made available.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Examine ways to improve student preparation to engage in constructive discussions during courses that cover difficult topics and with visitors to our campus who use inflammatory rhetoric.
- Increase transparency about the process used to document and resolve non-union complaints.
- Continue to increase the clarity about the fee structure and total costs of attending college for students.
- Continue to address the underemployment of Black and LatinX faculty, along with faculty in other underrepresented categories.

Standard III – Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

The university's commitment to student success is nowhere more evident than in our passion for delivering a robust liberal arts education that simultaneously prepares students for fulfilling lives after they graduate. WCU has expanded its offerings, developed robust technologies to support those offerings, and has overhauled its approach to general education to assure that every student is prepared to seize the opportunities on offer.

Strengths

- WCU has expanded the graduate student body, increased support for graduate assistantships, diversified graduate programming, and increased our research profile at a time when graduate enrollments are struggling at many peer institutions.
- The adoption of the Curriculum Inventory Management (CIM) system has streamlined course approvals, simultaneously creating a database of all course syllabi and mapping student learning outcomes to the curriculum.
- WCU successfully launched a revised general education curriculum, including a First-Year Experience course and ePortfolio system through an inclusive and faculty-driven process.
- WCU has enhanced its access mission through the support of alternative locations in Philadelphia and at area community colleges.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Harness the success of our Philadelphia and Delaware County Community College (DCCC) programs to foster greater integration of students who are learning at alternate locations.
- Continue to demonstrate ability to recruit high-quality faculty to increase the complement of Black and LatinX faculty.

Standard IV – Support for the Student Experience

Thoughtful, appropriate, and timely support of the student experience is critical to institutional success and well-being. WCU has been and continues to be a champion for student success from access to engagement to retention and through completion and post-graduation. We know how to meet students where they are, provide individual support, and simultaneously

create structures and institutional interventions that help students succeed.

Strengths

- A robust co-curricular student engagement effort support university-wide student success efforts.
- WCU demonstrates a strong culture of assessment.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Continue to formally examine campus climate issues and make changes to enhance equity, inclusion, and support of the student experience.
- Continue the commitment to the co-curricular transcript by enhancing the professional development program meant to increase faculty adoption of transcribed programs that enhance classroom learning.

Standard V – Educational Effectiveness Assessment

WCU's assessment processes allow faculty to measure the effectiveness of our educational programs, which in turn allows us to better support student learning and success. The programs and processes that have been developed help make our assessment activities both sustainable and achievable.

Strengths

- As a result of WCU's strong commitment to operating under a financially sustainable model, budget dollars are earmarked to support assessment efforts through direct compensation to faculty leads.
- The assessment process is further supported through a strong culture of assessment across divisions.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Assurance of Student Learning (ASL) and General Education assessment processes that are championed by separate faculty leads could be streamlined to build an even greater sense of culture around assessment.
- The strong work of improved assessment efforts over time could now be celebrated more consistently, showcasing best practices across the entire university.
- New strategies to close racial and gendered equity gaps in access to the university and to student success are still needed, despite consistent efforts, given that the gaps persist.

Standard VI – Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

WCU has established systematic methods for continuously assessing the effectiveness of planning and resource allocation in support of the university mission. The clear emphasis on student success permeates all planning and encourages investment in and by faculty, staff, students, and administration. In large part because of how closely aligned our planning processes, resources, and structures are with one another, WCU is in a strong financial position, the strongest in PASSHE. While the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic response has required additional financial resources at the same time revenues have fallen, university decision-makers have prioritized the health, safety, and welfare of the WCU community and worked to identify cost-savings to minimize the financial impacts on students and employees.

Strengths

- We have demonstrated our ability to utilize space and money effectively in a changing enrollment landscape so that we can be intentional and proactive rather than primarily reactive. In terms of facilities and space, we have been rated by Sitelines as using space most effectively, compared to peer institutions (VI.6.47).
- WCU has adapted our Human Resources planning in academic and student affairs to meet the demands of enrollment and maximize student success.
- The strong partnership between academic and student affairs in their planning efforts in support of student success.
- We have invested appropriately in efforts to increase diversity and inclusion at the university by the creation of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and increased resources for the Dowdy Multicultural Center.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Further integrate and highlight the strategic goals for diversity, equity, inclusion, and sustainability.
- Develop new and effective strategies to make progress on the university's carbon neutrality goals — by working across divisions — in order to permit WCU to demonstrate its leadership in higher education sustainability.

- Conduct an analysis of the use of the university's planning efforts and resource allocation during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to discover lessons learned that might improve our business practices and reveal opportunities for permanent innovation triggered by the disruption.

Standard VII – Governance, Leadership, and Administration

WCU's growth has occurred both from significant increases in undergraduate enrollment, and at the graduate level through the creation of many new graduate programs, including four doctorate credentials. With each newly created program, decisions must be made about governance and administration. As a member of PASSHE, WCU is the largest of fourteen organizations. Like its sister institutions, WCU is participating in a System Redesign instituted by the new Chancellor, Daniel Greenstein. The redesign is likely to impact multiple aspects of WCU's own Strategic Plan, *Pathways to Student Success*. During these unprecedented times, WCU will need to remain student-focused, flexible, innovative, yet true to its mission and culture of shared governance as we emerge from the global pandemic.

Strengths

- The university's institutional effectiveness model is clearly articulated in WCU's 2020 Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP) and represents WCU's steadfast commitment to student success and institutional achievement. This reflects WCU's ability to adapt to change and make institutional improvements through our assessment processes.
- WCU leadership continually engages and, in some cases, leads the System Redesign planning efforts with the Chancellor, Board of Governors, and other PASSHE university leadership, and as such WCU will be prepared for any impending new realities.

Opportunities for Improvement

- WCU should take institutional effectiveness to the next level by establishing an Institutional Effectiveness Committee that is charged with assessing the progress and effectiveness of the Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP) to include the university mission, strategic plan, and administrative assessment in conjunction with relevant existing committees. The charge for this committee should include developing a communications strategy that ensures transparency of this ongoing work.

- WCU should continue to ensure that personnel are efficiently deployed or aligned to respond to emerging needs and priorities and communicate organizational changes clearly and transparently to all stakeholders.

Closing

In the pages that follow, we will describe our work to assure that we are meeting all seven of the Standards for Accreditation and fifteen Requirements of Affiliation adopted by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). You will also see our work to identify and measure our success and learn from our mistakes so that we can identify opportunities for continuous improvement over time.





COVID-19 Addendum

On March 10, 2020, President Fiorentino informed the university community that West Chester University (WCU) would move to alternate modes of instruction for the remainder of the spring semester in order to assure the safety of students in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (I.1.C1). The unprecedented actions that followed have taken a variety of forms — all of them focused on the mission-critical work of supporting our students' continued success. In the addendum to our self-study that follows, we provide an overview and analysis of changes related to the pandemic that have the potential to impact our institution.

Standard I – Mission and Goals

While the university was forced to pivot its operations in numerous ways in order to maintain the safe learning environment that allows our students to succeed and thrive, it is abundantly clear that WCU was able to make that shift without compromising our ability to achieve our mission and goals. As our mission clearly articulates, WCU is a community of educators that develops graduates to succeed personally and professionally and contribute to the common good. We have demonstrated this every day of the COVID-19 pandemic, enacting our community spirit in the interest of safety and wellness while working tirelessly to assure the highest quality learning environment possible. Details about many of the initiatives that we have undertaken can be found in the Student Success and Retention Council's (SSRC) COVID-19 Report (I.1.C2), but below we will illustrate our mission-centered approach to the pandemic with a few key examples, including our agile adaptation of university policies and procedures to allow for remote learning, our use of critical technology to ensure access, and our timely distribution of refunds, emergency scholarships, and CARES Act funding to provide relief to students and families.

A Community of Educators

In consultation with MSCHE, WCU adapted our academic calendar in the middle of the Spring 2020 semester in order to shift university operations off campus. As students and faculty prepared for Spring Break, WCU announced that students would actually be vacating the residence halls, and faculty would be vacating their academic offices, to work remotely for the remainder of the semester. This was a massive undertaking, which involved the phased and socially distanced exiting of 4,834 residents from both university-owned and affiliated housing. The shift also required flexible options

to assure that international students and students with housing insecurity could remain on campus in a safe way.

After calculating the in-class hours needed to satisfy all accreditation standards, we determined that we could add an additional two weeks to the scheduled Spring Break to give faculty more time to prepare their classes for remote delivery, to give staff members time to develop processes for delivering first-rate service to our community from off-campus locations, and to give students additional time to move off campus and prepare for remote learning. MSCHE sent us written confirmation of our plan on 4/7/2020, and administration worked behind the scenes to reach agreements with our staff unions to allow administrative support teams to work from home and to provide them with the tools they needed to do so successfully. Essential staff members (custodial, grounds and facilities) worked tirelessly to develop protocols for maintaining a safe environment on campus for those whose work could not be done remotely, while other staff members attended trainings to learn new technologies and software.

The community spirit embodied in this work was astonishing. Over and over again, we heard "We're in this together," and that rallying call has kept us going through some challenging times. Each and every member of this academic community had a role to play, and each member stepped up to ensure that our mission of excellence could continue.

Developing Graduates to Succeed Personally and Professionally

While faculty members worked to maximize learning in courses that weren't originally planned for remote delivery, the university also worked closely with school districts, internship sites, and the federal work study program to assure that students could continue their experiential learning safely, whether remotely, or with protocols in place to keep students safe. The vast majority of internships continued through the Spring 2020 semester, and by the time summer session began, we had developed a clear process for approving in-person internships. The Twardowski Career Development Center leveraged available technology to work directly with students through Handshake and Zoom, reviewing resumes and guiding students to 5,826 job and internship postings that came in during the Spring and Summer 2020. They hosted skill building, information, and mock interview sessions, and matched 43 students with alumni mentors through our Ram Nation program.

By the beginning of the fall semester, we had also developed protocols for in-person classes, including student teaching, clinical coursework and others that were deemed essential, and a process for allowing students to opt out of any course with in-person instruction if they chose. We also developed a housing policy that would allow some students to live on campus, prioritizing students on the basis of financial need. During the Fall 2020 semester, when 17,719 students began their semester at WCU, 1,546 of them were enrolled in classes that had at least some in-person instruction, and 552 of them were living safely in our residence halls.

Developing Graduates to Contribute to the Common Good

While many activities that would normally be part of our thriving campus life had to be adapted, the resilience of our faculty, staff, and students allowed an astonishing array of productive action to continue. Tutoring services, for example, continued remotely, offering support for students who needed a tutor, but also the ongoing learning opportunity that tutoring offers to our student tutors. The Dowdy Multicultural Center, similarly, continued its peer mentoring program, supporting the students who needed mentors, but also the opportunity that mentoring itself offers. Student organizations, a vital part of WCU's on-campus culture, shifted their operations as well, including philanthropic and service-connected work to support our community. Events like the annual Broadway Cares AIDS benefit continued — delivered online — as did other student activities. For example, Physical Education students created virtual exercise programs for local second graders, and a student-led organization, YOUnison, launched April's "Worldwide Day of Gratitude" to thank essential workers for their heroism during the pandemic. Several examples of our community outreach were highlighted in a April 13th, WCU Supports Community Partners update to the campus community (I.1.C3)

Standard II – Ethics and Integrity

In order to assure that we remained faithful to our mission during the COVID-19 pandemic, the university modified numerous policies and procedures that would allow us to better serve students, and we communicated those changes transparently to all shared governance groups and stakeholders.

Commitment to Academic Freedom

Our university response to COVID-19 required a team approach, and from the outset we worked to

identify campus leaders who could offer feedback on the planning effort and share information with key constituent groups. University leaders met with the leaders of the faculty union, the curriculum committee, the council of chairs, faculty senate, and other shared governance groups to discuss the plans for delivering courses, and this consortium of shared governance leaders agreed to suspend the curriculum policy that normally requires courses to have a specific approval for fully online delivery. On the ground, this meant that our commitment to academic freedom was re-affirmed, and the faculty shared governance groups helped us to articulate a series of identifiers for courses that would better help students understand the modes of delivery that would be employed. Courses that would be delivered with some synchronous instruction, for example, were coded as "RS" courses, and additional fields were added to our student information system to help students understand when and how their courses would meet synchronously. Courses that would be delivered in an asynchronous manner were coded as "RA" courses.

As remote delivery continued into Summer and Fall 2020 and we better understood the COVID-19 virus, we added the "HYB" coding for hybrid courses that would have some in-person delivery, and developed clear process for assuring that students understood whether in-person participation was fully voluntary, or whether a course required some in-person participation in order to comply with specialized accreditations standards (i.e. clinical experiences or student teaching). Throughout the process of developing these policies and processes, we were in constant communication with our shared governance groups, and our university website was updated to provide students and the greater community with transparent information about course offerings.

Honesty and Truthfulness in Communication

Town Hall Zoom meetings became a regular feature of operations at WCU during Spring, Summer and Fall 2020 as we endeavored to offer transparent answers to the questions that arose as a result of the pandemic. Between March 11th of 2020, when the President announced our shift to remote delivery, and the writing of this report, the following Virtual Town Hall sessions were held:

Date	Type of Town Hall	Audience	Attendance
4/21/2020	Student Government Town Hall (Open Zoom)	Students	207
6/17/2020	APSCUF Open Zoom Session	Faculty	405
7/2/2020	Webinar with open chat feature	Faculty	389
7/13/2020	Webinar with open chat feature	Staff	930
7/16/2020	Webinar with open chat feature	Students	3,955
8/3/2020	Webinar with open chat feature	First-year students and families	600
8/11/2020	Webinar with open chat feature	Managers	158
8/11/2020	Webinar with open chat feature	Staff	515
8/18/2020	Webinar with open chat feature	Faculty	254
8/21/2020	Webinar with open chat feature	SCUPA (staff union)	63
11/2/2020	Webinar with open chat feature	Students	1,300
11/9/2020	Webinar with open chat feature	Faculty	400
11/9/2020	Webinar with open chat feature	Staff	91

Our commitment to honesty and transparency allowed us to make decisions quickly, which afforded us more planning time when we really needed it. The university's website was updated every day as new information became available, and a banner was launched on the main landing page to make it as easy as possible for visitors to the website to find information, access frequently asked questions (FAQs) and review the full range of health notices (I.1.C4). The uncertainty of the pandemic led many institutions of higher education to postpone decisions making, hoping that the pandemic would abate and that campus life would return to normal. While WCU shared that hope, we chose to be decisive in order to assure that our community knew what to expect. That decisiveness meant that we were able to build two weeks of preparation time in for our students, faculty, and staff during the Spring 2020 semester that most other institutions were not.

Our decision in mid-summer to have a largely remote fall semester, similarly, was prescient. Other institutions announced plans for in-person classes in the fall only to pivot in the final weeks and days of summer, leaving students with housing leases to pay, travel arrangements to cancel, and other tangible disappointments to accompany the emotional ones. Our commitment to transparency, even when the financial cost was high, led us to make decisions as early as possible so that our students and their families could plan. While the immediate fallout of our announcement to "stay remote" for the Fall 2020 semester was met with some frustrated responses from students and families, we quickly

became the envy of our comparison group, realizing the largest student enrollment in our institution's history for the Fall 2020 semester.

Commitment to Diversity in a time of National Crisis

In the wake of a national movement to respond to the deaths of Black Americans at the hands of the police, WCU identified strategies to reassure members of our community of our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, one of our named institutional priorities for this self-study. Letters to the campus community from the university President (5/20/2020), Provost (6/1/2020), and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer (7/30/2020) were issued to better articulate the university's response to the murder of George Floyd and others, with an emphasis on the shared values that our university cherishes (I.1.C5).

The Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion, which was already at work on an overhaul of their website, ramped up that process in order to launch a "Change Begins Here: Dismantling Systemic and Everyday Racism" page to help community members locate resources for learning about race and racism. The "Listening to Each Other about Race" series has been ongoing throughout the fall semester, with four successful virtual events so far, and the Graduate Social Work department offered a four-part series of Town Hall Meetings as well. The website gives easy access to a range of other successful events and activities, including a Courageous Conversations series and our 2nd Annual Ruby Jones Conference on Race, Social Justice, and Civic Leadership.

That virtual event, which featured a keynote address by Angela Davis, included sessions attended by 999 participants.

Standard III – Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

Despite the challenges inherent in moving most of our university operations to remote formats, WCU is incredibly proud that it was able to usher three new programs through the approval process with the Office of the Chancellor, the Board of Governors, and our Council of Trustees. We added a new Bachelor of Arts degree in Urban Community Change, received approval to offer a new Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics, and also added a new Physician Assistant Studies program in the College of Health Sciences.

Changes to course scheduling, design, delivery, and location were also necessary in order to protect the health of our campus community. While the decision to move all instruction to remote delivery during the Spring 2020 semester was made quickly in the wake of rapidly changing information about the public health threat of the COVID-19 virus, the university nevertheless provided faculty, staff, and students with two additional weeks to prepare for that pivot. As the spring semester continued and everyone adapted, a massive support endeavor rolled out to bolster the work that we were doing, and to help prepare for a longer-term shift to remote delivery than originally planned.

Prior to the pandemic, our curriculum process allowed for a robust review of courses for online delivery, including a requirement that faculty who teach those courses participate in a faculty development course to prepare them for online teaching. Additional offerings for this training were offered throughout the spring, summer, and fall semesters, as were training opportunities for students to help them make the most of their remote learning. A full description of these offerings can be found in the Information Technology Newsletter from Fall 2020 (I.1.C6).

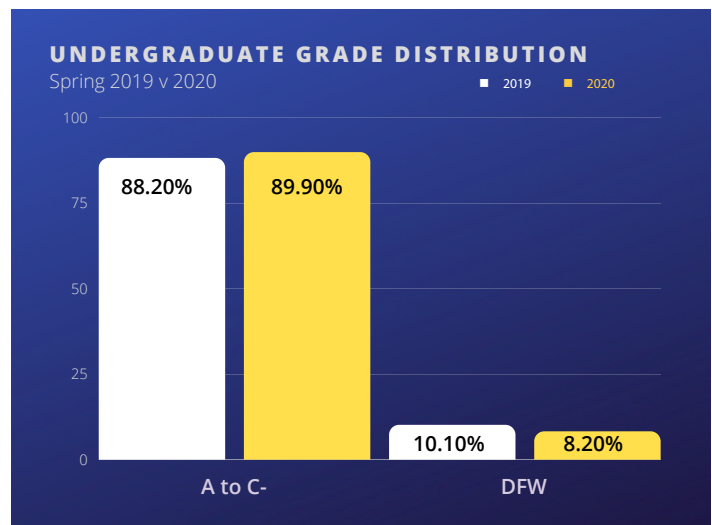
Travel bans at the international, national, and state levels have meant that many activities undertaken by faculty to enhance their professional development had to be postponed or shifted to online formats. In the first few months of the pandemic, most academic conferences opted to cancel their plans, but by early summer, that trend shifted as more and more conferences developed the tools to offer fully remote conference experiences. For that reason, many faculty members have been able to continue their scholarly plans.

Another policy change that reflects WCU’s mission-centered approach to the pandemic was the implementation of an alternative grading policy. None of our faculty or students started the Spring 2020 semester with an expectation that their coursework would be delivered via ZOOM, and the realities of our students’ struggles to adapt were quickly apparent. More about the policy can be found in the Self-Study and in the SSRC report, but broadly speaking it offered a flexible “opt in” grading system through which students could select a “Satisfactory” (for any grade above a C-) or “Earned Credit” (for grades of D+, D, or D-) in place of a letter grade (I.1.C7). The goal of this policy was to assure that students earned course credit for the successful completion of their classes, avoiding a scenario where students might drop out or withdraw if they were performing less successfully than usual.

By all accounts, the revised policy was successful, allowing students to stay on track in their degrees and mitigating a drop in retention and graduation rates due to the unanticipated challenges of managing the COVID-19 virus. The chart below shows the grade distribution of grades between A and C- during Spring 2019 (before the pandemic) and during Spring 2020 (when the alternative grading policy was in use). After the initial deployment, an extensive university-wide discussion and analysis took place. Ultimately, the alternative grading policy was extended through the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters, once it was clear that remote instruction would continue.

Standard IV – Support of the Student Experience

Our mission-centered focus was also on full display as we shifted support services for students to fully remote delivery. A more thorough analysis of this work can be



found in the SSRC's COVID-19 Report (I.1.C2), but some key examples are summarized below. The support offered to students happened in every division of the university, of course, but the following were some of the efforts that happened almost immediately in order to assure student success:

While 4,834 of our students moved out of our residence halls in timed windows during the week of March 16th to avoid possible exposure to COVID-19, more than 150 of our students were approved to remain on campus or make alternative move-out plans. Some of these were international students who could not travel home due to travel bans implemented nationwide; others were students with housing insecurity of other types, including homes that were unwelcoming to them for a variety of reasons. By April 6th, the number of students remaining was down to 78, and at the end of the semester, only 37 remained. For those students, however, a full range of support services was necessary. Aramark, for example, was able to provide dining services in a modified format through April, and then we worked with Grubhub to provide vouchers to students so that they could order food and have it delivered to campus. This was in addition to the support offered by the WCU Resource Pantry, which helped provide bags of food to students with food insecurity.

The extraordinary and mission-critical work of our Information Services and Technology (IST) team to support our community of educators cannot be understated, particularly as that work relates to supporting our student experience. Even before the public announcement that WCU would be moving to remote instruction, IST took the proactive step of distributing a survey to assess the technology needs of our students, faculty, and staff. The IST team then went to work, contacting each of the individuals who expressed

need in order to better assess what those needs were and deploy resources to assure that the needs were met.

In addition to the equipment loaned to students and employees by the IST division, several colleges and schools made specialized equipment available to students to assure their educational success. The Wells School of Music, for example, loaned more than 100 musical instruments to students, while the College of Arts and Humanities made digital cameras, sewing kits, clay, and yes — even potters' wheels — available to students as they continued their coursework remotely. Indirectly, the incredible efforts by our Office of Digital Learning & Innovation (ODLI) also supported our student experience, offering instructional design support to more than 500 faculty members, which no doubt improved the student experience with our learning management system, D2L. Both ODLI and IST offered training sessions on a variety of instructional technology tools and applications, which more than 800 faculty participated in, and which also no doubt improved the student learning experience in our remote learning environment (remote, in-person, and hybrid) for the Fall 2020 semester.

After focusing on the immediate needs of the spring semester, university leadership made the decision that an extraordinary investment should be made to assure that our classrooms could meet the demands of any possible outcome for Fall 2020. The Technical Support Services team researched, designed, and implemented a HyFlex classroom audio-visual solution for 200 campus classrooms, installing cameras, microphones, and other equipment as needed so that instruction could be delivered in-classrooms to both students who were present (and socially distanced) and to those who were remote (via Zoom).

To ensure continuity of instruction based on the uncertain impact of the pandemic on our faculty and their ability to continue teaching their courses, we instituted an emergency directive to record midterm grades and indicate whether two graded assessments had been completed. This online grade reporting form, delivered through our student information system, also asked whether each student would benefit from support in light of the shift to alternative modalities. During the Spring 2020 semester alone, 2010 students were identified and received support from a student success professional as a result of this approach. A similar mechanism allowed us to comply with US Department of Education requirements by collecting student attendance verification data following the shift to



remote modalities of instruction in both the Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 semesters.

Another adaptation to support students' continued academic progress came with a change to our academic dismissal policy. The university did not pursue academic dismissal for any students not meeting the 2.0 cumulative GPA minimum required for good academic standing following the Spring 2020 semester. Similarly, the university utilized an academic warning status for students who fell below a 2.00 cumulative GPA at the conclusion of the fall semester.

WCU students who were awarded Federal Work Study (FWS) funds for the Spring 2020 semester and who started working prior to the Spring Break period continued to be paid the amount outlined in their respective hiring letters, but they were not required to work following the shift to remote modalities in March 2020. In other words, FWS students were still paid bi-weekly and received the maximum number of hours and most recent pay rate recorded in their contract. This was in accordance with allowable guidance issued by the US Dept of Education on March 5, 2020.

The enrollment challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic also forced some changes to our routine admissions processes. With many high school students unable to sit for college admissions tests, we opted to shift our policy so that SAT and/or ACT scores were an optional, not required, part of the admissions process for students applying for Fall 2020, and subsequently for Fall 2021.

The Academic Success Program (ASP), a conditional admission program for students who do not meet traditional admissions requirements but show potential for success, typically brings its students to campus during the second summer term to complete two courses with a number of supports in place including mentoring, tutoring, and team-building programming. Because our summer term was delivered via remote instruction, the ASP summer program pivoted to remote instruction and ensured the same kinds of supports students rely on in a typical summer were maintained. The ASP team hosted online programming, virtual study groups, and tutoring via Zoom.

Finally, our remote summer session meant that our entire orientation program for new students had to be adapted to an online format, a herculean feat that was accomplished through an incredible collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs.

As the university worked to support students with specific needs, whether they were housing needs, food

needs, technology needs, or other supports, we also worked to assure that our student had access to the full range of student activities they were leaving behind on campus. For example, the Division of Student Affairs launched an ambitious new plan to engage our student leadership and student organizations to keep them engaged with our campus and with one another.

Similarly, we have attempted to engage our student athletes productively during this uncertain time in order to assure that their training and education can continue. The Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference (PSAC) suspended all NCAA competition for the Fall 2020 semester, a huge disappointment to many, but also a relief, as teams across the country experienced outbreaks of COVID-19 related to athletic competition. The Athletics Department continues to monitor the situation and review all available guidelines from state and local officials and update the university community as plans for Spring 2021 and beyond become clearer.

Standard V – Educational Effectiveness Assessment

WCU's Assurance of Student Learning (ASL) process continued through the switch to alternate modes of course delivery due to the pandemic. The ability to sustain the ASL process was due in large part to the design of the process. Each department has an assessment coordinator to oversee the departmental process and support faculty. The assessment information is compiled using an online platform, Nuventive. With the support personnel available and information stored digitally, we were able to continue the ASL process through 2020, with very little disruption.

The ASL process is overseen by the University Assessment Advisory Committee (UAAC). The UAAC was cognizant of the additional pressures on faculty during this time but also deeply aware of the important role our assessment process plays in guaranteeing continuous improvement. They balanced these competing interests by extended deadlines to allow individuals more time to submit assessment documents through Nuventive.

Professional development opportunities for the university community around assessment also continued, but they were moved to online Zoom sessions instead of the traditional brown bag lunch gatherings. The switch to online sessions allowed the presenters to record sessions, which ultimately made them available to a wider audience (V.3.6).

Starting in 2020, the ASL and General Education assessment processes moved under the purview of the

Associate Provost for Accreditation and Assessment. With a new senior leader to help coordinate our accreditation and assessment efforts, we have been able to identify structures and processes that will allow us to address the opportunities for improvement we identified through our self-study process. Working directly with the faculty who are leading our assessment efforts helped us see the big picture more clearly, and that in turn helped us keep the processes moving smoothly through the COVID pandemic while simultaneously allowing new ideas to help improve our practices. For example, combining ASL and General Education assessment professional development opportunities has meant that more faculty have more training, and that they share a similar language for discussing their work.

Standard VI – Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

Perhaps the greatest challenge caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was the loss of revenue to the university that normally comes from housing students in our residence halls and providing them with a full range of dining options. WCU deployed a range of strategies to help support students, some of them meant to offset even bigger financial losses if enrollments declined due to the shift to remote learning. While our students on the whole have done quite well learning from home, it is safe to say that it was not the college experience most wanted when they applied to attend.

As soon as the President announced the shift to remote learning during Spring 2020, he also clearly communicated that students would receive a refund for a portion of their housing, meal plans, student activities fee, recreation center fee, and several others (I.1.C8). Those refunds were processed, and checks were issued, by mid-April, totaling \$10,306,875.

Of course, refunding money is helpful, but the COVID-19 pandemic also forced many families out of the workplace as they struggled with childcare, a retracting economy, and health crises. The WCU Foundation immediately launched an Emergency Fund to help support students in crisis, raising over \$200,000 in just a few weeks as the university pivoted to remote learning to keep the community safe. This immediate need helped to bridge the gap until funding through The Cares Act, signed into law on March 27, 2020, made funds available to public universities. Ultimately, WCU received approximately \$18 million in Cares Act funding, with a requirement that half go directly to students in need. More details about the number of students who applied for and were awarded emergency aid can be found in the COVID-19 Summer

2020 report (I.1.C2), but the table below provides a summary of the CARES ACT funding utilized thus far:

Type of Funding	Amount
Cares Act reimbursement of fees, dining, housing, etc.	\$5,693,620
Cares Act Grants to students	\$5,985,208
Cares Act – ACT 101 Grants to students	\$233,788
Salary and Benefits to Public Safety and others directly related to mitigation efforts	\$1,791,671
Laptops, hotspots, medical and sanitation supplies	\$4,016,227
TOTAL	\$17,720,514

As the advising season for summer and fall classes was underway, WCU reminded students to reach out to their advisors and schedule for the next year, which we all assumed would be in person at that time, and by May of 2020, we had launched a transparency campaign to communicate with high school seniors, assuming that they were likely feeling uncertain about whether they should proceed with their college admissions process. From a planning perspective, we began to prepare for the possibility that we would have an enrollment decline if the virus continued.

The university made another set of strategic decisions in the early summer, still assuming that we would be returning to campus, but acknowledging that we would have some faculty and some students who wanted to continue to work remotely. We invested in HyFlex technology so that 200 classrooms could be used simultaneously for in-person and remote instruction at a cost of \$916,861.

We also mapped out seating in every classroom to assure that students could remain a safe distance apart. We installed hand sanitizing stations in every classroom and across campus, along with directional signage and initiated a mask requirement in all indoor spaces.

Ultimately, this planning was helpful for far fewer courses than anticipated in the fall, since the decision to continue most instruction remotely was made in July, but those courses that did meet in person were able to utilize the HyFlex classrooms, and some faculty members also opted to teach from classrooms on campus even though their students were remote. As we plan to be fully in-person in Fall 2021, the classroom technology will be utilized in other ways, to assure greater access and flexibility for students who need to miss a class, or for faculty who need to teach remotely on occasion.

The concern about Fall 2020 enrollments also led to another innovation, the use of “banked” or “rollover” credits to help assure that students would stay on track for their degrees. Given the tuition structure for the university, which charges a flat tuition rate for full time students whether they take 12, 15, or 18 credits, the Provost realized that many students were struggling to stay in school because the remote learning environment, family financial difficulties, and the stress of the pandemic were taking a toll. Students who took at least 12 credits in the fall were informed that they could “bank” the credits up to 18 if they didn’t take them in the fall and use them in the winter or summer session. For students who were overwhelmed, this meant they could drop down from 18 or 15 credits to 12 without worrying that they would fall behind in their degree progress, and students who were already planning to take 12 credits could “accelerate” their degree progress by utilizing these credits in winter and summer at no additional cost. But there was a cost, of course, to this innovation. The university basically invested in retention and persistence, assuming that the revenue gained by keeping students on track for graduation would offset the financial hit of the free credits. To date, we estimate the cost of this initiative to be \$2,848,868.

The bet paid off, at least in terms of our fall enrollments. While registration behavior was different than in any prior year, the transparency of the institution, our excellent communication, and our student-centered approach to remote learning meant that most students did eventually schedule, and first-year students did choose to join the Golden Ram community. For the fourteenth consecutive year, WCU posted an enrollment gain, with 17,719 students beginning classes at the start of the Fall 2020 semester. While it remains to be seen whether retention and graduation rates will also remain strong, it is clear that the banked credits signaled to students that we are all, indeed, in this together.

The decision that the Fall 2020 semester would be largely remote came right at the beginning of the 2021 fiscal year, when the university would normally begin rolling out operating budgets. Given the financial situation and uncertainty about enrollments, our normal process was modified slightly. Instead of receiving the full allocation, each unit instead received 80% of their operating budget. Initially, we hoped to roll out the remaining 20% later in the year, but with the subsequent decision to remain largely remote for the spring, the 80% allocation will likely meet the needs of most operational units. While the fall enrollment picture was very positive, the number of students living on campus was very low — 552 students, to be exact. This means that our

revenue streams from housing and dining services and other service-related student fees continue to take a hit. Unfortunately, it also means that some valued members of our community of educators were furloughed. While WCU has been able to protect university employees thus far, some employees who work for University Student Housing (USH) and Aramark were furloughed given the shift to remote learning.

Summary of Revenue Changes from Approved E&G Budget (I.1.C9)	
Additional enrollment “melt” anticipated for Spring 2021 term (tuition and fees)	-\$5,088,493
Additional COVID-19 relief credits due to remote instruction in Spring 2021 term (tuition and fees)	-\$9,330,380
Reduction in anticipated Winter/Summer tuition revenue due to success of “rolled-over/free” credits strategy	-\$2,848,868
Waiver of Distance Education Fee for Spring 2021 term (issued in form of relief credits)	-\$1,566,552
Subtotal Change in Tuition & Fees	-\$18,834,293
Interest and investment income	-\$1,201,140
Sales and services (camps, conferences, parking)	-\$2,094,639
Miscellaneous revenue	-\$660,952
Total Change in Revenue	-\$22,791,023

Year one of our strategic plan, *Pathways to Student Success*, continued to move forward through the pandemic. Progress continued as scheduled, but workgroups were asked to assess their initiatives at the end of the year and identify those that needed to be altered or carried over as a result of changes due to the pandemic. The November 2020 progress reporting period was used for this reflection, and progress reports on any altered initiatives will be reported in May 2021.

Administrative and Educational Support Services (AES) assessment units were scheduled to input assessment data into the Nuventive software system in 2020, but the additional demands on administrative units during the pandemic forced this initiative to be put on hold. While the assessment process continued using traditional MS Word templates and SharePoint document repositories, the plan to have both learning assessment and institutional effectiveness assessment in the same software platform will resume in 2021.

Standard VII – Governance, Leadership, and Administration

No modifications to the university's governance structures have thus far been necessary due to the pandemic. The President's Cabinet has continued to meet regularly via Zoom, as have other key leadership groups on campus, and the Council of Trustees also shifted their work to Zoom without difficulty. If anything, these groups have been in more regular contact than usual given the constant state of flux brought on by the pandemic and the need to quickly assess the university's response to a changing landscape.

One of the main modifications to our administrative functions involved negotiating with each of the employee unions to maximize the number of employees who could work remotely. As employees shifted to remote work, of course, technology needs increased, along with the need for training to assure that employees could use that technology. Electronic processes for exchanging documents with signatures were developed, including a secure file transmission site for finance and business services, for example. As we shifted to fully remote instruction, the primary tool utilized by most faculty was Zoom video-conferencing. While this technology was already widely available, the increase in user volume required updates to our software licenses. Ultimately, enhanced security protocols were also developed to protect faculty and students from the phenomenon now widely known as Zoombombing.

Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic brought challenges rarely experienced in higher education, but WCU is confident that we were able to respond to those challenges effectively. The biggest impacts are financial, which is a much better outcome than impacts to student learning and success, though we are aware that we will only be able to truly assess the impact of this pandemic on our student, faculty, and staff when it is fully behind us. We are incredibly fortunate that an institutional priority — financial strength — allowed us to draw on healthy reserves in order to respond quickly with resources when needed. The financial toll will certainly be felt, probably for several years, as our reserves have now been substantially depleted, but we are already engaged in a strategic planning effort to determine budget priorities that will get us back on track.

Lastly, we feel it is important to offer that while the COVID-19 virus has tested us, adding significant labor, expense, and stress to our typically vibrant campus experience, it also showed us places where innovation can be leveraged for future success. We anticipate that our online course offerings will ultimately be considerably strengthened by this experience, because more faculty have training and experience. We also learned a great deal about strategies for delivering effective student, faculty, and staff service via remote means — strategies that may help the institution better manage some of the space and parking limitations we discussed in Standard VI. We end the self-study process both humbled and energized by the commitment this community of educators has demonstrated throughout this truly unprecedented year.



TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS IN COVID RESPONSE

SPRING 2020

3/5/20

President Fiorentino announces Emergency Health Planning, urges community to follow health guidelines

3/6/20

Announcement that all non-essential travel is suspended

3/10/20

Announcement that Spring 2020 classes would move to remote delivery after an extended Spring Break

3/12/20

Continually updated FAQ page goes live and is announced

3/16-3/20

Most students move out of residence halls in phased intervals to protect their safety

3/30/20

Classes resume after extended break to allow faculty and students to prepare themselves for remote teaching and learning

4/2/20

Open Forum to update campus community and address questions

4/3/20

Mandatory Password feature implemented in Zoom to protect classrooms from Zoombombing

SUMMER 2020

5/15/20

President shares plan for fall re-opening; promises decision by July

5/29/20

President announces plans for university response to racial violence

6/11/20

President announces plans for Fall 2020 to be in-person

7/10/20

Announcement that Fall 2020 will continue with remote instruction, some hybrid courses offering in-person instruction, some students living on campus, and free rollover credits for winter/summer (I.1.C7)

FALL 2020

8/27/20

Announcement that Winter Session will be fully remote

9/16/20

Joint memo from Provost and Faculty union with guidelines for successful classroom observations in a remote learning environment

10/7/20

Announcement that Spring 2021 classes would continue as fall, with most classes remote, some hybrid courses, and some students living on campus

12/15/20

Announcement of WeCU plans for March 2021, inviting first year students to campus (I.1.C8)

WINTER 2020-21

12/15/20

Winter session begins, with five times the usual enrollment as students seize the opportunity of free banked credits available from the fall semester

SPRING 2021

1/25/21

Spring 2021 begins, with healthy enrollments despite a surge in COVID case counts and widespread "Zoom fatigue"

3/19/21

WeCU event welcomes 300+ first-year students to campus after a negative COVID test



Introduction

A University Preparing for the Future

West Chester University (WCU) is on the move and moving fast. As one of the top regional comprehensive public universities in the nation, we now serve more than 17,500 students at the undergraduate and graduate levels and have earned a national reputation for excellence, value, and student success.

Our status as a flagship institution is reflected in our strong performance as documented in a recent analysis of six-year graduation rates among public four-year universities by the Chronicle of Higher Education. In a list of over 588 institutions, WCU ranked 64th, placing us ahead of much larger and more well-known institutions both inside and outside of PA, with a six-year graduation rate of 72.6%. As our reputation for excellence has become more widely known throughout the United States, we have attracted a different caliber of faculty and staff who are recognized for their professional contributions and creative and scholarly activity. This level of excellence has positively impacted the experience of students and produced a learning environment that is dynamic, inclusive, and focused on their success.

As we remain steadfast in our commitment to being a regional comprehensive university in the liberal arts tradition that highly values teaching, we are also earning respect for our ability to offer doctoral level education and produce research and creative activity of the highest order. Even as we transform our institution and begin to demonstrate the characteristics of institutions traditionally defined as Doctoral Universities using the Carnegie Basic Classification Methodology, we remain true to our student-centered mission and goals.

Since 2013, WCU has become the largest campus in Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) and the fifth largest institution delivering four-year degrees in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Within PASSHE, WCU is known for its academic excellence across all of its colleges, the diversity of its

student body, and its innovative approaches to higher education administration. Our approach promotes efficiency while relying on shared governance to ensure that every decision is aligned with the institutional mission and strategic priorities. As the institution has grown, added engineering and doctoral programs, expanded its operations in Center City Philadelphia, and reorganized its operations to better support its mission, we have simultaneously worked to assure that student success is at the center of everything we do.

WCU has its origin in West Chester Academy, a private, state-aided preparatory and teacher-training school founded in 1812. The academy became West Chester Normal School in 1871, West Chester State Teachers College in 1927, West Chester State College in 1960, and West Chester University in 1983, when it also became one of 14 public universities in PASSHE. Since the 1960s, WCU has offered a broad range of liberal arts and professional degree programs as a Master's I comprehensive institution. More recently, WCU has begun offering a biomedical engineering program and has added four doctoral programs since our last self-study:

- The Doctor of Education (Ed .D .)
- The Doctor of Nursing Practice (D .N .P .)
- The Doctor of Psychology (Psy .D .)
- The Doctor of Public Administration (D .P .A .)

In response to the 2013 Strategic Plan, Building on Excellence, which called upon the university to “transform itself into a university whose organizational structures are strategically arranged so as to facilitate excellence in teaching and learning,” the university embarked on a significant reorganization. The goal of this reorganization, which began in 2015, was to “to more evenly distribute administrative support, administrative complexity, the production of student credit hours and build on pedagogical and/or disciplinary commonalities.”

Enrollment Counts: Falls 2016-2020

Doctoral Program	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
Doctor of Education, Ed.D.	15	28	25	42	59
Doctor of Nursing Practice, D.N.P.	44	38	28	27	21
Doctorate of Psychology, Psy.D.	4	12	23	30	44
Doctor of Public Administration, D.P.A.	83	98	103	103	107

Currently, the university offers over 135 baccalaureate, master’s, and doctoral degree programs through six academic colleges and one school, as indicated in Table 1 above. In Fall 2020, WCU’s enrollment was 17,719 students (14,711 undergraduate and 3,008 graduate students), which represents a 21.9% increase since Fall 2010 (the enrollment presented in our previous self-study).

As allocations from the state continue to decline, the university has offset those funding losses by implementing a strategic enrollment management plan that has realized steady growth at the undergraduate level (constrained by our campus footprint and room capacity), and more aggressive growth in both online and graduate populations. Our graduate student enrollment, for example, has increased by nearly 38%

over the last five years, including the addition of four new doctoral programs. This growth is also reflective of the university’s mission to serve the needs of the Commonwealth, and we are grateful that our strong reputation continues to support our ability to meet the needs of greater numbers of students. Nevertheless, the growth has challenged us to think more strategically, and to that end we have engaged in a multi-year plan with Ruffalo Noel Levitz to create an enrollment plan that will allow us to maximize our ability to serve the region while maintaining a standard of excellence that supports our institutional priorities of student success, diversity and inclusion, and financial strength.

The plan is working, as evidenced by our continued ability to recruit high-quality students, faculty, and staff. The university’s top feeder high schools are

College/School	Degree-granting Programs		
College of Arts and Humanities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Studies • English • Graphic & Interactive Design • History 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holocaust & Genocide Studies • Languages & Cultures • Media & Culture • Philosophy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious Studies • Studio Art • Theatre & Dance • Women’s & Gender Studies
College of Business and Public Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting • Criminal Justice • Economics • Finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geography & Planning • Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing • Public Policy & Administration
College of Education and Social Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early & Middle Grades Education • Educational Foundations & Policy Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Preparation • Literacy • Secondary Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Work • Special Education
College of Health Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Sciences & Disorders • Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kinesiology • Nursing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutrition • Sports Medicine
College of the Sciences and Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anthropology • Biochemistry • Biology • Biomedical Engineering • Chemistry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer Science • Earth & Space Sciences • Mathematics • Physics • Political Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychology • Pharmaceutical Product Development • Sociology
University College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interdisciplinary Studies 		
The Wells School of Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music – History, Theory and Composition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music Education • Music Therapy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance

within a 50-mile radius of WCU. The entering undergraduate class for Fall 2019 had a mean combined SAT score of 1,119 and a high school grade point average of 3.45. In Fall 2019, WCU employed 993 faculty members (695 full-time and 298 part-time). Temporary faculty represented 24% of our full-time equivalent instructional faculty. Of the full-time faculty, 54% are female and more than 15% are minority. Of the permanent tenure and tenure-track faculty, 95.1% hold terminal degrees (I.1.11).

The faculty, athletic coaches, certain technical and professional employees, and all other staff except for managers and executives are unionized. Collective bargaining for all unions takes place at the state level, with no local control over collective bargaining agreements. The unions represented on campus are as follows:

- American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees: AFSCME
- Association of Pennsylvania College and University Faculty: APSCUF
- Office of Professional Employees International Union Healthcare of Pennsylvania: OPEIU
- Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education Officers Association: POA
- Security, Police, and Fire Professionals of America: SPFPA
- State College and University Professionals Association: SCUPA

Our students are thriving, though we are restlessly seeking every opportunity we can to improve their experience and adapt our institution to their changing needs. Currently, we have the highest retention and graduation rates in PASSHE, and rates that exceed many regional public comprehensive universities on most measures. While we are incredibly proud of our 84.7% second fall retention rate, our 52.3% four-year graduation rate, and our 76.6% six-year graduation rate, we continue to seek out ways to better serve our most at-risk students, including our underrepresented minority and first-generation students. Our self-study will tell the story of many initiatives on this front, along with our work to assess their effectiveness and plan for continuous improvement on this important dimension of student success.

Self-Study Process

The self-study process that has taken place over the past two years has offered a rich opportunity for us to re-examine what we do to plot our course for the future.

After attending the MSCHE Self-Study Institute in 2018, three tri-chairs were selected to oversee a Steering Committee of 24 members, who were identified in early 2019, after an open call to the campus community to invite participation. The structure of three tri-chairs for the Steering Committee was mirrored in each of the seven working groups (one for each of the seven standards), as this structure had already proven to be highly successful during our strategic planning process. While the vast majority of our Steering Committee remained constant, the rapid change that characterizes much of higher education led us to believe that some turn-over would be inevitable, and the continuity of the tri-chair system proved to be an excellent safeguard against the disruption that changes in personnel can cause.

The Steering Committee examined the university's mission and strategic plan carefully, prioritizing the elements of the plan that could be synthesized and mapped to the MSCHE standards of accreditation. While every element of the extensive Pathways to Student Success strategic plan is important, the group acknowledged that our efforts would be more focused if we could emphasize the work that would be most critical during the span of the self-study process, which led us to the three institutional priorities we will describe in the next section.

The tri-chairs for each working group included a faculty member, a member of the Academic Affairs senior leadership team, and another university staff leader. Each of the working groups included 10-12 members, including faculty, staff, and student representatives, along with a member of our Council of Trustees. Full details of the membership for the Steering Committee and working groups can be found in the Self-Study Design (I.1.10). In total, there were more than 70 individuals directly involved in the writing of the self-study, and hundreds more who offered feedback and suggestions along the way over the two-year period. We invited participation at multiple stages of the process, including our Fall 2019 Mission Days, and our Spring 2020 open forums.

Institutional Priorities

WCU identified three institutional priorities that drove our work as we compiled this comprehensive institutional self-study:

- Student Success and Learning
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Financial Strength

Standard	Institutional Priority #1: Student Success & Learning	Institutional Priority #2: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion	Institutional Priority #3: Financial Strength
1. Mission and Goals	Mission statement focused on student success	WCU graduates will engage inclusively in a diverse society	Sustainability goal commits us to using resources effectively and in innovative ways to support an enduring, healthy and safe university
2. Ethics and Integrity	Ethics requirement in GE curriculum; revision of sponsored research and IRB protocols, commitment to transparent communication	Ethics requirement in GE curriculum; hiring processes that ensure social equity; Campus Climate Intervention Team; grievance procedures; free speech efforts; voter registration	Budget review committee; satisfactory academic progress
3. Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience	Revision of GE curriculum to offer curriculum stacking, pathways, first year experience, and e-portfolios; Co-curricular programming and transcripts	Re-vamping of GE curriculum's diversity requirement and development of diversity and social justice pathway through the curriculum	Financial literacy training; enrollment management and class-size analysis to align curriculum delivery with university budget; new doctoral, engineering, and certificate programs
4. Support of the Student Experience	Co-curricular transcripts; Orientation; early alert; Achieve; LARC; Writing Center; WRT curriculum; Registrar outreach initiatives; Provost's research grants; SURJ	Revision to policies that disproportionately impacted URM students; URM taskforce and "at risk" pilot programs; Hiring staff, managers, & faculty from URM groups; Student groups (SAGA, OMA, LASA, etc.)	RNL work to restructure scholarship and discounting practices, out-of-state scholarships, and differential tuition for high cost graduate programs
5. Educational Effectiveness Assessment	Teaching, Learning and Assessment Center; Heat Maps; ASL; specialized accreditations	Achievement Gap analysis and resulting focused initiatives	RNL work with Admissions and Strategic Enrollment Management
6. Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement	SPACC process for prior Strategic Plan; new residence halls; faculty development funds to encourage faculty excellence	Inclusive Strategic Planning, Mission, and curriculum processes; University Forum	Facilities master plan; Director of Sustainability; geothermal heating system; Redeployment of Wayne Hall to meet institutional needs
7. Governance, Leadership and Administration	Emphasis on student success in every executive and faculty search; Strategic Plan puts learning at the center of the institutional effort	Diversity professional development for senior leadership; hiring of CDIO, campus climate survey; Chair's boot camp	Critical needs process; professional development of senior leaders as fundraisers; reboot of fundraising process and priorities

The self-study process allowed members of our university community to reflect critically on the ways that we have aligned our institutional priorities and our strategic plan with the university's mission. The three institutional priorities aligned seamlessly to each of the seven standards. The alignment of these priorities with the university's mission and with the MSCHE Standards of Accreditation are summarized in the table above.

In the pages that follow, we will describe our work in detail to assure that we are meeting all seven of the Standards for Accreditation and fifteen Requirements of Affiliation adopted by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE).

You will also see our work to measure our success and learn from our mistakes so that we can identify opportunities for continuous improvement over time. The Steering Committee and working groups opted to organize the self-study according to the seven MSCHE standards for accreditation, and within each chapter we roughly follow the criteria for each standard while also linking our narrative and evidence to the institutional priorities that were identified as we launched the self-study.



STANDARD I: MISSION AND GOALS

West Chester University's (WCU) self-study journey began with thoughtfully selecting a set of institutional priorities that were integral components of our institutional mission and goals. The priorities, listed below, showcase our drive to educate and develop students to learn and achieve within a diverse environment in which equity and inclusion are paramount and in which the institution's strategic use of resources assures that our mission can be sustained.

This section is presented through the lens of institutional priorities to indicate clearly how the achievement of Standard I criteria supports their fulfillment. We demonstrate that

WCU's mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. Our stated goals reflect these priorities and are clearly linked to the mission, and they drive our efforts toward continuous improvement by specifying the ways that we fulfill our mission and measure our success as we do so. It has taken courage, in fact, to chart an ambitious path forward when the landscape of higher education is proving to be increasingly fraught with decreasing investment in public university systems, rising levels of student debt, and demographic changes that leave some regions of the country oversupplied with colleges. In this context, under the leadership of President Christopher Fiorentino, WCU has continually evolved to meet the needs of our students.

"In the last twenty months as your university President," President Fiorentino offered at his Fall 2019 Welcome Back address, "I've been struck time and time again by the can-do attitude and shared sense of purpose. . . West Chester University has been thriving as an institution. Our enrollment continues to grow; our reputation is stellar, but this is not a time to rest on our laurels. Rather, it's a time to seize control of our destiny with purposeful action. We must continue to do the things that have propelled us to where we are today and put us in this position of promise. We also must be bold and explore novel and innovative approaches to student success." During his address, President Fiorentino celebrated the

work of a variety of Mission Makers on our campus – faculty and staff who "had the courage to get out of their comfort zones and take risks to advance this university and its mission." In the pages that follow, we will offer clear and compelling evidence that our mission is at the heart of everything we do at WCU.

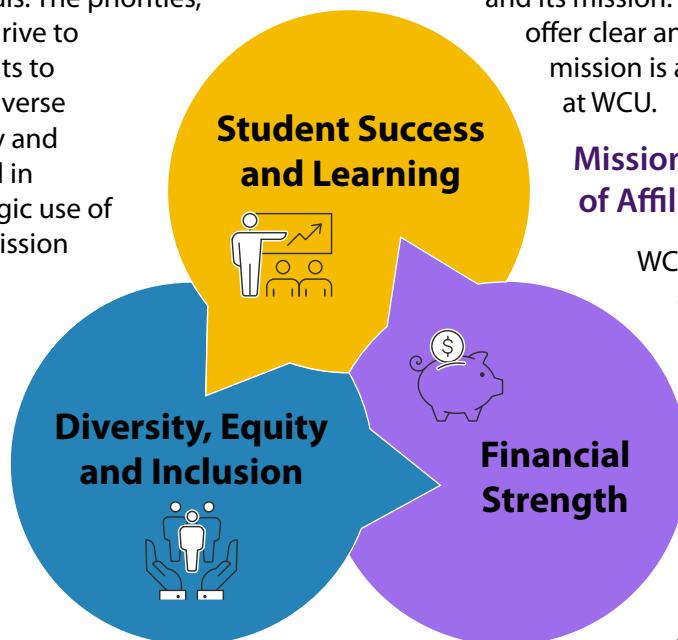
Mission (Criterion 1, Requirements of Affiliation [ROA] 7, 10)

WCU has a clearly defined mission, articulated in our Mission Statement (I.1.1), and it is further defined in the *Pathways to Student Success* (I.1.2) strategic plan. Both of these important drivers of our success were developed through shared governance processes that provided numerous opportunities for both internal and external stakeholders to participate. The resulting documents reflect a shared commitment to holistic student development and fulfillment of the common good.

Current Mission: West Chester University is a community of educators that develops graduates to succeed personally and professionally and contribute to the common good.

Prior to 2017: West Chester University, a member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, is a public, regional, comprehensive institution committed to providing access and offering high-quality undergraduate education, select post-baccalaureate and graduate programs, and a variety of educational and cultural resources for its students, alumni, and citizens of southeastern Pennsylvania.

The institution's prior strategic plan, *Building on Excellence* (I.1.3), was created during the tenure of President Weisenstein. When Christopher Fiorentino began as President, he was eager to create a mission that more clearly expressed the shared values of the community and to build a strategic plan that would assure that the institution was driven to fulfill that mission in its every action. He envisioned a mission statement that would reflect definitively and succinctly the university's purpose as a comprehensive regional university within a state system of higher education.



This work began in Spring 2017 with a request for online feedback on a proposed new mission statement (I.1.4). Campus unions and other shared governance groups were invited to provide preliminary feedback, assuring that internal constituencies had a voice in the process (I.1.5).

With the first phase completed, two open forums were held to enable and encourage the broader campus community to discuss drafted versions; the campus community also had an opportunity to provide online feedback after these forums (I.1.6). This process assured that external constituencies participated in the collaborative process. Taking this feedback into consideration, the President's Cabinet decided upon the final version of the new mission statement, and this was subsequently approved by the university's Council of Trustees (COT) in Fall 2017 (I.1.7). The approval policy employed by the COT will be explained more fully in responding to Standard VII. Upon approval, the new mission statement was announced to the university community and publicized on the university's website (I.1.8). In keeping with the President's original vision, the new mission is a single statement that can be remembered and communicated quite readily. The mission statement's brevity has strength in providing a concise definition of who we are as a university and a firm foundation for who we want to become.

Next, President Fiorentino charged his Cabinet with developing a new strategic plan that would drive WCU to fulfill its mission. As with the prior strategic plan, this process included several open forums during which members of the entire university community were invited to provide input on the key elements in the new plan. As the institutional mission indicates, the primary aim is to prepare students to become lifelong learners who contribute positively to the community. The dedication to continued learning that enhances the common good led the university to develop outcomes that were broad enough to prepare students for success during their careers at WCU and to serve as tools associated with success post-graduation. Thus, the university aims to develop graduates who can do the following:

- Apply scientific reasoning and demonstrate quantitative and qualitative literacy
- Collaborate with others to solve problems and address societal needs
- Communicate effectively and participate in civic discourse
- Engage inclusively in a diverse society

- Understand the ethical implications of decisions and the world in which they live

A robust General Education curriculum assures that these learning outcomes are met, with assessments linked to each of the seven general education goals listed below:

- Communicate effectively
- Think critically and analytically
- Employ quantitative concepts and mathematical methods
- Demonstrate the ability to think across and about disciplinary boundaries
- Respond thoughtfully to diversity
- Understand varied historical, cultural, and philosophical traditions
- Make informed decisions and ethical choices

Additional details about the alignment of these outcomes with the strategic plan will be provided in response to Standard III, but we want to demonstrate here that the three institutional priorities guiding our self-study process are integrally linked to the university's mission and to student learning throughout the curriculum.

Student Success and Learning (Criteria 2, 3)

WCU's mission, goals, and strategic plan serve as the foundation of our prioritizing and supporting student success and learning. Student success is paramount to the university's strategic plan, *Pathways to Student Success*, evident in its name. This ambitious plan provides specific benchmarks and measures to chart its path, and university resources are tied to their fulfillment. For example, Goal L1 (Learning 1) in the Learning priority of the strategic plan calls us to "Create and enhance structured curricular and co-curricular environments for the free exchange of knowledge among students, faculty, and staff". This goal is to be measured by the achievement of two more specific outcomes, each of which is linked to a variety of initiatives.

Other evidence of the importance of student success in the strategic plan includes a focus on learning, diversity and inclusion, community engagement, personal and professional development, and sustainability. For each area of the plan, specific goals, outcomes, and initiatives have been outlined that will focus efforts to ensure that the plan is carried out and thus that the mission is fulfilled.

A Continuum of Comprehensive Support Services

In alignment with its institutional mission and strategic plan goals, the university has developed many resources and integrated them with existing services and programs to support the success of all students. The university is committed to supporting students' success, from their first student experiences at Accepted Student Day and New Student Orientation through commencement and beyond. Moreover, the university supports student success even before students enroll. For example, the university seeks opportunities for its community college partner students to complete their education at the university, creating degree-completion pathways, recognizing students' prior learning, and encouraging their building upon it. Additional examples of how the university intentionally supports the student experience in correlation with its mission are shared below; the overall effort will be outlined in more depth in response to Standard IV.

On Accepted Student Day, accepted students and their guests visit campus and hear from various departments/majors, attend topic-based sessions, and interact with current and other accepted students (I.3.1). To assist in supporting students' success, events such as WCU Bound (I.3.2) and Discover WCU (I.3.3), are geared toward accepted students of color and provide information and on-campus experiences for both students of color and their guests. Once students arrive on campus, a myriad of resources offer continuous support. Students can find all of these resources in the Ram's Guide for Student Success (I.3.4), as well as through presentations in their First Year Experience classes (I.3.5). Moreover, Student Success Coordinators were hired in 2019 and remain available in each college to assist students in navigating campus resources and making well-informed decisions about their WCU education (I.3.6).

Within the revised General Education curriculum, a First Year Experience (FYE) course was created, in part, to foster the mission of the university. Through this experience, students receive an introduction to the liberal arts tradition and build important skills for thriving academically and socially. During this class, students begin their e-portfolio and continue to add documents to record their growth and development throughout their undergraduate education.

The Academic Success Program (ASP) is a leading example of the university's commitment to providing students access to an affordable, quality education (I.3.7). The ASP is a special admissions program for students who do not meet the university's current admissions criteria but show the potential to succeed in college.

ASP students attend a five-week summer session to help develop their reading, writing, and mathematics skills. Once they have successfully completed this program and are enrolled in the fall semester, ASP students receive additional advising, tutoring, mentoring, and counseling support to facilitate their continued success.

Other important efforts to foster and support student success are the WCU Promise Program and West Chester's First Initiative. The WCU Promise Program is a campus support program serving unaccompanied homeless and foster youth (I.3.8). Program students receive access to year-round, on-campus housing (including during academic breaks); food and supplies from the institution's Resource Pantry; priority for on-campus employment; access to scholarship funds; and monthly dinners that offer mentorship and a safe space to share successes and challenges. Established in 2018, the West Chester's First Initiative was designed to provide support and information for our first-generation college students and their families (I.3.9). Approximately 42% of our students identify as first-generation, of which slightly more than 50% are from historically underrepresented populations.

Additionally, the university offers a personalized academic advising model in which students meet at least twice a year with an advisor, typically in their content area, to receive guidance on making sound academic decisions, graduating in a timely manner, and exploring their academic goals and future paths. The Committee on Advising Excellence (CAE) offers continuous professional development for faculty advisors to refine their advising practices. In addition to their work to provide training for faculty advisors, CAE offers extensive resources through their Academic Advising website, which includes resources for students, faculty and staff to support our advising efforts, including information about advising awards (I.3.10).

Furthermore, the university's internships and practicum experiences support students as they transition to full-time, post-graduation employment. For instance, 94% of the university's Accounting students who participated in an internship or experiential learning are employed full-time within six months of leaving the university (I.3.11). In addition, the Twardowski Career Development Center offers coaching, counseling, and professional development, and facilitates job opportunities for students and alumni (I.3.12). Similarly, the Office of Alumni Relations offers lectures, networking opportunities, and social events for alumni to remain connected to the university and expand their experience at WCU beyond graduation (I.3.13).

In Fall 2019, to recognize and highlight the successes of individual university students who embody the institutional mission, President Fiorentino's Success Starts Here initiative shares news of the university's cultivation of leaders, thinkers, and doers (I.2.1). Together, university faculty and staff work diligently to advance its shared mission of student success, with such examples as a non-traditional student who excels in coursework while juggling work and parenthood, or a busy student-athlete who becomes an expert in time management. The President continues to feature student success stories each month during the academic year and welcomes story recommendations from the university community.

Teaching and Learning Toward Student Success

As a community of educators, the university continuously seeks ways to enhance employees' personal and professional development. In his 2019 Presidential Address, President Fiorentino initiated the WCU Mission Makers award, identifying campus community members who contribute to campus in ways emblematic of the institutional mission (1.2.2). For that first year, the leadership team for the First Year Experience were selected as Mission Makers for being an integral part of student success.

One way in which the university develops future Mission Makers is through a Committee for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), which fosters collaborations among faculty and students to build a scholarly community around issues of learning and teaching (I.3.14). The university strongly values teaching, and the CELT provides opportunities to improve teaching in ways that directly impact students. Through workshops, brown bag lunches, and funding awards, CELT supports faculty members in meeting their mission of promoting student success.

Another aspect of the university's support for teaching and learning is its strong commitment to student-faculty partnerships in research, service, and other aspects of campus life. For instance, the Office of Sponsored Research and Creative Activities (OSRP) Student Undergraduate Research Institute (SURI) initiative funds undergraduate student-led, faculty-supported research initiatives in an engaging summer format that interweaves professional development throughout the process (I.3.15). At the graduate level, there are myriad opportunities for student-led research as well as mentoring and funding opportunities for students to attend conferences and present their work regionally, nationally, and internationally (I.3.16).

Finally, key to student success is the university's recent creation of a Student Success and Retention Council in 2019 (I.3.17). In its first year, the Council launched a "Think 30" campaign to increase awareness of the economic benefits of completing an undergraduate degree in four years by taking 30 credits each year (I.3.18). Additionally, the Council developed an Exit Survey to better understand the reasons for students' ending their WCU enrollment (I.3.19).

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (Criteria 2, 3)

Diversity and inclusion were selected priority areas in the previous *Building on Excellence* and current *Pathways to Student Success* strategic plans, and both plans have led to significant improvements, making clear that prioritizing this work is essential to generate change (I.2.3). The events throughout 2020 have further emphasized the need for WCU to focus strategic resources on diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. After the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Freddie Gray, and countless others, the President's Cabinet responded. Shortly following the death of George Floyd, a taskforce was established with the explicit charge of reviewing and recommending revisions to the university's "Diverse Communities Requirement," which is a critical part of the General Education program (I.2.8). After this, in September 2020, WCU received the 2020 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award from INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine, the oldest and largest diversity-focused publication in higher education. This national honor recognizes U.S. colleges and universities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion (I.2.22).



Other efforts around supporting the student population through the Black Lives Matters movement will be discussed in Standard IV. There are a number of initiatives that WCU has developed over the years to help address

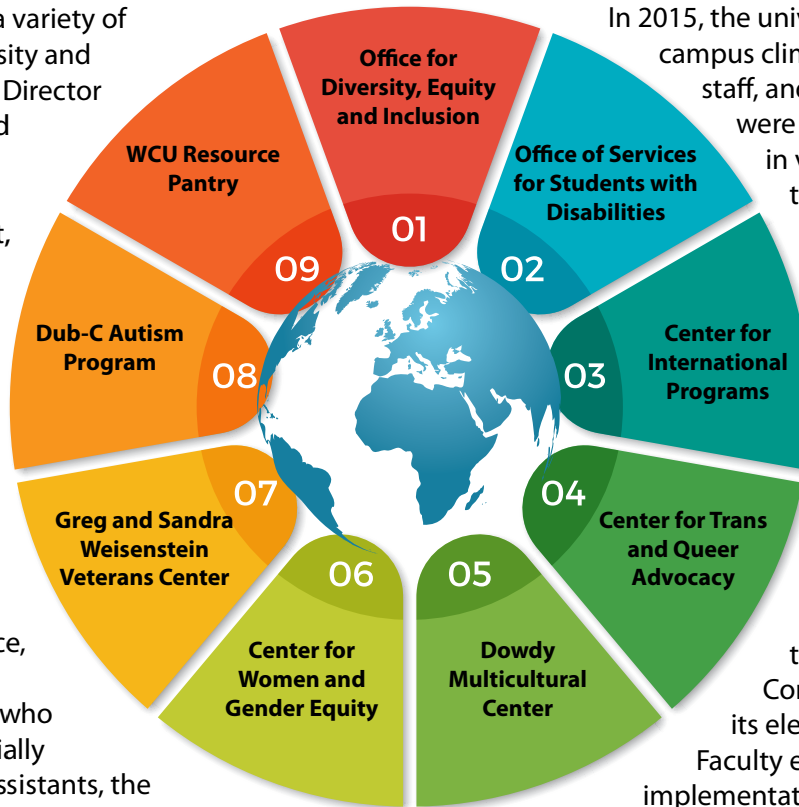
and support diversity, equity, and inclusion across campus; several resources are highlighted in this section and the following chapters.

The university maintains a variety of resources related to diversity and inclusion. In addition, the Director of Student Leadership and Involvement serves as a liaison for student groups for interfaith engagement, and the Student Union provides an interfaith prayer and meditation space (I.3.20).

In December 2010, the university unveiled The Greg and Sandra Weisenstein Veterans Center, designed to create a culture of understanding, acceptance, and success for veterans, active military, and those who support them (I.3.21). Initially staffed by five graduate assistants, the Center hired its first full-time coordinator in 2014. This allowed the Center to provide services for priority registration, financial aid, and scholarships. In addition, university alumna Eileen Glenn donated \$1 million to endow a part-time licensed, professional counselor dedicated to supporting the university's more than 300 veteran students. In 2019, the university created the Military Veterans Coordinating Committee to promote best practices across the university and ensure consistent and sustained support for veterans. The university has been named a College Consensus Top College for Veterans, a Military Advanced Education and Training Top Colleges and Universities, and a Military Friend School since 2014. The university recently advanced from a '19-20 Bronze Military Friendly School to a '20-21 Silver Military Friendly School.

In 2016, the Dowdy Multicultural Center was named in honor of WCU alumnus and long-time administrator, Lawrence Dowdy (I.3.22). A \$325,000 endowment was created in his name to promote a legacy of diversity, inclusion, and civility among the WCU student body. The WCU Resource Pantry, launched in 2016, supports student success by minimizing food and basic need insecurity and preparing students for life after graduation (I.3.23). The Pantry is a partner agency of the Chester County Food Bank. The Dub-C Autism Program

continues to grow and expand as it provides support to degree-seeking WCU students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (I.3.24).



In 2015, the university conducted a campus climate survey of the faculty, staff, and students (I.2.4). Results were presented and discussed in various forums, including the President's Commission on the Status of Women and the Council for Diversity, Inclusion, and Academic Excellence. The university's Innovations in Diversity and Inclusion Grants program provides faculty and staff the opportunity to lead and institutionalize new initiatives, such as the Latino Communities Conference, which celebrated its eleventh year in 2019 (I.2.5). Faculty engagement through implementation of the Equity Score Card initiative advanced student success of marginalized university communities, including underrepresented minority, first-generation college, and low-income students (I.2.6). Additionally, online and face-to-face ADA training over the last five years has advanced compliance and accommodations for the university's growing population of students with disabilities (I.2.7).

The university conducted a national search and hired a Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer in 2018 to further advance strategic efforts and implement best practices (I.2.9). The Chief Diversity and Inclusion Office (CDIO) position is one of seven positions on the President's Cabinet. university-wide committees, such as the university ADA Committee, the Council for Diversity, Inclusion and Academic Excellence, and the Military Veterans Coordinating Committee, are convened under the leadership of the CDIO. Employee affinity groups, such as the President's Commission on the Status of Women, the Multicultural Faculty Commission, and the Frederick Douglass Society, receive funds; the CDIO serves as the liaison for these groups. The CDIO also works in partnership with the Campus Climate Intervention Team (CCIT). The CCIT was established in Fall 1991 to foster an institution-wide climate free from acts of intolerance and to establish a protocol for responding

to and monitoring acts of intolerance (I.2.10). The office invited undergraduate students to participate in a national campus racial climate survey in Spring 2019; results were disseminated to the students, faculty, and staff through two campus open forums and dialogues (I.2.11).

Faculty diversity continues to be a national imperative in higher education. The university's Affirmative Action plans detail areas of underrepresentation to address annually (I.2.13). WCU's pipeline program, the Fredrick Douglass Teaching Scholars Program, offers summer, semester, and year-long teaching opportunities to graduate students entering the final year of a terminal degree or recent graduates (I.2.14). The fellowship provides developmental opportunities in addition to an instructional teaching position. This program began at WCU and later became a collaborative effort across the 14 PASSHE campuses.

Financial Strength (Criteria 2, 3)

The university has many systems in place that have served it well in maintaining financial stability through its planning, enrollment, and PASSHE System changes. It currently leads PASSHE in both enrollment and financial sustainability (I.2.15). The university works diligently with its COT to remain an affordable option for Pennsylvanians while working to stay competitive and maintain a growing reputation and appeal. Our success in maintaining a strong financial position has allowed the university to provide financial and human resource support from 2017-2019 to Cheyney University, a neighboring PASSHE institution (I.2.16). Additionally, the university has invested heavily in PASSHE Center City to provide greater educational access in the City of Philadelphia (I.2.17). The WCU Foundation, as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, continues to provide, strengthen, and diversify funding opportunities that drive student success at WCU (I.2.18). University Student Housing, LLC is a subsidiary of the Foundation that further supports the university and is governed by a Board of Managers (I.2.19).

Furthermore, the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) promotes and facilitates the research environment of WCU, assisting faculty and students who are interested in research on campus. Investments, such as the Provost's Research Grants, seed and sustain research and creative activity, while faculty development opportunities align external funding opportunities with student success. The distribution of awards from external funding sources has grown over the last three years, leading the university to anticipate R2 status (I.2.20).

The university's financial strength enabled it to not only to create key programs to support diverse student cohorts as outlined above, but also to plan for sustaining them. In September 2019, WCU opened the Ram Shop, an on-campus convenience store, to provide workplace training for students with autism in the growing Dub-C Autism Program. WCU is the first university in the country to offer such a space for students to practice and master social and professional skills working to address the national statistic that 85% of college graduates with autism are unemployed (I.3.25). Additionally, the Golden Rams Initiative Scholarship, through the Center for International Programs serves students of color, students with low-income, and Pell-Grant eligible students in studying abroad (I.3.26). Moreover, consistent with the institutional priority of sustainability, the university heats and cools almost half of its buildings with geothermal energy; the remaining buildings use high-efficiency natural gas boilers, resulting in greater energy efficiency and significant savings to the university (I.2.21).

The university has consistently made considerable financial investments and decisions focused on student success and continues to do so. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the university refunded a portion of students' housing, meals, and other related expenses, and enhanced its technology loaner program to assist students in having the equipment, technology, and support essential to help them succeed through remote learning (I.3.27). In partnership with the WCU Foundation, the university established the Student Emergency Aid Fund to help students impacted directly by the COVID-19 pandemic (I.3.28). To date, nearly \$300,000 has been raised to support WCU students who may be experiencing technology gaps that were previously filled through existing on-campus resources, unanticipated expenses due to reduced work hours, financial aid and tuition payment difficulties, and the new challenge of completing coursework remotely.

Excellence in Action – Assessing the WCU Mission and Goals (Criterion 4)

The President's Cabinet members and Strategic Plan Priority Team leaders conduct periodic reviews and assessments of mission and institutional goal fulfillment as part of Strategic Plan review and assessment. Strategic Plan Priority Teams continually review and assess institutional goal achievement and report to the university community twice a year; the assessment of the institutional priorities will be discussed further in Standard V. The purpose of the President's Corporate Advisory Board (PCAB) is to provide strategic advice to the President and other key university stakeholders to

ensure that the university's students are prepared to meet real-world employer needs through the sharing of current practices from the field, providing curriculum guidance, offering cooperative and internship opportunities, and employer partnerships. The PCAB members support fulfillment of the institutional mission and strategic plan goals, focusing meeting discussion on a specific topic, such as community engagement, a strategic plan priority area (I.4.1).

To engage the university in continuous improvement, a university "Mission Day" was hosted in Fall 2019 by the Provost's Office and Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Steering Committee (I.4.2). During this event, the faculty, staff, and students were invited to provide feedback and engage in thoughtful inquiry regarding the seven MSCHE Standards. Seven tables were placed around the room, and individuals were invited to visit the tables to learn more about each standard. The university's MSCHE Steering Committee members took the opportunity to ask participants questions pertaining to their lines of inquiry. When asked to share opinions on WCU's achievement of the mission, some participants discussed the phrase "community of educators," a key phrase in the institutional mission. Administrative leaders shared that this phrase came up frequently during the process of developing the new mission statement and resonated with constituent groups as they responded to drafts. This phrase signifies and promotes a sense of ownership of the educational enterprise as a whole; everyone is a stakeholder for providing the best education possible for the university's students.

In addition, external organizations have commended WCU's achievement of goals. The university created an institution-wide task force to conduct a self-study in application to obtain Community Engagement re-classification by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (I.4.3). After review, the university received the 2020 Carnegie Community Engagement Classification for its notable service and leadership through community engagement; this designation extends to 2026.

Conclusion

The university's commitment to its institutional mission and goals is clear, shared, and steadfast. The mission permeates its goals, strategic plan, and associated divisional and unit documents, but moreover, it informs, inspires, and ignites the university's leadership, faculty, staff, and students and genuinely engages our community of educators. The institutional priorities that we selected for this self-study were driven by the mission, and they continue to be met in ways that are consistent with this mission. Through this self-study process, areas of strength became clear, and opportunities for improvement and innovation will just as clearly be embraced to further motivate thoughtful decision making, action, and leadership.

Strengths

- The university's Mission is represented in strong, succinct language; however, more importantly, it is lived by our community of educators through continuous support of students.
- WCU's commitment to diversity is clearly articulated and increasingly recognized, as evidenced by our recent 2020 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award.

Opportunities for Improvement

- WCU should continue to enhance awareness and visibility of the mission statement in order to create greater intentionality with regard to our community's use of the mission language. This can be achieved through facility signage and planning, website prominence and consistency, inclusion within course syllabi, and in official university communications.



STANDARD II: ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

Introduction

What is the right thing to do, and what is the right way to do it? Do we resume in-person instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic? For everyone? For some? Like many institutions of higher education, WCU faces ethical choices nearly every day, and we are extremely proud of the ways our institution relies on its institutional mission and shared governance in making those difficult decisions, day in and day out. When we do so, we have our best opportunity to serve the diverse constituents of the region and to honor our commitments to employees, students, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Both in terms of communication and policies, WCU strives to promote a diverse and inclusive academic community. Ethics and integrity are critical to the institution because they help us ensure academic freedom and freedom of speech, assuring that we adhere to all applicable laws. Our ethical standards help us create a supportive and inclusive climate, establish effective grievance and complaint procedures, and utilize fair and inclusive employment practices. They also help us remain honest in our communication, and they drive us to create access for those with limited financial means. In short, they help us do the right thing, and call us to regularly assess our efforts to assure that that we are doing what we say we are doing.

Ensuring Freedom (Criterion 1)

The hallmark of higher education in a democracy is academic freedom and freedom of expression. WCU brings together a unique and diverse community of individuals to engage in thoughtful and creative inquiry while upholding the freedom of individuals to grow intellectually and build on that growth through innovation and expression.

Academic freedom for faculty is protected by the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties (APSCUF) faculty collective bargaining agreement (CBA) Article 2 (II.1.01). These specific freedoms allow faculty to engage in research, classroom instruction, textbook selection, and to speak professionally as a community citizen without censorship or discipline, showing respect for the opinions of others. As part of the CBA, this gives faculty access to grievance procedures if their rights are violated (see Criterion 3 below). All faculty are protected by this document including tenured/track and adjunct faculty, full-time and part-time.

All members of the community—faculty, staff, and students—have freedom to explore intellectual pursuits in a broad range of disciplines, including programs of study that call us to investigate our own standards of ethics and integrity (II.1.02).

In addition to curricular opportunities, community members can engage their intellectual curiosity in many co-curricular programs that raise critical issues for our time that may not yet be integrated into the regular curriculum. WCU has been host to a variety of speakers, some of whom challenge us to think in different ways including leaders in the Black Lives Matter movement and presidential candidate Donald Trump (II.1.04, II.1.05, II.1.06). Involvement and leadership in student-run publications and political organizations also creates nearly 300 co-curricular opportunities for growth and expression for WCU students (II.1.07), as do certifications outside the major, such as the Mental Health First Aid certification.

University policies regarding academic and intellectual freedom as well as freedom of expression for students can be found at the Ram's Eye View Student Handbook Section on Academic Integrity (II.1.12) and in the WCU undergraduate (II.1.13) and graduate catalogs (II.1.14). These policies are supported through guidance from the PASSHE Office of Chief Legal Counsel entitled "Freedom of Expression, the First Amendment, and the Public University" (II.1.15) and by the WCU Threat Assessment Policy (II.1.16) which guides proactive measures that may increase campus safety while allowing for freedom of expression.

Intellectual property rights are safeguarded through the ORSP. The office guides faculty, staff, and students interested in obtaining patents, copyrights, or declaring trade secrets through the technology disclosure process. ORSP also provides a limited amount of funding to support the identification of an invention's viability to be protected through these means and ensures that the university adheres to the State-Owned University Property Act (II.1.17), the Commonwealth Higher Education Modernization Act (II.1.03), as well as the APSCUF CBA, Article 39 (II.1.18), guidance for protecting inventor's rights. Moreover, WCU research compliance policies (II.1.19) rely on a combination of ORSP oversight and faculty input to monitor the development of intellectual property. Our Institutional Review Board (II.1.20) and the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (II.1.21) are responsible for reviewing and approving research protocols involving human and

animal subjects while financial conflicts of interest are mitigated with input from an ad hoc committee of faculty experts (II.1.22).

WCU demonstrates its commitment to academic freedom and other freedoms of expression through policies and programming that encourage respectful dissent and productive discussion for mutual education.

A Climate that Fosters Respect (Criterion 2)

WCU strives to build and maintain a climate that allows diverse individuals to thrive in scholarly community. To do this we intentionally seek to attract diverse talent to join our community, we foster respectful engagement with diverse subjects, and monitor a variety of indicators to ensure that success is widespread.

Promoting an equitable campus climate is not new to our institution; indeed our mentoring program for students of color has been recognized for decades, and we have one of the oldest Women's and Gender Studies programs in the nation—a program that gained departmental status since the last MSCHE review. Still, we continue to feature diversity and inclusion as goals in the current university strategic plan, *Pathways to Student Success*.

To ensure a diverse student population, WCU regularly engages in recruiting efforts among traditionally underrepresented groups. In 2011 a 12-person team convened to use the University of Southern California's Equity Scorecard as a way of identifying barriers to equity in the institution. Things like the time of day a class is held, the cost of the application fee, support mechanisms in place for second-year students, and methods of recruiting new students were examined and scored to look at their educational impact. As a result of this multi-year effort, new venues for recruitment were added, additional staff were hired in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions to support multicultural recruitment, support systems beyond the first year were created, and more. The previous strategic plan set targets for student and staff recruitment of underrepresented groups and this work continues today with the new strategic plan. As a result, the percentage of minority faculty has increased from 12% in 2011-12 to 14% in 2019-20. The percentage of minority undergraduate students has increased from 17% in 2011-12 to 26% in 2019-20. Further, WCU has increased applications and acceptance rates for minority undergraduates (first-time, first-year students) significantly (II.2.1).

WCU has worked to create a supportive campus environment for our diverse community. The campus

supports 34 multicultural student organizations, coordinated by the Multicultural Organization Advisory Board. The Dowdy Multicultural Center provides space on campus where students, particularly students of color, can feel comfortable and a variety of programs support students with mentoring, academic support, leadership development and other resources. The Center for Women and Gender Equity offers resources for women and men addressing eating disorders, pregnancy, parenting, sexual health and related issues. The Center for Trans and Queer Advocacy provides space and resources for LGBTQA members of our community. The Weisenstein Veterans Center provides space and considerable programming for veterans at the institution.

As discussed in Standard I, the Office for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (ODEI) was formed to provide leadership and coordination of initiatives. ODEI facilitates training for faculty, students and staff in practicing cross-cultural communication and conflict resolution, Green Dot bystander intervention, inclusive leadership (understanding identities, valuing diversity and inclusion, and understanding micro-aggressions); internal funding in the form of the Innovations in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Grants; and sexual misconduct and prevention. When acts of intolerance occur on campus, an immediate and appropriate response to ensure accountability ensues, including reporting to ODEI.

ODEI houses the office of WCU's Title IX Coordinator who is responsible for ensuring compliance. The Title IX Coordinator is responsible to provide sexual misconduct education, training and awareness to all members of the campus community, and to monitor and respond to any reported incidents of sexual misconduct. Additionally, the Title IX Coordinator is responsible for communicating the Sexual Misconduct Policy (II.2.02) to the university community.

This programming and support is complemented by the work of the office's Campus Climate Intervention Team (a group of faculty, managers and Public Safety staff who foster an institution-wide climate free from acts of intolerance), the Multicultural Faculty Commission (established to bring the concerns of faculty of color to the administration), and the Council for Diversity, Inclusion, and Academic Excellence (charged to inventory diversity efforts, programs, and initiatives and recommend ways to fill gaps in education). Initiatives in Student Affairs and the academic colleges complement these efforts also.

Numerous academic initiatives promote diversity of thought in the curriculum. Examples include a

General Education requirement that confer the “Diverse Communities” designation for courses that promote the ability to communicate, think, and respond thoughtfully to issues of diversity. Majors and concentrations are available including Holocaust Studies, Women and Gender Studies, and Contemplative Studies.

Study abroad is an important mechanism for WCU students to partake in a tradition, culture, and language that is not their own. The past decade has seen an increase in the institution’s commitment and support for growth in international student exchange. With the creation of leadership positions for international studies and signing of legal agreements with different international institutions, WCU has seen continued growth in this area. In 2018-19 more than 470 students participated in international learning experiences, including 40 recipients of the Golden Rams Initiative, which funds international experiences for students from underrepresented groups. In addition, WCU was a temporary home to 130 international students from 47+ countries. The Center for International Programs provides space and resources for our international students as well as support for students exploring study abroad opportunities.

It is not enough to recruit and support programming for a diverse community; outcome assessment must ensure that success is equitably distributed within the community. WCU collects data from a variety of sources to assess whether our diversity programming is having the desired effect. Persistence and graduation rates are regularly analyzed to see if we are having an impact on at-risk populations. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is another source of information about our students. Recently, the NSSE (II.2.03) helped us to identify that only 4% of graduating seniors had research opportunities as part of their degree, and students of color were even less represented in this group. In response to this, several initiatives have begun to encourage faculty to involve students in their research over the summer, and to incorporate more research within the existing course curriculum.

The Multicultural Faculty Commission provides mentoring for diverse faculty and has often initiated research to identify ways to better support multicultural faculty on campus. To ensure continued progress and monitoring, tenure and promotion statistics have been analyzed periodically to consider whether the institution is accessible to multicultural faculty, and new initiatives have tried to address inequity in different ways at different times.

The annual Affirmative Action workforce analysis revealed that of the 983 faculty members at WCU, only 16% identify as non-White. Additionally, the related availability analysis of the general workforce among African Americans, Hispanic students and persons of two or more race groups indicated that the university has fewer faculty, proportionally, from these groups by 5%, 3.5%, and 0.2%, respectively. This led the university to set an employment goal to address inequities of these groups in faculty employment.

Building a positive, respectful climate for diversity and inclusion is a value and a goal for our institution. It is an area we have excelled in, but also one we continually revisit to build even stronger. We do this through recruiting diverse individuals to engage in our community, by supporting them while they are here, and continually assessing their progress to ensure that programs are working.

Fair and Impartial Grievance Policies (Criterion 3)

In a large and diverse institution like WCU, perceptions of unfairness and complaints should be expected. Because of the union environment, the term “grievance” has a limited meaning for represented employees to cover violations of the collective bargaining agreement. Nonetheless, policies exist to address a broad variety of complaints that allow perceptions to be tested against fact-finding and provide a forum for diverse voices to be heard. Below the formal grievance process is reviewed, followed by alternative complaint procedures that may be used at the institution.

Often, a first measure taken to address a problem is a meeting between management and union leadership known as “Meet and Discuss.” All CBA units engage in regular Meet and Discuss to review new policies, implementation, and raise concerns about fairness to their constituents (II.3.01). Some problems can be resolved here without using the formal grievance process.

Within each CBA (II.3.02) a formal grievance process is outlined that is accessible on the Human Resources website. In general, these policies stipulate a process in which the complaint escalates from the lowest-level manager with the authority to remedy the problem all the way to arbitration, unless either (1) the parties reach a negotiated settlement or (2) the union decides not to pursue the grievance further. The protocols specify timelines both sides must meet, as well as both union and management rights and responsibilities at each step of the process. Grievance procedures are used

when there is a perception that policies are improperly implemented by management. Each union has identified grievance officers to assist a grievant in filing a complaint as well as assigning representation, etc. to assist members in using the process.

The student grade appeal process is similar to grievances because it escalates from the lowest-level person with authority to remedy the problem (the instructor), through the department chair, the dean, and finally to a grade appeal board made up of students, faculty, and administrators. There are slight differences between undergraduate (II.3.03) and graduate grade appeal procedures (II.3.04), but mostly they are the same. Timelines are specified and both students and faculty are permitted advisors.

For complaints that are not covered by the CBAs, similar complaint procedures are managed by the Human Resources Department (complaints against employees, II.3.05), by the ODEI (for sexual misconduct, II.2.02), and the Student Code of Conduct Office/Judicial Affairs Office (complaints against students, II.3.07 see pp. 30). The general procedure for receipt of a complaint is an investigation, which leads to a fact-finding report. That report is considered by the appropriate judge, who determines whether the finding rises to the level of a policy violation; if so, there's a process for issuing discipline that allows the person to address accusations and evidence against them. The entire process ensures the parties' rights to confidentiality.

The general procedure described above is slightly different for students, where hearings are used to establish evidence instead of a fact-finding report. Complaints against a manager are governed by the PASSHE Board of Governors policy 1983-01-A Merit Principles (II.3.08), which does not mandate the investigation of complaints but does stipulate a similar procedure giving the accused an opportunity to respond with a timeline for all actions.

One example that illustrates our community approach to resolving inequity is the recent establishment of the Faculty Ombudsperson (II.3.09, II.3.10). Over the past five years, WCU has engaged in discussion about how to support faculty who feel that they are being treated unfairly in ways that do not explicitly violate the CBA. This was often a result of faculty-on-faculty conflict that the traditional labor-management processes do not effectively address. At various times the institution has experimented with bringing in outside mediators, with training employees to be informal mediators, and most recently by creating an ombudsperson office. To complement this work, a Student Ombuds Office was

established in July of 2019 and an associate student ombudsperson was appointed later that year. We continue to experiment and assess our policies and procedures to ensure that members of our community have a chance to be heard and to examine the fairness of our procedures.

Of course, not all unfair practices can be addressed using grievance or complaint procedures because the practice itself considered unfair. For example, failure of the employer to recognize same-sex partners for the purpose of employment benefits or inequitable provision for female employees following the birth of a child are two issues that have been negotiated into some of the collective bargaining agreements over the past decade. Although these occur at a systemwide level, some of the advocacy, research, and actions have been taken by employees at WCU to move these issues into the spotlight. A second example is a negotiated agreement between WCU APSCUF and WCU management to address a classification of employees known as "regular part-time faculty." Because of a loophole in the contract, a small group of faculty members had been retained long-term without access to tenure or promotion. This agreement allowed them some choice to join the tenure track or be given fulltime employment.

Resolution of complaints and issues of unfairness in employment are not easily determined, and often take years to come to fruition. However, WCU has a track record of raising concerns and looking for ways to address them in a collegial environment.

Avoidance of Conflict of Interest (Criterion 4)

Our university actively works to avoid conflicts of interest (COI) or the appearance of such conflict in all activities and among all constituents. Within the institution, COI may occur in financial dealings as well as in evaluation. COI is addressed by policies at four levels: compliance with Pennsylvania law, the provisions of various CBAs, PASSHE Board of Governors (BOG) policies, and university policy.

First, state laws are designed to prevent financial COI. As a public university in the Commonwealth of PA, WCU is subject to the following state statutes: The Pennsylvania Public Official and Employee Ethics Act (II.4.01), the Governor's Executive Order on Gift Ban (II.4.02), the Governor's Executive Order on Code of Conduct (II.4.03), and the State Procurement Code (II.4.04). Guidance is further provided in the following PASSHE BOG policies: Policy 2012-01-A Conflict of Interest and Policy (II.4.05), 1998-04-A Procurement of Goods, Services, Supplies,

and Construction (II.4.06, also see separate document detailing compliance with applicable laws, Criterion 8).

All faculty and staff members who manage university accounts are required to disclose financial COI through the Office of Human Resources. Those faculty members who apply for external funding for research must file financial COI disclosures to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, before the proposal is submitted. The WCU Policy for Financial COI in Research (II.1.22) describes cases for which faculty would have to claim a significant, research-related COI and provides a pathway for mitigating or resolving it.

For faculty, safeguards to prevent financial COI for intellectual property are integrated into the APSCUF Faculty CBA, Article 43 (II.4.07). A variety of other CBA articles address evaluation COI to prevent "immediate family members" from serving on committees involved in hiring (Article 11.A.1, 11.G.4), evaluation (Article 12.C.1.a, 12.C.1.c.(2)) (II.4.08), tenure (Article 15.E.1), and promotion (Article 16.B.5) (II.4.09). Beyond restricting family members from participating in evaluation, faculty members who are in the same evaluation process are also restricted from evaluating one another, as are untenured faculty restricted from evaluating tenured faculty. To clarify the rules surrounding evaluation committee membership, the WCU COI policy for faculty evaluation was created jointly with the local faculty union (II.4.10).

Students are also protected by the faculty CBA, because grading is exclusively the responsibility of faculty (II.4.11) so students cannot evaluate other students. Moreover, the WCU student evaluation policy stipulates that student evaluations of faculty cannot be released until after grades are submitted (with only limited release of data when five or fewer students are in a class).

Fair and Impartial HR Practices (Criterion 5)

WCU is a union environment and most employees are covered by one of six collective bargaining agreements on campus. In many cases, parallel policies for managers (non-represented) exist on the Human Resources website. Although graduate assistants and work-study students are not considered employees, they also have policies governing the work they perform on campus. At WCU we strive to support fair and impartial employment practices through access to the policies, training for consistent implementation, and recourse to grievance/complaint procedures.

Access to policies is mainly online, but in a few places a parallel paper document is also accessible, such as

the printed copies of the APSCUF faculty contract sent to each faculty member and relevant manager. Employment-related policies for hiring, evaluation, promotion, and separation of employment are accessible through the union CBAs, Human Resources, and other relevant websites. All employment policies for faculty and staff that are not covered by the CBAs and information about student employment are described in the university Human Resources website. This includes information about background checks (II.5.02), contracting out bargaining unit work (II.5.03), employment of citizens of foreign countries (II.5.04), manager classifications (II.5.05), student work study (II.5.06), veteran's preference (II.5.07), and use of student workers (II.5.08), among others (II.5.08B). Hiring materials for graduate assistants are available through the Graduate Assistantship website (II.5.09), and work-study recipients can find policies relevant to them on the Financial Aid website (II.5.10).

Detailed criteria and processes for evaluation and promotion of faculty are described in the WCU Tenure (II.5.11) and Promotion (II.5.12) policies. Decisions about renewal, tenure, and promotion are made by the university President with input from a broad range of evaluators. This includes a department evaluation committee, the department chair, the college dean (or appropriate administrator), the university-wide Tenure and Promotion Committee, and the Provost. Individual evaluators are not allowed to participate in the evaluation process more than once. Locally negotiated faculty promotion and tenure policies have included individual statements of expectations as well as departmental teacher-scholar models that allow individuals to know position-related and disciplinary expectations and communicate these to evaluators outside of their department. The faculty CBA allows for individual faculty members to make rebuttals at most stages in the evaluation process (ref. II.4.08 and II.4.09).

Many individuals responsible for implementing employment policies are offered training to ensure fairness, transparency, and impartiality. For example, before beginning to hire a new employee, a search committee chair receives instruction on the process along with an employment checklist from the employment manager. Before the position announcement is created, the search committee is trained on mitigating implicit bias, how to attract a diverse pool of applicants, and understanding the WCU Nondiscrimination Policy (II.5.13) by staff from the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Throughout the process, the employment manager reminds the search committee chair of the state regulations governing

consideration of retrenched PASSHE employees from other institutions and the preferred hiring of veterans.

It is a typical practice in our institutional culture to provide training for any group (employee or not) that is entering a new position, whether it is New Faculty Orientation or the new First Year Experience course for incoming undergraduates. These programs do more than address what the institutional policies are and how they should be implemented; they also serve to create a shared sense of ethical responsibility toward our governing policies.

Honesty and Truthfulness in Promotional Materials (Criterion 6)

We live in a world where communication can be initiated from any community member and can become a viral, international phenomenon. The messages we send are archived and the volume of messages available makes them difficult to navigate. In this environment, the honesty and accuracy of institutional messaging becomes an important value. Oversight of WCU communication occurs at different points in the institution and although it is distributed among many stakeholders, there are several important gatekeepers for maintaining honesty and truthfulness in communication. These include the Communications and Marketing Department, the Division of Information Services and Technology, the Curriculum and Academic Policies Council (CAPC), the Admissions Office, the Division of Student Affairs, and the Human Resources Department.

The University Communications and Marketing Department maintains a strategic plan (II.6.01) for how to communicate to external and internal stakeholders. All messaging is tied to the principles conveyed in the university's strategic plan (*Pathways to Success*) and mission (I.1.1). When communications are planned, the office's Assistant Vice President (AVP) vets all talking points with senior university leadership to make sure that facts are accurate, and the message is consistent. The AVP also regularly convenes a group of 20 or so communicators across campus so that messaging maintains consistency. The office's communications adhere to all requirements for confidentiality and privacy, including FERPA and HIPAA.

Relevant content on the WCU website is largely reviewed and posted by the subject-matter experts in various departments and entities. Web specialists in the Information Services and Technology run monthly reports across the WCU domain to identify pages which have not been updated in the previous six months (II.6.03). The owners of the stale content are asked to

review and update the pages within 30 days, or the pages are removed. Content owners may also request that the older content be retained on the site for archival or other purposes. In addition, when anyone uses the search engine on the WCU site, freshness of content is one of the 73 preference factors utilized by the search algorithm.

Academic policies and student requirements are within the purview of the Curriculum and Academic Policies Council (CAPC, see II.6.04). The Course Review and Revalidation Committee monitors courses that are not offered regularly to assure that students are not anticipating courses to which they will not have access. In addition, it ensures that courses not offered in recent years will be updated and revised to reflect current knowledge and circulated through the CAPC approval process. When changes to academic programs are approved by CAPC, staff in the Registrar's office work to make sure that relevant online and paper catalogues are updated to reflect the new policies. These documents are regularly sent to departments and programs for additional review.

Admissions materials are created with transparency in mind. Information is provided to the marketing team through Institutional Research, Undergraduate Admissions, Financial Aid, and other individual offices (including Athletics, Housing, Student Affairs, and individual colleges) across campus. Although admissions numbers change from fall to spring, the university uses the official fall snap number for consistency across print and digital publications. Within the Division of Student Affairs, guidelines are provided to various constituent groups to assist their communication effectiveness (II.6.05-II.6.08). Many announcements in Student Affairs are time-sensitive and are displayed on the university calendar, a newer addition to the community website. All employment advertisements have a multi-step vetting process, such as the tenure-track faculty hiring process (II.6.09), and are published from a central desk in Human Resources after approvals for the wording have been received.

Ensuring the accuracy of internal and external communication in a university community is a challenging task, particularly in a digital age when official materials can be sent in a variety of media formats from multiple devices by a broad range of individuals. By using several different monitoring strategies, WCU is successful in reducing misinformation and ensuring that important messages reflect the institutional priorities. Unfortunately, it continues to be a challenge to manage the overwhelming amount of

communication that community members receive or have access to. However, the transparency and frequency of communication about the pandemic and changing circumstances has been noted by internal and external stakeholders.

Promoting and Providing Education around Funding Sources (Criterion 7)

WCU takes seriously its institutional mission to provide access to learning. It is a point of pride that WCU has kept costs down, increased scholarships and endowments, and offers a quality education at an affordable price. The institution has been recognized by Money Magazine (II.7.01), Forbes Magazine (II.7.02), and US News and World Report (II.7.03) for keeping costs low while delivering a competitive educational experience. Compared with regional institutions, WCU costs have grown at a slower rate. Even within the PASSHE system WCU overall costs are low, compared with sister institutions.

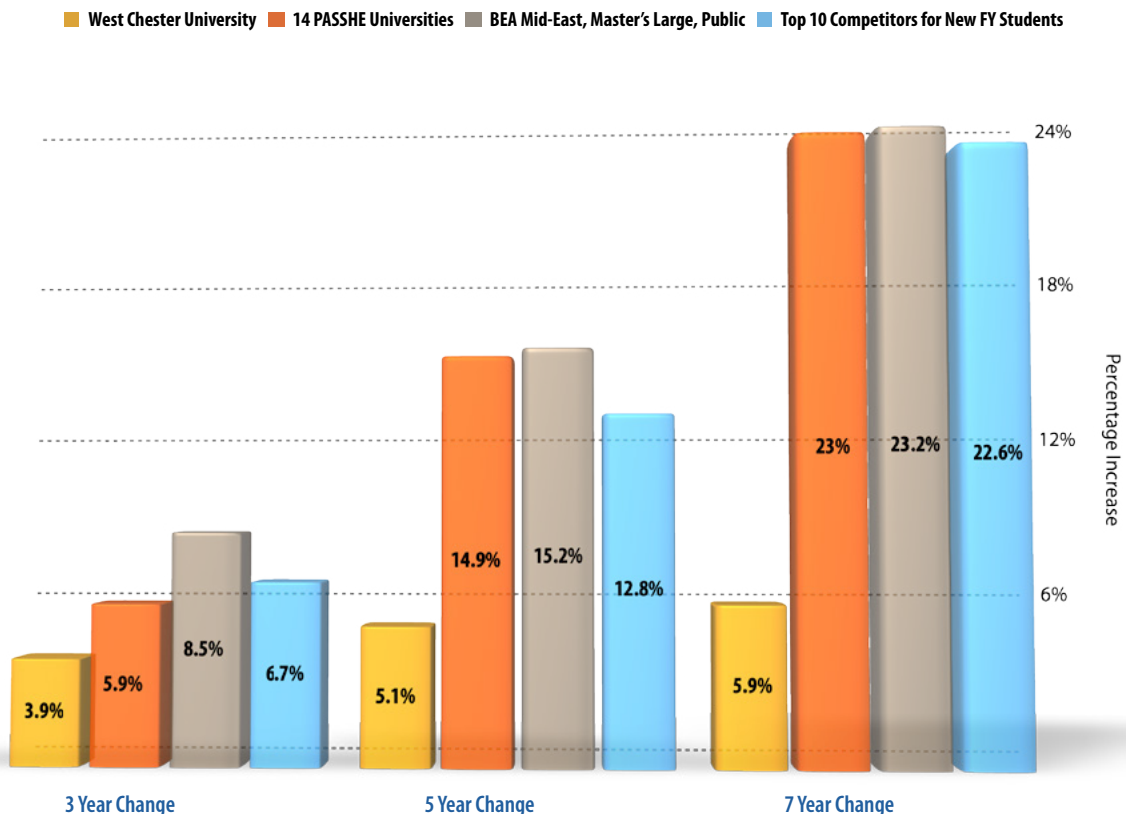
The WCU Foundation engages in fund-raising to increase the availability of scholarships, and this has significantly increased in the past decade. Because of these

alternative funding sources, WCU is able to keep its cost to students lower in a challenging fiscal environment. In 2019, the Foundation was responsible for raising over \$7.4 million. More than 6000 students benefit from Foundation scholarships each year (II.7.05).

WCU also looks for ways to contain student costs and support them to overcome financial obstacles to a college degree. Some examples include: the Philadelphia campus has a 10% reduced tuition fee (II.7.06); the Bursar has instituted pay plans over five months instead of three (II.7.07); and the Registrar has created more flexible policies to allow students to remain registered after non-payment of tuition. Several programs have been instituted to reduce the cost of textbooks and address food insecurity and homelessness among students (II.7.11-12).

Beyond reducing costs, WCU provides financial aid education for incoming students and families to ensure that they understand financial options and responsibilities (II.7.13). Financial Aid counselors provide financial literacy instruction during admission events (both parents and students have sessions), orientations, and in some sections of the First Year

Cost of Attendance: In State, On Campus Undergraduates (II.7.04)



Experience. A financial aid toolkit included in these presentations is available online. It includes a module on budgeting, a credit work sheet, and information about borrowing student loans. The Office of Financial Aid holds FAFSA filing training semi-annually. At that time counselors meet with anyone who needs support and provide 60-minute tutorials through the Financial Aid TV service. Financial Literacy Ambassadors help students understand and apply different types of financial situations to everyday life. These ambassadors set up events, host games, and have tables all over campus. Faculty and staff can arrange for ambassadors to speak to campus organizations and do classroom presentations.

Assessment of Ethics and Integrity in Policies and Processes (Criterion 9)

WCU engages in several different approaches for assessment of policies and practices. With regard to ethics and integrity, an important value to the institution is ensuring that institution is accessible to individuals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. To that end, a variety of measurements are regularly made for the purpose of assessment. For example, statistics related to ethnicity and gender are regularly used to evaluate the staff and student complement for colleges or the President's Cabinet to set goals for the coming year. In 2009-10 and again in 2016 a campus climate survey was conducted (II.9.01). The results were used by the Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, the President's Cabinet, and a variety of other ad hoc committees.

In addition, many policies are regularly reviewed in different contexts to determine if they are fair to constituents. Meet and Discuss between union representatives and management provides a forum for employees to give feedback on existing policies. This regularly occurs for new policies and changed policies, but at times existing policies are reviewed in this context.

Committees and offices at a variety of levels often provide a year-end report offering an analysis of their activities during the year. This does not always address issues of ethics and integrity, but it is a regularly occurring opportunity for ethics to emerge as a concern or for celebration.

Conclusion

Ethics and integrity guide the work and continued progress of all constituents of WCU. They are visible in our support of academic freedom and freedom of

speech, in the supportive and inclusive climate on campus, in the use of effective complaint procedures and fair employment practices, in truthful communication, in our financial accessibility, in compliance with applicable laws, and in regular assessment. The previous sections outline many strengths and opportunities for our community with regard to ethics. Below some additional strengths and opportunities are listed for consideration.

Strengths

- Emphasizing and supporting diversity has been a longtime value for WCU and many of our successful initiatives continue this legacy. The reorganization of diversity initiatives under the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has increased communication and created programming opportunities that were not possible before.
- Two recent initiatives have successfully increased accessibility for students with disabilities: The Real Achievement Matters (RAM) Initiative brings small numbers of non-degree students with intellectual disabilities to WCU. The Dub-C Autism Program provides direct and indirect support to degree-seeking WCU students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- Multiple facilities changes have increased access to diverse groups: single-occupancy, non-gender-specific bathrooms have been added to many buildings, lactation rooms are available in most classroom buildings, and space on campus for meditation and prayer has been made available.
- Lastly, a new policy enables individuals to use a preferred first name, rather than a legal name, on many university systems and records.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Examine ways to improve student preparation to engage in constructive discussions during courses that cover difficult topics and with visitors to our campus who use inflammatory rhetoric.
- Increase transparency about the process used to document and resolve non-union complaints.
- Continue to increase the clarity about the fee structure and total costs of attending college for students.
- Continue to address the underemployment of Black and LatinX faculty, along with faculty in other underrepresented categories.



STANDARD III: DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Since the last Middle States reaccreditation, West Chester University (WCU) has continued to offer high-quality, dynamic, and continually refined educational programs at all degree levels. We have also placed renewed emphasis on the General Education component of our undergraduate programs, bolstering the importance of liberal arts preparation for our students. Our mission statement challenges us assure that our graduates will be able to: "... collaborate with others to solve problems and address societal needs, communicate effectively and participate in civic discourse, engage inclusively in a diverse society, and understand the ethical implications of decisions and the world in which they live." We assess our students' learning regularly, evaluating a common set of learning goals to assure all programs of study are providing students with this general preparation, and all evidence indicates that our efforts are working. Our graduates are learning, thriving, graduating, and going on to contribute to the workforce, community, and common good.

This example of the refinement of WCU's General Education program illustrates the process in place to make sure students in any program of study graduate with the knowledge and understanding that align with the mission and strategic goals of the university. It also demonstrates the commitment to be certain all university degree, certificate, and professional programs offer students a cohesive learning experience.

The Extent and Quality of Programs Leading to an Education Credential (Criterion 1, ROA 8, 9)

WCU provides high-quality educational opportunities through a broad range of disciplines on its West Chester campus as well as all additional locations. Bachelor's degrees require a minimum of 120 credits that include the general education requirements and at least one major program of study. A master's program must consist of 30 credits or more taken in a focused field of study. Doctoral programs vary in the number of credits based on the nature of the discipline. Certificates range from 12 to 18 credits, again, based on the nature of the course of study. The requirements for successfully completing these degree and certificate programs can be found in the electronic course catalog on the university website (Catalog). In addition, said degree programs are in alignment with the relevant PASSHE Board of Governors (BOG) Policies and associated Procedures and Standards

to include: Academic Degrees Policy and Procedures/Standards, General Education Policy, and Guidelines for Accelerated Bachelor to Master's Degree Programs Early Admission to First Professional Master's Degree Programs Procedure/Standards.

We ensure the quality of the programs offered by WCU with thorough internal and external evaluations and reviews. Within the university, any new or revised course or program of study typically begins at the department level. Each department develops a course or program using departmental processes, which often include review by the departmental curriculum committees and a faculty vote. Upon favorable review at the department level, department representatives enter comprehensive course/program information into the Curriculum Inventory Management system (CIM), an online system that ultimately syncs content directly with the catalog. From there, the college dean reviews the proposal on the CIM site. It is then vetted by the university's Curriculum and Academic Policies Council (CAPC), the elected faculty body that reviews all changes to curriculum and academic policies. Proposals are also forwarded to CAPC requiring the same requisite approvals. After the appropriate review, CAPC forwards its recommendation regarding a proposal to the Provost/Executive Vice President, who approves or does not approve the proposed course or program change. During each step of the process, there are opportunities for university members to access proposals and offer feedback and comments. The only variation of the above process relates to educator-preparation programs whose requirements extend beyond a single college. In this case, there is a Council of Professional Education (CPE) that reviews the curriculum or course and responds to the proposal on the CIM system before it goes to CAPC. New undergraduate and graduate academic degree programs are taken to the WCU Council of Trustees for approval to move the new degree programs to the Chancellor for final approval as outlined in the associated Board Policy and Procedure/Standard Requirements for Initiation or Change of Credit-Based Academic Programs. It should be noted that since our last self-study and subsequent reaccreditation the Higher Education Modernization Act of 2012 was enacted which allows for the offering of Professional Doctorates.

Every submission of a new or revised program or course must include an exhaustive rationale for what is being proposed. A comprehensive syllabus must be submitted

for any new or revised course, including a list of the pertinent educational objectives, a measurable list of learning goals and outcomes, how these outcomes will be assessed, and bibliographic references (III.1.1).

To ensure sustained quality, all programs undergo an internal periodic review every five years. There are structures and processes in place to assess the quality of the programs. Sometimes this is done through an outside accreditor, while at other times it is handled internally. Criterion 8 and Standard V will discuss these processes in greater detail.

Online Delivery of Instruction

Since the last MSCHE visit, WCU has made significant progress in using online modalities to effectively offer instruction to thousands of undergraduate and graduate students within the Commonwealth and beyond. As of Spring 2020, the offerings include six master's degree programs, two doctoral degree programs, 15 certificate programs, and over 170 undergraduate courses and 160 graduate courses taught fully online or in a blended/hybrid manner. We offer 11 fully online degree programs and 15 specialized certificates fully online as presented in our catalog.

As with all courses and programs of study, online curriculum development begins with faculty at the department level and follows the course and program approval process outlined above. Given the unique pedagogical considerations of online instruction, CAPC requires faculty to update their online teaching competencies every five years by completing a rigorous training program designed and delivered by WCU's Office of Distance Education. The training requirement ensures faculty stay up-to-date on changing pedagogies and technologies while also encouraging continued engagement with the university's Instructional Designers. WCU uses this collaborative model to support the design, development, and delivery of digital instruction. The designers provide consultation on online pedagogy, syllabus construction, effective online activities, and assessment. They also help faculty create course materials and recommend or provide training on appropriate e-learning technology. For example, an Instructional Designer might work with a faculty member concerned about safeguarding the integrity of online testing to incorporate a third-party exam proctoring service such as Examity into the course.

Upon completing an online course, students are given the opportunity to evaluate the course. It is not just an evaluation of the instructor but of the course and the method of delivery that can inform the design team of

needed refinements. Online courses and programs are treated the same as courses and programs delivered face-to-face and undergo the same periodic review.

As part of the effort to deliver online courses that meet quality standards, WCU has begun verifying online courses through Quality Matters. Quality Matters is an international body that certifies online courses and programs as having met a research supported set of design standards. Faculty have the option to submit an online course for a Quality Matters review by a team of three peer-reviewers with at least one reviewer external to the university. The review process is overseen by the Office of Distance Education. The list of the university's certified courses is publicly available on Quality Matters QM Certified Courses website (III.1.2). In 2019, WCU became one of only five institutions in the nation to obtain Quality Matters Program Certification for Online Teaching Support. This certification required three years of documentation demonstrating that all online faculty undergo training in best practices for online course delivery; have ongoing pedagogical support; are encouraged to engage in professional development; are available to provide feedback to learners; and collect and use feedback from learners to improve online teaching.

Off-Campus Programs

Since the previous self-study, WCU has established a robust educational presence in Philadelphia, serving more than 350 students. At the undergraduate level, students can complete a B.S. in Business Management, a R.N. to B.S.N. in Nursing, or a B.S. in Social Work. Graduate students can earn a M.P.A. in Public Administration, a M.S. in Criminal Justice, a M.S. in Transformative Education & Social Change, or a M.S.W. in Social Work.

Another trend in offering programs off campus is found in delivering specialized programs at the location where the educational preparation directly relates to the work being done at that location. For example, the master's degree in Applied Studies in Teaching & Learning is being offered at local area PreK-12 school districts. This allows the program curriculum and approved learning objectives to be customized to meet those of the district.

WCU has a long-standing partnership with Delaware County Community College (DCCC) including a recently revised Dual Admission Agreement that ensures guaranteed admission with transfer of the Associate Degree in its entirety into most parallel majors, guaranteed housing, and renewable transfer scholarships. WCU also offers programs onsite at DCCC to include the B.S. Degree in Business Management. More recently, WCU began offering the R.N. to B.S.N

degree as a concurrent option for R.N. DCCC students. Both programs are accredited by their respective boards, the AACSB and the CCNE and taught by WCU faculty.

Study abroad

WCU is ranked 14th among similarly sized universities for short-term study abroad opportunities, offering more than 670 programs on every continent but Antarctica, ranging from week-long experiences to full-year study abroad. Students who study abroad advance their language and intercultural development skills. They also gain increased confidence, a deeper understanding of their studies, and advanced personal development. Study abroad fits with the university's overall mission on several levels, specifically with regard to the following goals (see Standard I):

- Collaborate with others to solve problems and address societal needs
- Communicate effectively and participate in civic discourse
- Engage inclusively in a diverse society
- Understand the ethical implications of decisions and the world in which they live

Additional details pertaining to Study Abroad through the Center for International Programs can be found in Criterion 5.

Criteria and expectations for faculty evaluation (Criterion 2, ROA 8, 15)

The criteria and expectations for evaluating faculty members at WCU are developed by employing two performance evaluation tools: The Teacher-Scholar

Model and the Statement of Expectations. The use of both tools affords flexibility in building evaluation criteria for each faculty member based on their individual strengths and contributions. The tools are described the following sections.

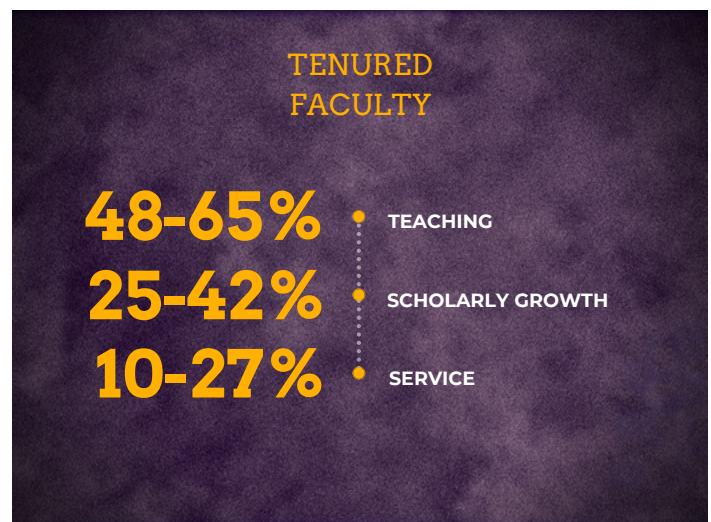
Teacher-Scholar Model

The faculty at WCU are teacher-scholars whose research and teaching activities continuously inform each other. Departments have developed a teacher-scholar model that defines the ways faculty members bring their scholarship into their teaching and their teaching into their scholarship (III.2.1).

Statement of Expectations

Each new faculty hire receives an individual statement of expectations based on that individual's unique background and job requirements. Each statement should be consistent with the departmental teacher-scholar model as well as the WCU promotion and tenure policies, and the faculty collective bargaining agreement. These are approved by the respective dean. The document summarizes duties and expected level of performance in three areas of activity: effective teaching and fulfillment of professional responsibilities, continuous scholarly growth, and service. Areas are given a percentage weight, which reflects its importance toward the faculty member's evaluation.

Three basic instruments are used to compile data on teaching effectiveness: Student Rating of Instructor Surveys (SRIS), peer faculty evaluations, and department chairperson evaluations. Each is briefly discussed below, followed by a table summarizing the schedule of these evaluations for each faculty type.



Student Rating of Instructor Surveys (SRIS)

SRIS is an instrument designed to evaluate the quality of teaching provided by an instructor in a given course section. The instrument contains 16 items that measure evaluations on the dimensions of delivery and preparation, in addition to some demographic items and open-ended questions soliciting student feedback. The scores on the delivery and preparation items are compared to historic averages of the faculty member's department, college, and the whole university. The SRIS are administered in all on-campus and online courses taught each semester during which a faculty member is under evaluation (III.2.2). The questionnaires for face-to-face classes are administered by faculty peers; instructors do not handle evaluations of their own classes. The delivery and preparation scores are used during periodic review by the faculty's evaluation committee.

While the SRIS, as students' only direct input into evaluating teaching effectiveness, is an important instrument in faculty evaluation, we do recognize an internally and externally documented pattern of bias that may negatively or positively skew the results. It is widely noted that a faculty member's gender, race, ethnicity (particularly with reference to accent), perceived manifestation of sexual orientation, and other factors can negatively or positively impact (e.g., for those with privilege) the scores that a faculty member receives. In some instances, these biases may compound each other. In an effort to acknowledge this bias, the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) clearly

stresses that faculty evaluations should not be based on individual data points, emphasizing the need for a holistic and culturally aware evaluation of each faculty member, perhaps by explicitly discussing the potential for such bias. In this vein, we acknowledge that the SRIS, while useful, is an imperfect instrument for gathering student feedback on course instruction.

Peer faculty evaluations

Classroom faculty are observed periodically (see table below) by their tenured peers during class sessions. The observers provide narrative evaluations of teaching skill, value and implementation of course objectives, and rapport with students. The observed faculty have the opportunity to discuss the observation report with the observer. The observation reports are included in the annual review, five-year review, tenure, and promotion packets (III.2.3).

Department chairperson evaluations

Classroom faculty are observed periodically by their department chairperson during class sessions. The chairperson provides narrative evaluations of teaching skill, value and implementation of course objectives, and rapport with students.

Evaluation instrument administration schedule

SRIS reports, peer, and chair evaluations are administered based on the following schedules for faculty of different ranks and career stages.

Faculty evaluation schedules

Faculty type	Frequency	What is administered
Tenure track faculty	During each of the five tenure track years	SRIS for all sections taught 4 peer evaluations 1 chairperson evaluation
Tenured faculty	Once every five years (5th year review)	SRIS for all sections taught in the fall 2 peer evaluations 1 chairperson evaluation
Tenured faculty applying for promotion	During each of the two years of the promotion timeline	SRIS for all sections taught 2 peer evaluations 1 chairperson evaluation
Adjunct faculty	Each academic year	2 peer evaluations 1 chairperson evaluation

In addition to the instruments above, tenure-track faculty are annually reviewed by their department's evaluation committee, chairperson, and dean. The annual review is comprised of assessing the dimensions of teaching, scholarship, and service. Overall, faculty are evaluated as to whether they meet professional standards, exceed them, or need improvement. Faculty are strongly encouraged to review the feedback from their peers and exhibit growth and progress based on their review.

While the above annual evaluation process helps ensure that probationary faculty are rigorous and effective in

their duties, a similar evaluation is performed every fifth year for tenured faculty to report on whether tenured faculty continue to meet professional standards.

Tenure and promotion application and evaluation process

The most extensive evaluation takes place during the tenure and promotion application process. Faculty apply for tenure and promotion separately and each of these applications is based on separate criteria (III.2.4).

The tenure and promotion processes are separate and are based on detailed policies set forth by the Office of the Provost. The policies are informed by the

Historic university means and standard deviations on SRIS (through Spring 2019)

Item	University Mean (6-point scale)	University Standard Deviation
Please rate the quality of teaching provided by this instructor.	5.2	0.5
The instructor clearly presented course requirements and grading procedures	5.3	0.5
The instructor interacted in a positive manner with students.	5.6	0.6
The instructor responded to student questions in a way that encouraged me to learn.	5.4	0.3
The instructor met classes at the assigned days and times.	5.7	0.4
The instructor met the course objectives published in the course description or syllabus.	5.6	0.4
The instructor returned graded tests and assignments in a timely manner.	5.4	0.6
The instructor was prepared for class.	5.6	0.4
The instructor made good use of class time	5.3	0.6
The instructor maintained an environment in which students were comfortable asking questions.	5.5	0.6
The instructor facilitated learning by maintaining an atmosphere of civility.	5.6	0.4
The instructor clearly explained concepts and techniques.	5.2	0.7
The instructor allocated an appropriate amount of time to each topic.	5.2	0.6
The instructor was available during posted office hours. (Please leave this item blank if you have never been to the instructor's office hours.)	5.6	0.4
The instructor organized this class in a way that helped me to learn the material.	5.2	0.7
The instructor provided useful feedback on tests and assignments.	5.2	0.6
The instructor explained concepts using real-world examples, analogies, or circumstances relevant to students' lives	5.4	0.5
The instructor evaluated students fairly.	5.5	0.5

Collective Bargaining Agreement and spell out clear expectations, deadlines, and steps for faculty at each career stage. Both tenure and application processes begin at the department level, with departmental review and evaluations, following with the Dean's recommendations, the review by the university's Tenure and Promotion Committee, and final approval by the university President.

Evidence of faculty teaching effectiveness

Notably, while the Collective Bargaining Agreement defines academic advising to be faculty work (professional responsibilities), we do not have an effective mechanism to evaluate this job component. Classroom faculty members typically serve as academic advisors for students majoring in their home department and non-classroom faculty may carry full-time advising loads (e.g., Exploratory Studies students). Short of a student survey (which can be affected by known sources of bias [discussed above with respect to SRIS]), we currently lack a comprehensive mechanism for highlighting excellent advising and identifying situations where advising should be improved. The Committee for Advising Excellence continues to work on ways to help remedy this situation. With the introduction of Advising Excellence awards, our online advising professional development program, and the hiring of student success coordinators, the campus is moving toward a situation where advising is of a more consistent quality and a more overtly valued component of faculty work.

Evidence of faculty scholarly productivity and service

As evident from the summaries of faculty scholarship and external grants (III.2.5), WCU faculty have been highly productive across programs and the external grant funding obtained by faculty has increased each year. It is important to note that consistent with the Teacher-Scholar Model, faculty often engage students in their research activities. Also, all university faculty are expected to be involved in service to their departments, colleges, the university, their discipline, and local communities. This is demonstrated through a summary of hours faculty at all levels spent engaging in institutional and community service (III.2.6).

Evidence of faculty qualifications

85% of full-time faculty and 27% of part-time faculty currently hold terminal degrees in their disciplines. The table below shows the numbers of faculty currently employed and the numbers of faculty of each type holding terminal degrees.

Faculty type	Count	Terminal Degree
Full-time Faculty	695	590
Part-time Faculty	298	81
TOTAL	993	671

Depending on the discipline, faculty qualifications and continuous education credits are reviewed regularly by respective academic units in order to maintain program accreditations and individual faculty credentials within their disciplines.

Evidence of sufficient faculty size

The complement of faculty needed to sufficiently cover classes and provide other professional duties varies by departments and programs. The Provost and Deputy Provost work with the college Deans collectively to make certain faculty lines are distributed in a manner to effectively provide faculty resources where most needed. The university has expanded its employment to match its student growth. As a result, the current, university-wide student-faculty ratio is 18:1.

The number of tenured and tenure-track faculty is regulated in part by Article 11.f. of the Collective Bargaining Agreement between APSCUF and PASSHE (CBA). The article requires 75% of the faculty complement be tenured or tenure-track faculty.

Evidence of support for faculty professional growth and innovation

New faculty are provided with \$6,000 in startup funding, which is a significant change since the last self-study, during which we realized that faculty in some colleges were receiving start-up funds while others were not. This funding can be used for a variety of professional development expenses, including research and instructional purposes like costs of data collection, professional travel, professional equipment purchases, or course-development expenses. Each faculty member has two academic years to use the funds.

Beyond the startup funds, faculty are assigned an annual amount of professional development funding. The amount varies by department and is dependent on funding allocations determined by each college. In the AY 2019-2020, the average college allocation of professional development funds per faculty was \$1500. This is an increase in funding per faculty since the previous self-study and reflects changes in academic units that were implemented to better meet the professional needs of the faculty across the institution.

In addition to the funding above, faculty are provided with a number of internal grant opportunities, both campus-wide and at the college level.

In AY 2019/2020, the Provost's Office awarded a total of \$132,727 in internal grants across the university, funding over 30 research and creative projects in 23 disciplines.

Beyond internal funding, the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs provides faculty with extensive assistance in applying for external funding, including identifying the funding agency, preparing and submitting the project proposals, and project reporting. In AY 2018/2019, this resulted in \$6.51 million in federal, state, and foundation awards.

In addition to the monetary resources listed above, faculty can apply for sabbatical leave. Consistent with the Collective Bargaining Agreement, up to a total of 7% of the faculty may be awarded sabbatical leaves annually. Sabbatical leaves are granted to faculty who seek to complete meritorious projects advancing faculty research, teaching, and professional growth.

The university has increased the number of conferences it hosts focused on improving teaching. In addition to conferences, faculty are given the following several other opportunities to disseminate their work on campus. Beyond the funding and presentation outlets, WCU faculty are provided a plethora of opportunities to develop and engage in professional growth. A summary describes many of the rich opportunities afforded to faculty for professional development (III.2.7). Most of these are available to both tenure/track and adjunct faculty.

Academic Programs described in the Catalog (Criterion 3)

Since its inception, the institution now known as WCU has always maintained an annual catalog that outlines academic policies and the requirements of the various degree programs (Catalog). In preparation for the 2015-16 academic year, the university completely overhauled the format of both the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. This update, which coincided with a new online curriculum management system (CIM, the Course Inventory Management system), provided a complete overhaul of how the curriculum is presented to students. Each program has its own curriculum table laying out all program requirements and elective options, including credit totals. All baccalaureate programs have a parallel format for the General Education component of the degree where any required General Education courses are clearly identified. When a single program has

various concentrations (i.e., completion options) there is a separate page (curriculum table) for each option so that students can clearly see the requirements of their particular program. When changes are made to the curriculum through the approved process, these changes sync with the online system for the next publication cycle. An online archive is also stored for historical purposes. In addition to these changes which clearly improved a student's ability to understand the follow degree and program requirements, degree programs also have a "suggested course sequence" which lays out a suggested path to degree completion. These plans, arranged by semesters, have been built in conjunction with individual departments such that the catalog now has the capacity to function much more like an "advising sheet" rather than just a list of requirements. Where appropriate, and based on demand, alternative suggested course sequences (e.g., part-time) are also presented. In the PeopleSoft system, the university has also worked to streamline these functions into an easy-to-read "degree progress report" that any student can access. This report shows completed requirements and incomplete requirements in format groups by the category of course. Finally, and importantly, this new format is easy to navigate online on a variety of devices.

Student focused resources & opportunities that reinforce academic success (Criterion 4)

WCU views itself as a community of educators where faculty, staff, and students all share in the mission of improving the collective good. University employees continue to effectively support students in both the curricular and co-curricular dimensions of their academic experience. A number of the resources that support student success fall under WCU's University College. Aligned with *Pathways to Student Success*, the University College Strategic Plan outlines the direction to further enhance these efforts (III.4.1).

University Libraries

The WCU Libraries system provides a plethora of resources and opportunities that reinforce student academic success, both in relation to coursework and scholarship (III.4.2). The University Libraries system includes the main Francis Harvey Green Library and the Presser Music Library. The two libraries hold more than 670,700 physical resources. These include books, DVDs, CDs, journals and special collections materials. While print resources are still an essential and well-used part of the University Libraries resources, digital materials account for the vast majority of the collection. With 135,000 electronic journals, 275 databases, over a million

eBooks, and 125,000 streaming media, the university learning community has a multitude of resources to accomplish research at all levels and across all university learning modalities. To bridge gaps in resources, our Interlibrary Loan department fulfills approximately 7,000 book and article requests annually. Utilizing a rapid system for fulfillment, most articles are delivered in the same day they are requested.

The University Libraries' faculty librarians work with their academic departments to ensure research needs are met, both for students and faculty. Subject specialists teach about 350 library instruction classes each year spanning introductory general education to graduate and PhD level courses. Librarians are also available to work with faculty, students, and staff through a variety of modalities: chat, Zoom, email, phone, and one-on-one consultations. Two years ago, the libraries hired a student success librarian to help coordinate library instruction and information literacy efforts. This librarian also works to align the libraries' student success programs with the university's strategic plan and mission by creating a strong presence on campus that is actively involved with the Academic Success Program (ASP) and the First-Generation Initiative.

The Learning Assistance & Resource Center

The Learning Assistance & Resource Center (LARC) offers free, regular weekly tutoring to students throughout the semester for select courses. One-time drop-in tutoring is also available for select courses (III.4.3). Tutors are students who are formally trained by LARC staff. LARC also administers the Early Alert Program, which proactively identifies students in general education courses who have a grade of C- or below prior to the course withdraw deadline. Students are notified that they have been identified by their course instructor via the Early Alert Program and are invited to discuss learning strategies with LARC staff. Further information about the LARC is highlighted in Standard V.

The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities

The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities assists students who have physical and learning disabilities. OSSD ensures compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990). The mission of OSSD is to maximize student success in an accessible academic environment, while keeping with WCU's mission to provide equal education for all qualified students. OSSD facilitates a proctoring center that provides testing accommodations for students who register. Additional support includes reading technology via Kurwzeil

software, dictation software, and notetaking technology via Livescribe smart pens.

Success Coaching

Success coaching provides individualized support to guide students toward academic and personal success at WCU. Unlike tutoring, which fosters content knowledge, success coaching provides practical skills and strategies for students to achieve their academic goals. Each student is paired with a success coach to meet with regularly or as needed. Success coaches are graduate students who are trained to offer personalized support as an "experienced peer." Success coaching topics include time management, test taking and preparation, note taking, textbook reading, goal setting, college adjustment, and more. In Fall 2019, the first semester of the pilot year of this program, 195 students utilized this service, with 55% of these students visiting the Success Coach three or more times.

RAMp Up and COMPASS

A relatively new program, RAMp Up, was offered as a pilot in January 2019 for students in the College of Arts and Humanities, the College of Health Sciences, and University College. Students who earned a cumulative GPA less than a 2.725 after their first semester were invited to participate. Institutional data suggests that students who earn less than a cumulative GPA of 2.725 after their first semester are 3.8 times less likely to graduate within six years compared to those with a higher GPA. The themes of the program focus on goal setting activities, success strategies, career development planning, and time to meet with Success Coaches and the Financial Aid and Bursar offices. The average cumulative GPA of those students who participated in RAMp Up in January 2019 increased 0.68 points following the completion of their second semester, whereas those who did not participate (but were qualified to participate) only saw a term GPA increase of 0.23 points after their second semester. Students who participated in RAMp Up in 2019 were retained at a 3% higher rate than students who were invited and did not attend. This pilot was viewed as a success and was scaled up to include qualifying students from all seven WCU colleges and schools in January 2020. A total of 111 students participated of the 572 who were invited.

Another important effort has been the COMPASS program, which aims to reduce the equity gap in 4-year graduation rates between African American males and all WCU first-time full-time first year students. This pilot program, which launched in Fall 2019, invited non-athlete Black or African American male students who

were placed on academic probation to participate in programming and mentoring, including mandatory study halls, graduate student mentors, and mandatory tutoring.

Summer Undergraduate Research Institute

WCU continues to provide academic support to students through scholarship initiatives, such as the five-eight week SURI program (Summer Undergraduate Research Institute), which aims to increase interest and opportunities for undergraduate research in all disciplines; promote scholarly collaboration between students and faculty; establish a community of undergraduate scholars; develop students' basic skills in project development; and prepare students for careers and/or graduate-level studies. Students selected for the SURI program receive a stipend and summer housing to participate full-time in the program over five weeks in the summer. In 2018 the SURI program sponsored 19 WCU students for a 5-week program and 5 students for another three weeks. For 2019, SURI sponsored 22 WCU students, 15 of whom continued in the program for eight weeks. A Survey of Undergraduate Research Experience assessment for the students in the 2019 cohort showed the desire of SURI students to attend graduate school increased from 23% to 41% after the SURI experience. Additionally, WCU-CARES and WCU-CARTS are new initiatives that support undergraduate researchers during the fall and spring semesters, including providing travel funds to present at professional conferences and meetings. These new programs are aimed at increasing the numbers of students who have engaged in research by their senior year.

Honors College

The Honors College at WCU offers a specialized learning opportunity for students. Each year, the Honors College accepts 80 incoming freshmen from any major, and 57 majors are currently represented. The Honors Program focuses on academic excellence, community engagement, and a living-learning community. Honors classes focus on building leadership qualities and an interdisciplinary perspective. Similarly, Honors promotes leadership through community engagement. The associated club, the Honors Student Association (HSA), emphasizes community service, both in West Chester and abroad with the Aid to South Africa program that happens yearly. HSA also won the 2019-2020 Service Organization of the Year title (III.4.4).

Exploratory Studies and Academic Advising

In the past decade, academic advising has been identified as an area for growth and development.

Several initiatives have been created to build this aspect of the student experience. The Office of Exploratory Studies at WCU is an umbrella that serves not only advising for First-year students who are undeclared in their major, but also for students with a declared major who are navigating policies and procedures, and academic degree requirements. In 2016, WCU created the positions of five Student Success Coordinators, who are tasked with helping create equity among faculty advising loads; improving advising on campus; providing year-round access to advising, freeing up faculty to focus on students in upper-level courses; and facilitating just-in-time support for students. First-year students' perceptions of their experience with advising as reported on the National Survey of Student Engagement has increased from 4.9 out of seven since hiring the Student Success Coordinators in 2016, to 5.4 out of seven when recently surveyed in 2019.

Co-Curricular Student Learning Experiences

In addition to curricular student learning experiences, WCU has engaged in strategic growth in co-curricular student learning experiences. The university recognizes that learning happens both in and out of the classroom. The co-curricular experience will be described further in Standard IV.

General Education Program (Criterion 5, ROA 8, 9, 10)

WCU designed the General Education program to provide students with the knowledge, perspectives, and competencies expected of them as citizens of the Commonwealth and of the world. The university believes that a liberal arts education will prepare students to think critically and communicate as professionals, to understand the social and global contexts of their lives, to transfer knowledge and skills from one setting to another, to recognize ethical implications of professional practice, and to balance the various dimensions of their personal and professional lives. Therefore, WCU strives to give students the abilities to:

- Communicate effectively
- Think critically and analytically
- Employ quantitative concepts and mathematical methods
- Demonstrate the ability to think across and about disciplinary boundaries
- Respond thoughtfully to diversity

- Understand varied historical, cultural, and philosophical traditions
- Make informed decisions and ethical choices

First Year Experience

The General Education requirement at WCU begins with the First Year Experience course (FYE 100), which provides students with a basic platform from which they can plan their growth and development while at WCU. First Year Experience courses are offered in a variety of areas, but they share common content across all sections, including:

The First Year Experience (FYE) is a four-credit requirement for incoming first-year students as well as transfer students with fewer than 24 college-level credits. All incoming first-year students are enrolled in a FYE course in their first semester. These courses are taught by an interdisciplinary team of typically four faculty members. The bedrock of this four-credit course has been developed to broaden student perspectives by solidifying a foundation in the liberal arts through curricular activities and experiential learning. In FYE, all

students are engaged in various forms of experiential learning (which might include research and/or service learning), learn the foundations of success, and engage in deep reflection to facilitate metacognition and critical thinking. FYE faculty members teach at all levels of the university, resulting in a unique opportunity for students to engage with some of the university's most sought-after professors and experts in their first year.

Students are scheduled into a FYE course based on their major or stated areas of interest. In addition to the common content, FYE courses introduce students to content in a particular area of study while remaining completely transferrable (i.e., no section of FYE is required for a specific major). FYE sections are offered with a focus on the Arts, Humanities, Culture & Communication, Social Science, STEM, Education, Health, or Business, as well as sections that are truly exploratory. Students that enter the university without a declared major may be placed into a section with a clear focus if they indicate their interest in that area, or into the exploratory section if their focus has not been identified.

One of the common requirements of the FYE is that students develop a "four-year plan" for successfully completing their major. Through a series of scaffolded self-reflective assignments, instructors guide students to critically engage with their major and chart their path to degree completion. This includes completion of their entire program of study, not just their major. In this context students are encouraged to think strategically about the general education courses they will take and any other credentials they want to pursue. Taking this one step further, the ideal four-year plan also includes goals about co-curricular activities as students think about and plan out their entire college experience. As with other aspects of the FYE course, this assignment is done in steps where feedback from FYE instructors, advisors, and other university personnel are incorporated. The format of the course, taught in both large lecture and smaller breakouts, facilitates a variety of ways for information to be disseminated and discussed.



General Education Program

Through the General Education program, students take a total of 40 credits (inclusive of FYE) that cover English composition, mathematics, interdisciplinary, and diverse communities courses. Additionally, students take distributive courses in science, behavioral and social science, humanities, and arts. WCU also has writing emphasis and speaking emphasis requirements for all baccalaureate programs along with an ethics requirement (III.5.1).

The enhancement of the General Education program at WCU has evolved since the last accreditation by MSCHE. Since the previous review, WCU faculty engaged in a comprehensive evaluation and review of the general education program aimed at improving the program to better ensure that students acquire and demonstrate the essential skills articulated in the goals. WCU recognizes the importance of contextualizing these goals and skills, both as stand-alone aspects of a liberal arts education but also integrated into a student's major area of study.

ACADEMIC FOUNDATIONS	
First Year Experience	4
English Composition	6
Mathematics	3
Interdisciplinary	3
Diverse Communities	3
DISTRIBUTIVE REQUIREMENTS	
Science	6
Behavioral & Social Science	6
Humanities	6
Arts	3
Total Credits	40
ADDITIONAL BACCALAUREATE REQUIREMENTS	
Writing Emphasis	9
Speaking Emphasis	9
Ethics	3

Toward that end, and as described above, we have created a new course aimed at not only introducing students to WCU and its General Education program, but also aimed at acclimating students to college in general

and WCU in specific. The FYE is the launching point, and all baccalaureate programs now have a capstone course which provides the opportunity to bookend the general education program.

The two-course first-year writing sequence is still an essential part of our general education program; however, we have improved both placement and access. Placement into writing courses is now guided by a directed-self placement tool, the WRITE Survey. Students are given both agency and control in their writing course placement based on their own ability to assess their skill and confidence levels as writers. Further, we have replaced our non-credit bearing developmental writing course with a four-credit supplemental writing workshop course. Together these transformative changes in our first-year writing program have yielded improved student access to required courses (with no credit-deficit). These changes also offer a more uniquely tailored approach, allowing us to better meet students where they are.

We have retained several aspects of the general education program aimed at introducing students to a diverse array of topics (the distributive areas), as well as the limitations of disciplinary knowledge creation. On the latter, we have maintained the Interdisciplinary requirement so that all students come to appreciate that many complex problems cannot be addressed by a single discipline. Further, we require all students to take a course emphasizing the importance of diversity in human culture. The Diverse Communities course is a hallmark of a WCU education that not only introduces the topic but goes further to illustrate the role that structural inequality plays in marginalizing groups of people.

In the shift to a new General Education program, we have retained these categories of courses, but we have also purposefully refocused and aligned them by creating a common set of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) that any course fulfilling one of these requirements must assess. Each general education course is designed to achieve SLOs in critical thinking and effective communication; distributive, interdisciplinary, and diverse community courses are designed to achieve additional SLOs (III.5.2). All courses are required to go through a process of re-approval by the faculty curriculum body (CAPC) and Provost to continue counting toward the general education program.

We recognize that students value (and benefit from) the integration of the general goals of a liberal arts education within the specific goals of the major field

of study. Toward that end, we have retained a Writing Emphasis (WE) requirement and created a Speaking Emphasis (SE) requirement that can be scaffolded across the curriculum, emphasized in general education and major courses. Students take nine credits of each of these categories of courses; three credits of each must be taken at the 300/400 level. We have also created an Ethics requirement – like WE and SE above, these courses can be a general education or major-specific course -- to enable students to engage in contextualized discussion of the importance of ethical decision making.

Starting in the FYE, and continuing throughout the general education program, students are taught the importance of reflection and metacognition – the true keys to learning. This culminates in the capstone course where students complete a capstone assignment that asks them to reflect on their entire college experience, the integration of their general and major-specific education, and their progress on the general education goals. We have instituted an ePortfolio as a digital repository of artifacts that students can create over their college career and reflect on at its completion.

WCU as an institution has worked together as a community to build and launch this new general education program. Further, with support from the Provost's office and CAPC, we have created a General Education Council, a group of dedicated individuals charged with leading and stewarding the new general education program. These faculty members are subject matter experts and innovative pedagogues that provide support for the various parts of the general education program by identifying best practices in their respective areas of responsibility, convening workgroups to develop policy and curricular proposals, and creating related ongoing professional development opportunities. Led by a faculty General Education director, this council includes faculty members (14 total) dedicated to and focused on each of the following areas: the FYE course, the Distributive courses, the Interdisciplinary courses, the Diverse Communities courses, the Ethics courses, the Writing Emphasis courses, the Speaking Emphasis courses, the Pathway Certificate programs, the ePortfolio, the Capstone courses, and General Education Assessment. The General Education Council was established in 2019-20 and is charged as the long-term steward of the General Education program. We aim to capitalize on the current momentum to continue the process of continual improvement.

A great recent example of this momentum has been the Writing Across the Curriculum initiative. The initiative has reinvigorated The Writing Emphasis program by

encouraging faculty to think about incorporating new and best practices for writing instruction into their various courses. A similar Ethics across the Curriculum initiative has also been underway. Comparable initiatives for the other areas of General Education will take place in coming years.

Additional Opportunities for Intellectual Growth

As we strive to produce graduates that are fluent in their major area and proficient in other aspects of a liberal arts education, we continue to seek additional means by which students access additional opportunities for intellectual growth, including the integration of their major and general education courses. Ideally, we want all students to see the general education aspects of their baccalaureate degree program as critically important, not something to “get out of the way.” Below we describe a number of additional options for students, elective components of a WCU education that are aimed at enriching both the general and specific aspects of the WCU experience.

In an effort to encourage more cross-disciplinary thinking, to provide students more opportunities for applying information and learning approaches across multiple disciplines, and to provide a cohesive approach to more easily integrate the general education program within the goals of a degree program, faculty can work collaboratively to create 12-credit certificate programs for general education pathways designed to address specific themes. These certificates will appear on student transcripts. Faculty are encouraged to develop pathway certificate programs representing linkages across multiple areas of the general education curriculum. While the range of potential pathway themes is certainly open for discussion and approval, initial themes recommended by the Gen Ed Advisory Committee include the following (those with an asterisk (*) are approved and described in the catalog):

- Community Engagement*
- Digital Literacy
- Diversity, Power, and Justice
- Global Awareness*
- Sustainability*

In addition to the noted course opportunities, the university provides hundreds of options for participation in service each year, coordinated through the Center for Civic Engagement & Social Impact. Alternative Spring Break Trips are just one of many examples in which students from any major can volunteer for a variety of programs, from creating sustainable food resources in

urban communities, a cross-educational experience in Guatemala, and empowering youth through financial literacy education in New York City to serving the LGBTQ+ community impacted by HIV/AIDS. With a deep commitment to enhancing the students' academic training with experiential learning, both faculty and administration incorporate clear trajectories to expand an individual's cultural & global awareness and cultural sensitivity.

For a more immersive cultural and global experience, WCU's Center for International Programs (CIP) ensures access to a variety of programs to enhance the educational opportunities for our diverse population of students. In 2017-2018 alone, 536 students studied internationally — good enough to rank WCU 14th in the nation among similarly sized institutions for short-term study abroad according to the 2019 edition of Open Doors. CIP offers faculty/staff-led initiatives, exchange residencies, and programs by eight affiliate partners. In order to further enrich the student experience, students who have studied abroad are eligible to become WCU Global Ambassadors to act as invaluable resources for peer advising.

To ensure that our students are career-ready, every WCU program provides opportunities to complete an internship, as an embedded or enhanced part of their major. Career shadowing programs, business competitions and hackathons serve to expose our students to the many diverse ways their major and minor has impact on an everchanging marketplace. WCU's Career Development Center further supports these efforts by offering directed career training and advising services to every student (and alumna/us).

Strategic Growth and Planned Expansion (Criterion 6, ROA 8, 9, 10)

WCU has experienced significant growth in its graduate degree programs and certificate programs. Currently the university offers 40 Master-level degree programs, 4 doctoral-level degree programs, and 40 graduate-level certificate programs.

Life Cycle of the Graduate Student

In Fall 2019, the university had 3,054 students enrolled in graduate programs and certificates (VI.6.1). The university focuses on providing graduate students guidance and mentoring throughout their graduate education. This effort begins before the student has enrolled in their first course and extends throughout their academic and professional career. For instance, as part of the Graduate Enrollment Management (GEM)

Plan the university provides graduate students support through the process of recruiting, admitting, retaining, and graduating students in their respective degree programs.

For those graduate programs that include online courses, Faculty are provided with course facilitation training through the through the Office of Distance Education. They are provided instruction through programs with New Faculty Orientation, Technology Bootcamp, and many technology training programs (e.g., Online Faculty Development) in the best practices and skills in Distance Education. The Office of Distance Education also provides training and technical assistance for faculty in order to continually improve their online courses.

Research Opportunities, Grants and/or Assistantships

Graduate students are supported by dedicated faculty who mentor them through teaching and research opportunities. Students are provided opportunities to participate in submitting grants for external funding, coauthor manuscripts submitted to peer reviewed journals, and present at conferences.

Recognizing the importance of graduate education to the university's mission, the university has substantially increased its support for graduate student education by increasing the number of graduate assistantships. Graduate students are provided opportunities to apply for funding to cover their tuition and their living expenses. Teaching Associates gain valuable teaching experience and mentorship as they facilitate courses with faculty. This provides them with critical experience as they graduate and move to other positions in academia. Graduate students also receive support through grants and scholarships.

In recognition of the unique factors required in educating graduate students, the university designates select faculty as a graduate-line faculty. These faculty specialize in facilitating only graduate-level courses and mentoring students in their research activities.

Outlets for Graduate Publication and Presentations

Overall, the university has made significant investment in delivering a quality graduate education for students and enabled them to engage in research and scholarship. The university will continue making long-term investments in their graduate students through developing new programs of study, enhancing current programs, and supporting them through faculty mentorship.

Graduate students publish and present their research through a wide array of peer-reviewed local, regional, and national forums. They present their research through

the Fall and Spring Research and Creativity Days on campus. Graduate students collaborate extensively with their faculty mentors who have been funded through internal and external grant funding. Graduate students also regularly present their research at regional and national conferences in their field, and the university has increased funding to support this activity substantially. Graduate students who are presenting at a conference are eligible for an award up to \$500 for domestic travel or up to \$1000 for international travel. Students who are attending a conference domestically are eligible for an award up to \$250 or up to \$750 for international conferences. The total funding allocated to support graduate student travel has grown to approximately \$12,000 (III.6.2).

Review and Approval of Third-Party Student Learning Opportunities (Criterion 7)

Most student learning opportunities are provided by the university. When third-party providers are used, they are overseen by specific departments on campus. Third party providers are most often used as a quality check. Here is an example.

Oversight of International Learning Opportunities

The CIP acts as the centralized oversight for all international student learning experiences offered through the university. Any university employee planning to take students on an experience abroad is required to submit a plan through the CIP and receive approval (III.7.1). Part of that process includes proof that study abroad courses for credit have received the necessary approvals from CAPC and have been incorporated into the teaching schedule via the department chair and dean. The CIP is also responsible for vetting third party providers and vendors to ensure appropriate procedures are followed for international programs. Major international learning experience providers go through a Request For Proposal (RFP) process every five years. Vetting includes scoring providers on criteria such as cost, location, safety and risk management, timing of programming, academic offerings, recommendations, credibility, reputation, and references.

Periodic Assessment (Criterion 8, ROA 8, 9, 10)

Student learning at WCU is rigorous and coherent, and we know this because we continue to scrutinize our methods and their outcomes, to adapt them when needed. External reviews of programs and course work are completed at various levels by PASSHE itself and by external accreditors. In addition to Middle States

Commission on Higher Education, the university relies on 23 other external accreditors who review the curricula, quality, appropriateness, and rigor of WCU's professional programs (V.2.5). At present, the university enjoys the positive recognition and accreditation of all the professional organizations listed on the Accreditations and Nationally Recognized Programs page found under University Information on the online course catalog (Catalog). These certifications reflect the high quality of our professional programs.

University-wide Academic Program Student Learning Assessment Process

All course and program proposals include an assessment plan, which is then vetted by CAPC, the Provost's office, and PASSHE for any new programs. Additionally, since the last accreditation visit, WCU has instituted a regular process to ensure the quality of our curriculum and programming. Within the interaction between general education and a major, we expect every academic program to be evaluated by a student learning assessment plan. The quality of the plan is determined using an institutional rubric which is evaluated by the University Assessment Advisory Committee made up faculty, administrators, and students. The processes of the assessment of programs and student learning are explained in greater detail in Standard V.

Conclusion: The Impact of COVID-19 on the Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

As with other institutions in the United States and around the world, the COVID-19 outbreak has forced WCU to rapidly alter its typical educational and operational functions. Appropriately, administrators, faculty, and staff responded to the challenge by maintaining a focus on the university's mission: *West Chester University is a community of educators that develops graduates to succeed personally and professionally and contribute to the common good.* Plans were swiftly developed to allow the university to adhere to its central mission effectively in the light of the possible threats imposed by the pandemic.

It was apparent that face-to-face instruction would no longer be possible, and students would not be able to live on campus. Fortunately, WCU already had a substantial cyber infrastructure in place that could support a rapid increase in the use of alternative learning modalities. The system was also robust enough to continue to provide for the needs of a fully remote workforce.

Many faculty members had significant experience teaching online and using various virtual methods of instruction. To assist instructors who were not as prepared to teach through cybernetic options, Instructional Designers and Instructional Support Specialists collaborated to provide a series of webinars designed to help these faculty move their courses to an online format and continue instruction. More experienced faculty also established an online support group for the transition process, where they could mentor those with less familiarity teaching online. Additionally, a Work Continuity website was published to provide the campus community with guidance on how to obtain necessary technology equipment, get onto the internet, access training resources, and view the university's Continuity of Instruction Plan.

The number of devices loaned to faculty and students after publishing the website is summarized in the graph below.

Two weeks were added to the end of the spring break week to give faculty time to prepare to instruct classes virtually. The type of training provided and the number of faculty participating during this period of preparation was record breaking. From March 16 to April 24, 853 faculty and staff registered for 56 webinars, covering specific tools and best practices related to five main areas; site preparation, communication, delivering course content, assessing students, and accessibility. All webinars were recorded, captioned and made available to the campus community through the Work Continuity website.

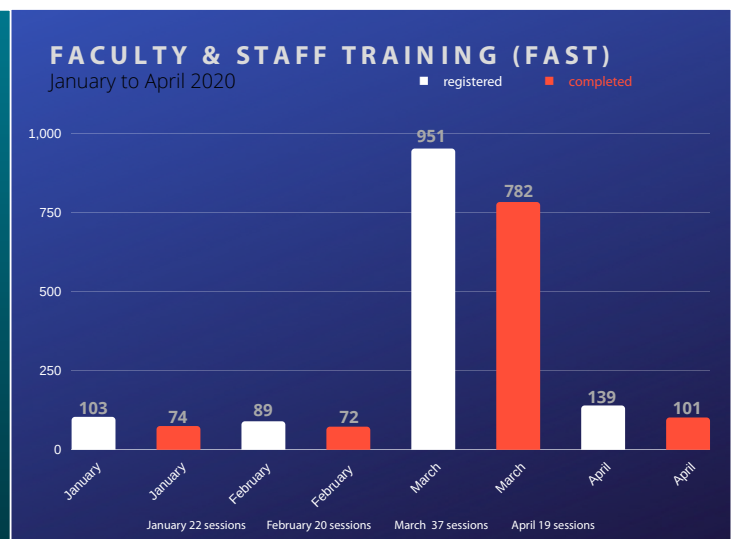
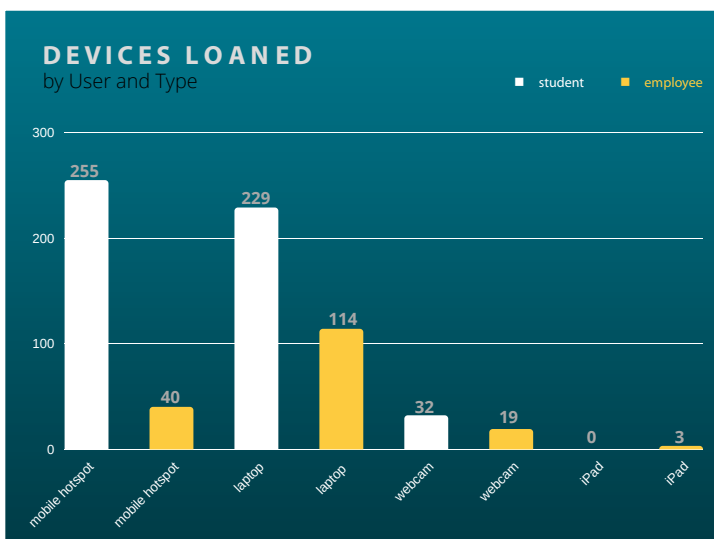
The positive response of faculty members and students suggest the modification of instructional modalities and instructional support services were successful considering the critical circumstances.

Other elements of the student learning experience were also modified by the university through the shared governance process. Learning that was typically augmented through internships, student teaching, and other forms of field experiences was impeded by the pandemic, and instructors became creative in finding novel ways to help students emulate such experiences. For example, student-teachers who had been assigned to teachers of record who continued to teach classes online were permitted to join virtually to help the classroom teacher prepare and deliver the instruction. At the graduate level, for example, a typical face-to-face experience, in which students presented a defense of their thesis, was completed through a virtual means. Zoom meetings were arranged in which a professor could oversee a student's defense and parents, significant others, and friends could join to witness the presentations online.

In changing the way instruction was to be delivered, grading methods had to also be altered to be realistic and fair during this period of rapid transformation. The administration, again through shared governance, developed an alternative grading policy for the semester.

Throughout the entire university, offices that provide many important services developed systems that would continue to make personnel available to students, faculty and staff. The overall response, by all members of the university community, to support the learning experience of the students, and to assist faculty and staff during the pandemic, was commendable.

While this is being written during a time of uncertainty, as things unfold WCU will continue to provide appropriate resources to support the design and delivery of the student learning experience.



Strengths

- WCU has expanded the graduate student body, increased support for graduate assistantships, diversified graduate programming, and increased our research profile at a time when graduate enrollments are struggling at many peer institutions.
- The adoption of the Curriculum Inventory Management (CIM) system has streamlined course approvals, simultaneously creating a database of all course syllabi and mapping student learning outcomes to the curriculum.
- WCU successfully launched a revised general education curriculum, including a First-Year Experience course and ePortfolio system through an inclusive and faculty-driven process.
- WCU has enhanced its access mission through the support of alternative locations in Philadelphia and at area community colleges.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Harness the success of our Philadelphia and Delaware County Community College programs to foster greater integration of students who are learning at alternate locations.
- Continue to demonstrate ability to recruit high-quality faculty to increase the complement of Black and LatinX faculty.





STANDARD IV: SUPPORT FOR THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Introduction

West Chester University (WCU) is committed to the success of its students in and out of the classroom, individually and holistically, from matriculation through graduation. WCU fosters a culture that emphasizes academic excellence, personal growth and development. Our mission states that WCU is a community of educators that develops graduates to succeed personally and professionally and contribute to the common good. Students see our commitment prior to their matriculation and carry that support with them as they graduate and become contributing members to their communities.

WCU is a thriving undergraduate and graduate institution in an enrollment climate that is trending downward. Part of our success stems from knowing that a student's education is more than academics, more than a GPA, and a university is a place to learn and grow in all aspects of one's self. There is a myriad of programs provided to support the student experience at WCU. Students have a unique opportunity to engage in many co-curricular opportunities on campus. From the arts to the sciences, from leadership opportunities to research opportunities, from sports participation to community service, WCU is committed to supporting students in their learning throughout their college experience. We have highlighted the programs below that significantly support student access, retention, and completion but with full knowledge that a program omitted from this narrative may be the most important contribution to a particular student's success.

For many underrepresented students, Black and brown students specifically, the college experience can be complicated to navigate. WCU is no exception. From access to completion, students may have encounters that do not support their student experience. Throughout this narrative we have described many of the WCU resources, programs, and interventions designed to support, retain, and graduate underrepresented students. But it is not enough. WCU is committed to creating a campus environment dedicated to equity, inclusion and social justice. Recently created and staffed, the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion addresses issues of social justice as discussed in Standard II. And we can do better. It is clear the student experience for students of color is different and more complex. It is an experience that our community has begun to understand and address, especially considering the

recent national and local conversations about racialized violence and discrimination (IV.6.7).

Access to West Chester University (Criterion 1a-b, ROA 8, 10)

Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions

Future students and their supporters get a brief understanding of our vibrant community in the "Get Started" video featured prominently on our undergraduate admissions webpage. Our "landing page" highlights the dynamic student body, support, and pride Golden Rams embody, emphasizing that WCU is "opportunity, success, family, giving, welcoming, community, memorable, home."

College is an investment in the future for students and for the institution, and all stakeholders need to understand the "price" and opportunity of that investment. WCU demonstrates a clear commitment to students by providing access to a top-tier education at one of the lowest price points of all four-year colleges and universities in Pennsylvania. WCU and all other institutions in the PASSHE system froze tuition for the 2019-2020 academic year and again in 2020-2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (IV.1.1).

With an emphasis on access to learning, prospective students and their supporters can be confident that WCU's rolling undergraduate admission process considers the diverse aspects of applications: academic record, standardized test scores, and requested program of study. In August 2019, WCU, deployed a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. Slate by Technosolutions provides a user-friendly interface and tool for connecting students and for creating a clear work-flow for admissions professionals. The Office of Admissions, which subscribes to the National Association for College Admission Counseling Principles of Good Practice, (IV.1.8) and the Offices of Admissions, Financial Aid, and Bursar provide current and accessible information about admissions policies and processes, financial aid, costs of attendance, grants and scholarships for traditional, transfer and international undergraduate students on their respective websites.

WCU's undergraduate programs are not the only areas in an upswing. Over the last ten years, WCU experienced a 35% increase in graduate enrollment which will be discussed further in Standard VI. Students recognize the strength of WCU's high-quality, accessible graduate degrees, certification, and certificate programs that are

enriched by faculty collaboration and a diverse student body.

In 2019, in recognition of this growing population and commitment to access, WCU established The Graduate School as a comprehensive division designed to provide a wide range of services. This transition from Graduate Studies Office to a Graduate School coincided with the 60th anniversary of graduate education, an important milestone for the university (IV.1.10). The move to a Graduate School model provides a “one-stop shop” and supports graduate students through a collaborative enrollment management and leadership structure. Prospective, newly admitted, and current students find the Graduate School’s admissions website as the primary source of information for programs and admission requirements, university-wide information on costs, financial aid, graduate assistantships and student support services, as well as departmental webpages for academic areas of focus, faculty, research opportunities, and program-specific support services.

Graduate applicants receive an individualized and holistic review. Decisions are made first at the graduate program level and are determined using multiple criteria that includes an evaluation of college transcripts, letters of reference, applicant goal statement, and if required by the program, standardized test scores, and other similar requirements. A faculty graduate coordinator serves as a liaison between the graduate program and the Graduate School and in conjunction with a college-level recruiter is in charge of recruitment and enrollment for each graduate program.

Expanded Enrollment Opportunities

WCU has expanded enrollment opportunities in the past 10 years to serve a wider range of learners. Since 2013, the university has maintained a thriving learning community in the heart of Philadelphia (IV.1.2). Serving mostly adult learners at the undergraduate and graduate level, the WCU “Philly” location provides access to degree programs, along with a comprehensive student success center, staffed by professionals and graduate students, which includes tutoring, writing support, career development programs, library services, and other co-curricular programs and services. Students also have access to services such as enrollment and financial aid.

WCU recently partnered with Delaware County Community College (DCCC). This collaboration allows students to earn a Bachelor of Science in Business Management on the DCCC campus (IV.1.13). Dedicated WCU staff support students from admission to graduation. WCU also guarantees admission for

undergraduate students transferring from a Pennsylvania community college with an Associate’s degree and for students transferring from a PASSHE university. Students transferring from one of the aforementioned institutions are not guaranteed admission to a particular major as some academic departments have specific course prerequisites and grade point average requirements (Catalog).

WCU prides itself on offering programs to meet the needs of all students, including those who are historically underserved, first-generation, adult, transfer, and traditional-aged students. Students are admitted to WCU into four distinct categories. WCU has a long history of cultivating successful support programs and developing new programs that meet the ever-changing needs of students.

Not every WCU student is prepared for the rigors of academic study at the college level. The Academic Success Program (ASP) is a special admissions program for undergraduate students who do not meet current admissions criteria but who still show the potential to succeed in college. During a five-week summer session, ASP students develop college-level skills in reading, writing, and mathematics and receive academic support through advising, tutoring, mentoring, monitoring, and counseling. Students enter the fall semester with six academic credits, along with confidence in academics, campus life, and university procedures. ASP faculty serve as the students’ academic advisors for their first year and continue to provide academic support and programming through graduation (IV.1.3).

The Graduate School also offers guidelines to provide access to promising students. Students who do not meet the GPA requirement (2.8) of the specific program or the Graduate School can be admitted with provisional status. The department graduate coordinator works with the graduate student to identify needed coursework, which may or may not be credited to degree requirements (Catalog).

WCU also has a diverse transfer community, which welcomes students from many different academic backgrounds. In 2016, the PASSHE BOG adopted the Student Transfer Policy, which states that all college-level credits from regionally accredited institutions will be accepted and ensures unnecessary duplication of coursework (IV.2.1). In addition, WCU accepts general education coursework from regionally accredited institutions when comparable to our program. Students who transfer from another PASSHE school with their general education program completed will have their general education requirements met. However, students

may need to satisfy unique, signature WCU general education requirements if doing so does not extend the time to degree.

For undergraduate transfer college-level credits, WCU first applies as many college-level credits as possible towards the satisfaction of general education requirements, then to requirements of the major, and finally to elective credits. The WCU Registrar's website is the primary source of information about policies and procedures for course evaluation and acceptance process, including transfer credit, test credit (AP, IB, CLEP), and international credit.

Likewise, graduate students may transfer credits earned through previous graduate study at another college or university. The Graduate Catalog and the Graduate School website explain conditions and minimum requirements for the acceptance of transfer credits. Decisions about potential course transfers are made at the program level by the graduate coordinator and then by the Graduate School.

Student Success and Retention at West Chester University (Criteria 1c-d, 4, ROA 8,10)

WCU is proud to welcome new students to our university, but we are even more proud to retain and educate the whole student by focusing on strong academic and co-curricular programs and support services. We are committed to students as individuals and as community members.

Supporting Incoming and New Students (Criteria 1c-d, 4)

WCU's New Student Programs (NSP) and the Director of Parent and Family Relations welcome, assist, and support new students, families, and supporters as they transition to, and through, the WCU community. NSP offers orientation experiences in June, August and January for new first-year, transfer, and adult learners. NSP also offers first-year and transfer transition programs throughout the semester. Orientation is also offered to all incoming graduate students through the Graduate School twice per academic year. Many graduate programs offer additional orientation programs to the students in their programs.

Approximately 40% of the students who graduate each year start as transfer students and often need unique tools for their success. The Transfer Concierge is a member of the

Registrar's Office who connects transfer students to campus resources and creates a welcoming community through transfer specific admissions events and orientations in conjunction with the Office of New Student Programs.

Student learning occurs both inside and outside of the classroom in many ways throughout the institution. All first-year students take WCU's First Year Experience (FYE) class. This dynamic four-credit course prepares students to be successful and engaged learners by building a strong foundation for academic success, personal growth and development, exploring campus resources, developing a passion for future academic study and preparing them for life after college. The partnership between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs has created a unique opportunity for students to engage in outcome-based learning experiences empowering them to learn, lead, and serve. See Standard III for additional details on FYE. Each incoming undergraduate student has access to a Student Success Coach, who provides practical skills and strategies like time management, test preparation, note taking, textbook reading, college adjustment and more. Initiated in Fall 2019, the Student Success Coaching evolved out of our Achieve! Program. (IV.1.4).

Support Throughout The Student Experience



77 Student Engagement and Success Services/Resources



Support for the Student's Curricular and Academic Experience

All students are eligible for tutoring and supplemental instruction at the Learning Assistance Resource Center (LARC). Each year, approximately 2600 students receive services. Additionally, the Francis Harvey Green Library provides academic support to the entire student body. In addition to the (2,381,296 number of holdings) the FHG Library offers 24/5 hours, study spaces, resource librarians available both in person and online, banks of computer terminals, interlibrary loan, and a robust instructional media center. Librarians provide support to students at all WCU locations. In addition, WCU's Early Alert Program (EAP) is a proactive system of communication and collaboration of professors, staff, academic advisors, and university students. EAP students participate in regular meetings to support their academic and social growth that address campus resources, communication skills, and self-advocacy skills.

Increased enrollment changes, growth, national focus, and retention prompted WCU to create five student success coordinator positions that are housed in each college. Staff serve as coordinators who work directly with students to ensure a solid academic plan, streamline registration, and explain university policy from matriculation through graduation. Originally established as a pilot in 2015, the positions were funded permanently in 2018. Additionally, the Committee for Advising Excellence continues to provide training and support to all faculty and staff who engage in advising students.

Support for the International Student Experience

As the number of WCU international students increase, so do the opportunities offered by The Center for International Programs (CIP). Currently, there are on-campus activities for international students on campus, additional study abroad opportunities, and new student success-oriented services. To better prepare students, in June 2016, WCU partnered with ELS Language Center to provide educational training to prospective students who do not meet language proficiency requirements. To increase efficiency and consistency, in 2019, undergraduate and graduate admissions staff manage all correspondence with international students and recruiters. To familiarize international students with the United States labor market and hiring process, the CIP partnered with the Twardowski Career Development Center. Recently, the Graduate Student Association added a new student organization, the International Graduate Student Association.

Support for Student Equity and Inclusion

The Underrepresented Male Task Force (URM) is a university-wide effort to increase the retention, persistence and graduation rates of Latino and African American undergraduate males. In addition to developing a campus wide plan for 2020-2021, the COMPASS was piloted in Fall 2019 to serve as a multi-layered program that supports African American males on academic probation.

The Center for Trans and Queer Advocacy creates an environment where the intersectional experiences of trans and queer people are supported, celebrated, validated and affirmed. In 2017, the first director of LGBTQA services was hired, then an associate director and support staff positions were added. The Center now has a newly updated space, including a student lounge with computers, and they have developed a range of new programs to support students and allies.

The Center for Women and Gender Equity (CWGE) actively promotes and advocates for a campus community that values the safety, equality, and intellectual advancement of women and other historically marginalized groups. During Summer 2019, CWGE received new office space which includes a lounge, computers and space for program planning. The director position was upgraded and an associate director position has been added to further support students.

The Dowdy Multicultural Center (DMC) hosts over 3,700 student visits annually, which coordinates services, programs, and resources and provides a comfortable and welcoming environment where students of color can access computers, study tables and a lounge area. In response to the increase in students using the Center, WCU upgraded the leadership position to a senior director and added an assistant director, a graduate assistant, and temporary graduate interns.

WCU's Veterans Center serves both veterans and their dependents. The Center includes parking, a computer lab, lounge space and kitchen space. A new counselor position has been added to support veteran students, including on-site services and a therapy dog. An admissions position has also been established to assist prospective veteran students with navigating their transition to college. The Center received the Silver Military Friendly School Award in 2020-21, is recognized as a Top College for Veterans by College Consensus and participates in the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs Yellow Ribbon Program.

In 2018, the university launched West Chester's First Initiative to better meet the needs of WCU's first-

generation students, which make up approximately 30% of undergraduate students. In 2019, WCU was named a First Forward institution by Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) and the Suder Foundation, one of only 80 institutions nationwide to receive this honor. WCU also became a member of a first-generation honor society, Alpha Alpha Alpha, induction to be scheduled in AY 2020-2021.

As the number of students registered with Autism Spectrum Disorder has grown from six (2014-15) to 65 (2019-20), the D-CAP program members, staff, and graduate assistant support has grown steadily since its inception in 2016-17. D-CAP also expanded to include the College Autism Readiness Retreat, collaboratively with Kutztown University, for high school students and the Ram Shop, opened in 2019, to prepare WCU students for employment. The Director of Autism Services is also in the process of starting a consortium for autism college programs (IV.6.5).

Student-Athletes have a special balance of academic and co-curricular lives. WCU is committed to the success and graduation of our student-athletes. We offer 24 varsity sports, and the number of student-athletes has remained steady at 550-600 for several years. WCU is committed to complying with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)'s rules and regulation and to providing educational support services and financial aid. All student athletes can participate in a mentoring program that offers on-going, one-on-one support, through graduate student mentors and faculty oversight, including special focus on first-year students and students experiencing academic difficulty. The department has also developed several programs specifically for designed for athletes. These programs include topics from leadership development, transitioning from "athlete to non-athlete" and social and mental health support. Athletics and co-curricular programs fall under the Division of Student Affairs and operate under the same administrative and budgetary principles (IV.4.1).

Support for the Student's Personal and Interpersonal Experience (Criteria 1c and 4)

The undergraduate Student Government Association (SGA) provides a unified and responsible government that promotes the welfare and growth of students. The SGA works to ensure that all rights and privileges are shared by all and that the concerns of students are heard and acted upon. The Graduate Student Association (GSA) is a student governing body that promotes well-being through education, professional and social events, and

as advocates for graduate student needs. GSA approved two new student organizations in 2019, the International Graduate Student Association and the Black Graduate Student Association Caucus to further support inclusivity and programming for students.

In 2018, WCU clustered key support programs to create a seamless experience for students. The Associate Provost for Student Success and Dean of University College and the University College itself houses the following student success services: Academic Success Program, Learning Assistance Resource Center, Exploratory Studies, Office of Services for Students with Disabilities, and Student Success Coaching. University College also maintains oversight of and connection with ROTC, RamNation (alumni mentoring), RAMP-UP, COMPASS, FYE, the Writing Center, and the Committee on Advising Excellence.

No university would be complete without mental health services and programs. Students can rely on the Department of Counseling and Psychological Services for individual therapy, group therapy, crisis intervention (during and after business hours), crisis consultation, and mental health education programs. As a response to the increased need for mental health services, the department offers short-term care, off-campus referrals long-term care, and assistance with insurance.

WCU's Community Mental Health Services, a non-profit training center, provides low-cost, cutting edge psychotherapy and testing including psychological services, as well as specializations in trauma-related disorders and child & adolescent mental health. This non-profit training center also supports graduate students as a research facility for the Doctor of Psychology Program and faculty as a clinical site for the Psychology Department. Students may participate in a comprehensive peer education program, co-curricular workshops, and campus-wide events offered by The Office of Wellness Promotion. All peer educators complete training to become certified through NASPA's Health, Safety, and Well-Being Initiatives.

Sometimes students engage in or are witness to concerning, disruptive and/or potentially harmful behavior. The Campus Assessment, Response, and Education Team (CARE Team) is a campus-wide team that provides a caring approach to identifying, consulting, and coordinating the university response and outreach for such situations. The case manager for CARE advocates for student success through non-clinical case management and social support needs through interventions, referrals, and connection to follow-up services, guided by the National Behavioral

Intervention Team Association (NaBITA). The case manager coordinates with community resources and campus partners including Academic Affairs, Dean of Students Office, Residence Life, Counseling Center, Office of Services for Students with Disabilities, and Registrar.

In 2017, the Resource Pantry began serving the estimated one-third of WCU students who experience food insecurity (IV.6.6). The Resource Pantry provides fresh and non-perishable food, personal care items, school supplies, career clothing, and winter coats. Pantry Ambassadors receive federal work study, and Pantry staff connect students to other WCU support services and programs, including Operation SNOW (Student Needs Over Winter), which provides winter clothes for students.

Co-Curricular Student Engagement (Criteria 1c and 4)

A WCU student's education would not be complete if pursuing only academic goals. The Division of Student Affairs (2018-2019 and 2019-2020 recipient of Diverse Magazine's Most Promising Places to Work) is home to 17 departments dedicated to supporting all students' experiences. WCU students can engage in co-curricular programs across the educational journey by the intentional and seamless experiences provided. In 2021, student will be able to make their co-curricular achievements an official part of their records through Ram Plan: WCU's Co-Curricular Transcript.

In 2017, WCU's Division of Student Affairs pivoted to become more intentional about creating a curriculum-based approach to providing co-curricular programs and services for all students. Based on the work of Kerr et al., 2017 and Kerr and Tweedy, 2006, the division developed five learning domains: career readiness, community engagement, health and wellness, involvement and leadership, and social justice. All programs are linked to these learning domains. Community engagement and social justice focus areas align with the university's new undergraduate certificate programs. The First Year Experience course fully supports and integrates co-curricular programming into its coursework.

WCU's co-curricular catalog is among the first of its kind in the country. Students are able to create individualized education plans by accessing the templates in the online co-curricular catalog, which was modeled after the academic catalog. In addition, students may develop competencies in the Division's seven co-curricular learning goals: civic engagement, communication, critical thinking, integrative learning, intercultural fluency, personal development and problem solving by engaging in the co-curricular transcript. These learning

goals were a result of a division-wide iterative process that intentionally aligned many of the major programs emanating from Student Affairs with university, field and industry frameworks such as the:

- WCU General Education Learning Outcomes
- Association of American Colleges and Universities' Essential Learning Outcomes and VALUE Rubrics
- National Association of Colleges and Employers' Career Competencies
- Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education's Student Learning and Development Outcomes

The Division is working with the Registrar's Office to create the Ram Plan: WCU's Co-curricular Transcript, which will serve as official documentation of each student's learning achievements, thereby completing students' educational experience and the larger mission of the university.

University Support and Interventions to Support and Enhance the Student Experience (Criterion 1c)

WCU's Student Success and Retention Council was created to analyze institutional retention and persistence data to address additional needs of WCU students as they arise. The Council includes one faculty representative from each College/School, four representatives from Student Affairs, Student Success Coordinators from each college, and representatives from other areas as needed (I.3.17). Rapid Action Task Forces are deployed to identify and address gaps in student success, retention, and persistence.

Since 1991, the Campus Climate Intervention Team (CCIT), a university-wide committee of faculty, staff and students, has cultivated an institutional climate free from acts of intolerance. The CCIT actively reviews campus climate surveys, acts as an education team responding to unwelcomed or challenging acts that occur on campus, and works proactively to encourage reporting and prevention of acts of discrimination, harassment or intolerance.

WCU has made significant investments in facilities to improve and enhance the student experience. Since the last accreditation visit, WCU opened a new Student Recreation Center; refurbished the Counseling Center with additional facilities with the goal to increase student privacy; refurbished a residence hall (Wayne Hall) into an academic building with classrooms; renovated a historic academic building preserving the beautiful serpentine stone exterior while modernizing the interior to center student success; branded WCU to increase school spirit

through the use of etched logos on glass doors, flags and banners on buildings and streets, enhanced and uniform signage for buildings, and other identifying features throughout all campuses. Standard VI provides a comprehensive discussion about university facilities.

Supporting the Student Financial Experience (Criterion 1a)

Like many college students, Golden Rams need financial assistance. WCU's Financial Aid Office serves students through Ask Rammy, a 24-hour customer service chatbot; the Promise Program, a Campus Support Program for Homeless and Foster Youth; emergency funds for book scholarships, micro-scholarships, and a fund to finish awards with support from the WCU Foundation and SSI. Institutional merit and need-based awards are now included as part of financial award offers. Financial Aid also expanded and streamlined the work-study program by creating new jobs on campus including positions at the Resource Pantry, D-CAP, CAH Ambassadors, and with the Transfer Concierge.

WCU offers many opportunities for students to work on campus. In addition to the expanded work-study program, WCU employs over 400 paraprofessional students in a variety of campus departments. Students serve as resident assistants, desk assistants, peer mentors, peer educators, student union building managers, etc. They receive exceptional focused training and evaluation. Our newest peer education program, Sustainability Peer Educators, is a direct outcome of WCU's focus on sustainability. Employment on campus creates a sense of belonging and can lead to student retention, success, and completion. Student employment, like student internship, is a high impact practice for students.

Graduate students, like their undergraduate counterparts, are often in need of financial assistance to succeed. Graduate assistants work in academic departments and student service offices on campus. Their work impacts crucial research efforts of the faculty, as well as strengthens the success of undergraduate students by providing tutoring, mentoring, programming, and other support around campus. Funding for assistantships has grown from \$3.2 million in fiscal year 2015 to \$4.6 in 2019 (IV.1.6). Graduate assistantships offer a tuition-waiver and stipend and are awarded by credits.

One of the most impactful opportunities for graduate students is the Graduate Dean's Professional Development Award (GDPDA). Since 2018-19, this award provides funding to current graduate students to attend

conferences for professional development and degree advancement. Students who are presenting and/or attending conferences are eligible for financial awards ranging from \$250 to \$1000.

West Chester University Degree Progress and Completion (Criterion 2)

WCU is dedicated to supporting students towards completion of their educational goals whether that be undergraduate or graduate degree or certificate completion. Many of the support programs mentioned above contribute to the support of student goals. Advising, tutoring, writing support, and other co-curricular support programs all help students navigate to completion.

Transfer Student Support

In addition to supporting students transferring to WCU as described previously, the Registrar's Office supports students in their ability to transfer credits successfully to other institutions. Students may order official transcripts to be forwarded to other institutions seven-days a week/24 hours a day. WCU posts all equivalencies on AcademyOne, an online vendor of transfer resources for institutions across the nation, which assists students in future planning for either graduate studies, second degrees, or transfer to another school.

Degree Progress Report

Undergraduate and graduate students have the ability to monitor their own progress towards their degree through the PeopleSoft system. Unlike a static page in the catalog, the Degree Progress Report (DPR) is available in real time to students and their advisors for degree audit, credits toward graduation, and completion requirement for graduation (IV.2.2).

Twardowski Career Development Center

The Twardowski Career Development Center (CDC) serves students by developing self-awareness of interests, values and skills, offering group and individual support with major and career exploration, resume and cover letter writing, job and internship search strategy, networking and interviewing, and hosting career fairs and industry meet-ups. Annual reports published by the Career Development Center show significant student and employer growth in recent years. In 2018-2019, the Career Development Center experienced a 35% increase in employer engagement on campus as compared to 2017-2018, representing an all-time high in employer engagement. The CDC also experienced an increase in student interactions in 2018-2019, including a 58%

increase in one on one appointments, an 80% increase in student event attendance and a 5% increase in student attendance at workshops, compared to 2017-2018. Given the need for more experiential opportunities and to help students begin building their networks, the Career Development Center partnered with the Office of Alumni Relations to launch Ram Nation, an online flash mentoring platform where students can request informational interviews, job shadows or mock interviews from alumni. Additionally, an online mock interview platform called Big Interview was implemented to better prepare students for video interviews, which are becoming more common. The CDC also monitors students' post-graduation plans through the First Destination Survey. Similar to 2017-18 graduates, 70% of 2018-19 graduates were either employed or engaged in military or volunteer service (IV.1.7).

Commencement Ceremonies

For many years, WCU held two undergraduate commencements and one graduate commencement at the end of each semester. Continued growth of the student body and unpredictable weather increasingly put a strain on the available facilities and the ability to center the students and their families in the ceremonies. To support this important student experience, in May 2019, WCU held 14 separate commencement ceremonies over a three-day weekend in May. The ceremonies involved additional faculty and staff to participate and allowed students to celebrate with more family and friends.

Logistical Support of the Student Experience (Criteria 3, 5, ROA 8)

Student Records

WCU is committed to the safe and secure maintenance and appropriate release of student information and records. To this end, there are policies, procedures and communication with faculty, staff, students and stakeholders about the importance of information security.

FERPA

The Registrar's office safeguards students FERPA rights through record maintenance and regular faculty and staff FERPA training sessions. Student directory information is not generally made available to the public except in certain circumstances for appropriate athletic, scholarship, award, enrollment verification, and police requests. Staff, faculty, student employees, and others with whom the university has a contractual relationship are not permitted to use or disclose student's directory

information for purposes other than those pertaining to their job responsibilities. WCU informs students of the outcomes of personal information related to FERPA (IV.3.1).

Information Services Policies and Procedures

The Office of Information Security provides comprehensive, campus-wide implementation and support of best practices, policies and procedures to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information systems and data. These include the Acceptable Use Policy, Data Classification Guide, Data Classification Policy and User ID and Password Policy, found here. Information Services and Technology (IS&T) strategic plan (IV.3.2), includes partnering with campus offices on data-related regulatory compliance such as FERPA, HIPAA, GLBA, GDPR, PCI, and SARA. Additionally, IS&T regularly audits and updates its Business Continuity Plan, as well as its Information Security Program plan. To ensure against data loss, IS&T performs periodic disaster recovery audits.

Third Party Vendors

WCU has three third-party providers that assist the university in providing support services. Student Services, Incorporated (SSI) is a not-for-profit organization primarily designed to initiate, regulate, and operate the financial matters of the campus bookstore, the RAM E-card program, student publications, student organizations, check cashing/ticket service, the administrative aspects of much of the student programming, a partition of intercollegiate athletics, and the GSA. Also, University Student Housing (USH) is a 501(c)(3) residence hall operation that provides 60% of on-campus beds. As third-party providers, WCU's relationship with SSI and USH are in accordance with the Board of Governor's (BOG) Policy related to external financial support (IV.5.1). While the university's staff provide the professional and paraprofessional training as well as the programming, USH owns and maintains the facilities. Lastly, Aramark provides dining services to the WCU community. Aramark has partnered with the university in to serve our students, most notably, as the lead sponsor of the WCU Resource Pantry. Aramark provides a yearly opening inventory of food, conducts two food drives a year, hosts dinners each semester to raise funds, and offers cooking demonstrations to teach students how to make nutritious meals with the food provided at the Pantry. All providers are subject to the BOG's procurement policy (IV.5.2) and the annual Council of Trustees resolution regarding affiliated organizations (IV.5.3).

Assessment of Effectiveness of Student Support (Criterion 6, ROA 8,10)

WCU is community of educators that supports students throughout their time in our community. We also recognize that regular assessment of the effectiveness of programs designed to support the student experience is essential for enhancement, growth and for meeting the ever-changing needs of students. Assessment processes for several areas include periodic external reviews which give further insight into how departments can better serve students (IV.6.8). As part of our culture and practice of assessment and improvements, the Division of Academic Affairs created the position of Associate Provost for Assessment and Accreditation and the Division of Student Affairs created the position of Executive Director of Assessment and Planning. Below are examples of assessment of several areas that support the student experience.

Undergraduate Admissions

Over the last several years, Undergraduate Admissions has been focused on the modernization of all its functions dedicated to serving students. In 2018, WCU hired consulting firm Ruffalo Noel Levitz, and this partnership provided comprehensive assessment reports of all admission functions, a draft recruitment plan geared toward serving traditional aged first year and transfer students, and recommendations for more efficient and student-centered departments.

Undergraduate Admissions electronically assesses all on-campus events and more recently has adjusted the timeliness of their surveying, variance in participants, the efficiency and effectiveness of the assessment tools and review of survey results. Moving to a quicker, more efficient tool has resulted in better response rate from attendees, as well as more detailed feedback that is utilized to enhance the student experience (IV.6.1).

Financial Aid

The Office of Financial Aid assesses services through internal audits of customer service and processed aid. Staff keep track of some of the following: number of calls answered, response time to voicemails and emails, and how much undisbursed and unprocessed aid is pending. The Office of Financial Aid also monitors phone lines with software, administers surveys to students and families, conducts program reviews using an external reviewer, and uses financial aid services consultants to assess compliance, staffing and business processes.

Ruffalo Noel Levitz assessed WCU's scholarship model, which includes merit awards and grants. The scholarship

model looks at (a) the amount of aid WCU needs to offer to yield the number of first-year and transfer students needed to reach enrollment targets and (b) the estimated family contribution. Based on the assessment, the scholarship model reduced one-time awards and increased awards needed to support students throughout their time at WCU, increasing retention and completion (IV.6.2).

University College

University College was established in 2018. In 2019, a shared governance approach was used by the faculty and staff to create a college mission statement, values statement, and priorities statement. Later that year, the same process yielded a technology priorities statement in order to ensure best utilization of resources and funding for technology. In 2020, this same process yielded a college Strategic Plan, which has become the College's assessment framework. This strategic plan is aligned with the university's Strategic Plan and mission and the college's mission statement. Please find the University College strategic plan (III.4.1).

Division of Student Affairs

The Division of Student Affairs (DOSA) maintains a robust assessment plan for programs and services which includes assessments of student needs, constituent satisfaction, campus climate, student learning, benchmarking, program review, and infrastructure and culture. The Division offers on-going assessment training and consultation. The purchase of Campus Groups has improved the tracking of program attendance and check-in systems has yielded more accurate data related to office visits.

The DOSA administers the National College Health Assessment and First Destination Survey on a regular basis. Academic Affairs' ongoing administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement also informs DOSA's work. Since 2018 departments also engaged in the NASPA Consortium Benchmarking Surveys for Fraternity and Sorority Life, Orientation, and Student Conduct.

As part of the co-curricular transcript development process, the DOSA created seven learning goals with definitions and rubrics for each. A comprehensive survey of the learning goals was piloted in Spring 2019. For the past 15 years, departments have engaged in the program review process. These reviews are scheduled to occur on a five-year cycle and have been paused while the DOSA completes a division-wide program review (IV.6.3) and external review to inform the division's next strategic plan (IV.6.4).

Conclusion

Thoughtful, appropriate, and timely support of the student experience is critical to institutional success and well-being. WCU has been and continues to be a champion for student success from access to engagement to retention and through completion and post-graduation. We know how to meet students where they are, provide individual support, and simultaneously create structures and institutional interventions that help students succeed. As with any iterative process, the self-study has provided us with insight that results in the recommendations that follow.

Strengths

- A robust co-curricular student engagement effort support university-wide student success efforts.
- WCU demonstrates a strong culture of assessment.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Continue to formally examine campus climate issues and make changes to enhance diversity, equity, inclusion, and support of the student experience.
- Continue the commitment to the co-curricular transcript by enhancing the professional development program designed to increase faculty adoption of transcribed programs that enhance classroom learning.





STANDARD V: EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

How do we know if students are learning? How do we make sure that continuous improvement is knitted into the fabric of our ever-evolving institution? West Chester University's (WCU) mission and strategic plan highlight the importance of student learning and success, and our processes for assessing our educational effectiveness assure that we are living up to those goals. Since the previous self-study, the institution continues to strengthen its systematic assessment of student learning, including assessments that assure students are accomplishing outcomes consistent with their program of study, degree level, and the institutional mission. The institution has established a management system for the curriculum review process, has dedicated human and financial resources to assessment and accreditation, and has continuously updated our already efficient processes for the institutional review of academic program student learning and general education outcomes. These efforts ensure our compliance with specialized accreditation and program review at the state level, and they enable us to institute a process for the review of online education and documenting the assessment of academic support services.

Systematic Goals & Assessments (Criteria 1, 2, 3; ROA 8, 9, 10)

Ensuring Student Learning Through Curricular Review

One of the more influential developments in the assessment of student learning was the transition from a paper process to an online curricular catalog management system in 2015. The Curriculum Inventory Management (CIM) system, as described in Standard III, allows the institution to manage the approval process for all course and program proposals and track student learning outcomes. The integration provides an infrastructure for academic departments to articulate how student learning is measured at the time a course or program is initiated in the curricular process. For every course or program proposal, the preparer must demonstrate alignment of the programmatic student learning outcomes to the course student learning outcomes, and, if applicable, the general education outcomes, and then align the assessments that demonstrate the achievement of the respective outcomes (V.1.1). This has streamlined the university's Curriculum and Academic Policies Council (CAPC) review process, while ensuring that the culture of assessment and student learning is consistent across the institution.

Planning and Resource Allocation to Support Educational Effectiveness

Our efforts to align resources to support our educational effectiveness goal have been intentional and focused. Most recently, we hired an associate provost for accreditation and assessment, bringing expertise and experience to guide and provide oversight for regional and specialized accreditation, general education and programmatic student learning assessment, academic program review, administrative assessment, and academic related federal compliance. The institution also supports educational effectiveness by providing alternate workload assignments (course reassignment) for faculty to champion, complete, and demonstrate the faculty centeredness of this work (V.3.1). The Fall 2020 total resource allocation for our Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Center, for example, was \$16,000. The faculty associate for assessment provides direct oversight of academic program student learning assessment and leads the assurance of student learning process. The Provost's Office also supports assessment coordinators in each department at the university, reserving nearly \$300,000 in funding during the academic year to support course release for their efforts. Finally, each summer a team of faculty are provided compensation to oversee and participate in the assessment of general education. For the Summer 2020 general education assessment cycle, the Provost Office provided 15 credits of support for the seven faculty members who participated in this work, at a cost of \$40,000. The total budget designated for assessment work for any given academic year is approximately \$462,000.

Academic Program Student Learning Assessment

Since 2012 the institution has implemented a comprehensive and systematic process for the assessment of student learning for all academic programs called the Assurance of Student Learning (ASL). The goals of the ASL are to communicate a consistent message regarding institutional expectations and requirements for student learning outcomes assessment, develop a process for programs to receive feedback on their plans, and allow administration to understand the status of student learning outcomes across all programs. Two platforms are used for monitoring this process; TK20 is used exclusively in the College of Education and Social Work, while Nuventive is used in the remaining Colleges and School to document and track all academic program student learning assessment plans. The platforms allow for the creation of reports such as curriculum

maps that demonstrate the alignment of program learning outcomes to general education outcomes and specialized accreditation standards or institutional goals to Middle States standards. The ASL is overseen by the faculty associate for assessment, reporting to the associate provost for accreditation and assessment. This individual chairs the university's Assessment Advisory Committee and works closely with each associate dean of the Colleges as they have oversight for assessment within their units. The Provost's Office provides individual faculty within each College/School release time to serve as the assessment coordinator. Assessment coordinators ensure the plans are carried out annually by following the agreed upon student learning outcome rotation schedule (V.1.2).

Annually, the ASL process begins at the start of each academic year, when assessment coordinators are asked to discuss their student learning assessment plan with faculty and staff in their departments and programs using the previous year's results. The programs develop action plans and place this information into the institutional platform by November. Following this, all assessment plans are evaluated using an institutional rubric by the University Academic Assessment Committee (UAAC) and associate deans to determine program compliance with what the institution calls the core elements of assessment. The rubric is based on the criteria shown in the table below.

The ASL has enabled the institution to create heat maps (i.e. green is good, red needs improvement) annually following the review of the plans each November (V.2.1). The heat maps demonstrate how programs are

performing within each criterion of the four-point Likert scale. Any program that receives below a four in a rubric criterion is given qualitative feedback to help them improve in their overall assessment of student learning (V.2.2).

PROGRAM	RESULTS	ACTIONS
Graphics and Interactive Design BFA	2.5	4
Studio Arts BFA	3	3
Communication Studies BA	4	3.5
Communication Studies MA	4	4
English BA	4	3.5
English MA	4	4
History BA	4	4
History MA	1.5	1.5
Languages and Cukltures BA	4	4
Languages and Cultures MA	4	3
Philosophy BA	3.5	3
Religious Studies BA	2	3
Philiosophy MA	4	3
Theater BA	2	2
Women and Gender Studies BA	3.5	3.5
AVERAGE	3.33	3.27

Outcomes	Program outcomes must be direct and specific. Outcomes should clearly state what students will be able to know, do, and value through the completion of the assessment measure
Measures	There must be a minimum of 2 program level measures for each outcome. One of the measures must be a direct measure (sample of actual student work) while the other measure can be indirect (a report of perceived student learning)
Curriculum Map	All programs must have a curriculum map to demonstrate where their program level outcomes are first introduced (i.e. discussed), practiced (evaluated at the course level) and ultimately assessed at the program level,
Rationale	Appropriate rationale must be provided for each outcome measure, (rationale can include the course, description of measure, and/or level of student being assessed)
Criterion	Benchmark levels (criterion) must be set for all outcome measures (i.e. 80% of students will score "x" or higher on assessment measure). Having criterion will enable programs to understand whether or not they were successful in the achievement of the outcome measure
Results	Programs must annually report results of several program outcome measures and include some level of data analysis
Action Plans	All results should have an appropriate action plan to demonstrate what if anything can be improved and/or documented as a program strength as a result of the assessment cycle

While the College of Education and Social Work (CESW) participates in the ASL process alongside the other colleges, CESW has built in additional assessment practices to assure that their efforts are aligned with the needs of the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). CESW is committed to the Assurance of Student Learning process (Academic Program Student Learning Assessment) and in achieving the Quality Matters Standards for online education through the CESW Assessment Office, senior instructional designer, and faculty assessment coordinators in each department. Additionally, each program has developed program specific student learning outcomes that are aligned to the CESW Conceptual Framework and programmatic accreditation standards. Education preparation programs also align outcomes with SPA standards, Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) competencies, and the Danielson Framework for Teaching. With rigorous reporting requirements for the various educator preparation programs, unit assessment data are collected and reported through an assessment software system called Tk20 by Watermark for all programs within the CESW (V.2.3). Beginning in the 2020-21 academic year, the CESW will begin to also utilize the Nuventive assessment system to align better with programs across the university.

Programmatic Change as a Result of Assessment

The ASL process has enabled the institution to create an assessment of the assessment process to regularly monitor and document micro-level changes within academic programs. There have also been macro level changes that have occurred as the result of the institutional assessment process. We have added new certificate programs such as the Principalship certificate (CESW), Gerontology (CESW) and Mindfulness (CHS). The Communication Studies Department has created a concentration in digital media (CAH). Several programs have instituted pre-requisite coursework to ensure student success. For example, the Exercise Science program now requires students to take Introduction to Biology prior to Anatomy and Physiology, and the Math department has worked to create a specific math requirement course for business students.

Excellence in Action:

Over the last several years, the criteria used to assess each assessment plan (and the rubric used to evaluate these criteria) have been modified to ensure continuous improvement of the ASL process (V.2.4). For example, the rubric criterion for action plans has been modified to recognize the programs who are doing assessment well so that the evaluation was less focused on the negative.

Specifically, the criterion was revised for programs to not only indicate “action complete” when a benchmark is met but for programs to critically analyze and then articulate the strengths of the curriculum that have assisted in the achievement of the outcomes. During the past five years, significant advancements were made toward the development, restructuring, and refocusing of the program assessment plans. Particular attention was given to the utility of assessment plans and their capacity to inform potential programmatic changes to effect improvements in student learning outcomes.

The reviews demonstrate that several programs (e.g. Anthropology, Sociology, Communication and Media, Political Science, etc.) strive to collect data more effectively and efficiently, and to increase their benchmarks to the same levels used by comparable peer institutions (V.3.2). To illustrate this more specifically, faculty in the Political Science department reviewed the assessment plans and tools of peer institutions and restructured their assessment plan with the intent to enhance the measurement of program level outcomes. The previous plan included course embedded/course-specific assessments for all of the five program goals and used a simple majority benchmark of 51% students passing in the essential areas. The new plan has increased the benchmark to a super majority of 70% of students who score adequate or higher on essential areas; it retained the course-specific assessments to measure student learning outcomes for one of their program goals (written and oral communication skills); and, it added a 30-question comprehensive exam to assess learning outcomes for the four remaining program goals (knowledge of discipline, information literacy, critical thinking, and global perspectives). This newly developed exam includes multiple questions about concepts taught in the core courses, and it is implemented online at program entry and exit. The assessment data indicates that students meet and exceed the learning objectives. The department has been actively using the assessment results; it has already taken several actions to gauge the quality of the program and of its components and to improve programmatic outcomes (V.2.5).

The College of Education and Social Work (CESW), which serves as the home for the majority of the Educator Preparation Programs (EPP), as well as Counselor Education and Undergraduate and Graduate Social Work, continues to use assessment results to enhance students’ learning (V.2.6). Each program has developed program specific student learning outcomes that are aligned to the CESW Conceptual Framework, Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)

Standards, Specialized Professional Association (SPA) standards, Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) competencies, and the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The EPP has developed a multilayered and complex assessment system designed to facilitate continuous improvement and student learning. Specific mention could be made of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, which was adopted as a more effective tool to provide support and feedback to candidates in preparation for the demands of teaching. The EPP also adopted the Professional Disposition Assessment, which is based on the 2011 Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Model Core Teaching Standards. This is a developmental process that provides clear support and feedback to teacher candidates, along with evidence of candidates' preparedness for employment in the demanding profession of education. More importantly, faculty members in the Departments of Early and Middle Grades Education, Literacy, and Educational Foundations and Policy Studies, in collaboration with Ball State University, developed the Community Immersive Semester for Educators (CISE). CISE offers candidates in the Early Grades Preparation program access to a nationally recognized, evidence-based model, which develops the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions for working with racially and socioeconomically diverse children and their families in historically marginalized communities.

Both the undergraduate and graduate Social Work programs at WCU are nationally accredited by the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE). These two programs rely heavily on national benchmarks and accreditation standards to assess student learning outcomes. The BSW uses two core assessment items to measure the attainment of the nine program competencies specified in the 2015 EPAS (Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards). Since the 2016/2017 academic year, the BSW program has witnessed tremendous improvement in their assessment of their implicit curriculum. This revision has yielded significant and remarkable results such as the reaffirmation of accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) until 2027. This reaffirmation validates and confirms the quality of the program, valued and respected by CSWE and peers across the United States, and it reaffirms both BSW program options for the full eight years.

Within the College of the Sciences and Mathematics, departments not only use the assessment results to further the program changes, but also utilize the assessment process itself to help further chart the path of student growth. At the undergraduate level, the B.S.

in Political Science is a prime example of a department that used the assessment results for increasing the opportunities available to students to further their education in a specific niche. As can be seen in the department's four column report (V.3.3), based on the assessment results and discussion, the department has evolved over time. The genesis of the two minors, (i) Law and Society and (ii) Global Studies, can be found in the assessment results discussion. The B.S. in Mathematics and the B.S. in Chemistry are examples of two programs that used the assessment process to further student learning. Both departments offer numerous concentrations within their programs for students to graduate. A few years back, each track had individual assessment plans. This led to heterogeneity in student learning within each track. Acknowledging the unevenness of the assessment and student learning, both the departments overhauled their assessment framework and measures. As can be seen in their current four column reports (V.3.4), both the departments are witnessing increases in student learning.

Over the last five years, two programs were evaluated by site teams of respective accreditors: The Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, accredited by ABET and the Bachelor of Science in Chemistry, Forensic Toxicology and Chemistry programs, which is also accredited by Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission (FEPAC). In both review processes, a common suggestion provided by the reviewers was to grow the external Industrial Advisory Council for the programs and include them in the assessment of the program educational objectives (V.3.5). Over last two years, the College, in close collaboration with the faculty members of the department, has worked on expanding the composition of individual advisory councils with qualified new members. Further, the faculty and the members of the council are now periodically assessing the program objectives to ensure the objectives are aligned with the current needs of the industries and society.

The College of Business also demonstrates an effective utilization of assessment results to make changes to student learning. At the undergraduate level, the College redesigned its assurance of learning (AOL) and as a result revamped their senior survey. Initial results show a positive correlation between students doing internships and securing post-graduation employment. The college has also overhauled the content of one of its main courses, MGT 313 (Business and Society), a discipline-specific writing emphasis course required for business majors. Faculty teaching this course will receive one-on-one coaching sessions and participate in training

session on teaching writing emphasis courses facilitated by the Director of Writing Across the Curriculum at WCU. At the graduate level, while the MBA students who took the 2018-19 national assessment exam scored above average, their performance in finance questions was below national average. To address the low performance in finance questions, the faculty have created a common course structure with common course learning outcomes, eliminated group projects, and limited the required textbook to two choices. All of these faculty-driven curricular enhancements will be implemented in Fall 2020.

General Education Assessment

In 2013-14 the institution began using the Association of American College & Universities Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubrics in the assessment of general education. To allow for effective assessment the general education goals are placed on rotational schedule where two of the six goals are assessed annually (V.2.7). Faculty members who teach general education courses are required to identify the respective artifact that can be used for general education assessment when they propose or re-validate courses through the university's curriculum management software system. Annually, each fall, faculty teaching courses related to the goal(s) to be assessed in the upcoming spring are asked if they would like to participate in the general education assessment process. The process is led by the Director of General Education Assessment and the Associate Provost for Assessment and Accreditation. A representative faculty sample from across colleges and courses are selected. Upon selection, the team meets prior to the beginning of the spring semester to ensure a course artifact will align with the VALUE rubric (V.2.8). Faculty then reconvene in the summer to review and score artifacts through meetings facilitated by the Director of General Education Assessment who is responsible for writing the annual report (V.2.9). In addition to documenting student learning within general education through this process it has also been a useful way to provide faculty development (V.3.6).

Excellence in Action:

Over the last several years the General Education Assessment process has been beneficial for faculty development as well as the documentation of student learning. For example, in completing general education assessment on the goal of oral communication in 2015 it was discovered that students in 400 level courses were not as proficient as hoped in their speaking. A curriculum change was approved that now requires students to

take nine credits of speaking emphasis courses (SE). These courses are aimed at helping develop students' skills throughout the curriculum and not just in their introductory and capstone courses. A similar finding occurred in reviewing the general education goal on ethics. Students are now required to take at least 3 credits of coursework with an ethics designation.

Accreditation Processes in Professional Programs

WCU's professional programs continue to use data and assessment results to make programmatic changes to ensure student learning and success (V.3.7). Most importantly, these programs rely on the benchmarks and standards set forth by their professional organizations and accrediting bodies to make informed curricular decisions that enhance student learning. These data-driven decisions have impacted programs' evaluation and assessment of student learning. Over the past years, several of WCU's programs with specialized accreditation have strategically overhauled their assessment plans to strengthen their student learning in critical program competencies to make their students globally competitive. Some of the changes we have witnessed were driven by state mandate, in the case of the College of Education and Social Work, and some are the results of recommendations by national and regional accrediting organizations such as the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) and the American Psychological Association Committee on Accreditation (APA-CoA).

To illustrate this, the four AACSB accredited programs (Accounting, Economics and Finance, Management, and Marketing) have a Continuous Improvement Review Process that follows a five-year cycle. The cycle ends with a site visit, and then the process begins over again. Throughout the cycle, all programs are required to review and refine their strategic plans and complete an annual survey. In the third year, each program submits their Continuous Improvement Review Application, which includes an interim self-study report and recommendations for site visit team composition and peer and aspirant schools. During the last site accreditation in 2017, the AACSB team identified two areas of improvement (V.3.8). First, the team recommended that an update of the program's Assessment of Learning (AOL) system and curriculum management system align with college-level outcomes rather than department/course level outcomes. In response to this comment, the School of Business put together a group of 70 full- and part-time faculty to participate in the redesign of their entire AOL system to make them more efficient and responsive to their assessment. Additionally, the business programs

are utilizing meaningful college-level data to inform curricular decision-making and changes. Second, the team recommended that the programs simplify and improve the accuracy of the faculty qualification system to document how faculty demonstrate academic and professional engagement. In response to this, the School of Business has overhauled its faculty qualification system to simplify and clarify the criteria. In addition, the School has implemented a more effective system to track and record faculty intellectual contributions and research productivity.

In the College of Health Sciences, two programs have successfully used assessment results to enhance student learning based on recommendations by their accrediting organizations. In the October 2015 site visit, the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) recommended the Public Health department strengthens their MPH program evaluation and planning in the areas of assessment and reporting methods. The department has accomplished this by revising their 22 core competency requirements that serve as the foundation for the MPH program assessment.

A second program that demonstrates success in student learning in the College of Health Sciences is the Athletic Training (AT) Program. The Dean of Health Sciences noted the AT assessment plan as a model for other programs. The AT program believes that student learning transcends the assessment metrics outlined in their program (V.3.9). As such, the AT program has ensured the quality of student learning through an array of factors including the diversity of its faculty expertise, a collaborative learning environment for its students, and the exposure of students to diverse clinical experiences. The AT program curriculum is broadly focused to train and prepare students for the spectrum of patient populations and professional settings. More specifically, the diversity and content expertise of the AT faculty has established an outstanding learning environment for the WCU AT students. To strengthen student learning and experience, the program is currently exploring the possibility of incorporating Community Volunteers in Medicine (CVIM) in West Chester into the clinical education requirements for both the bachelor's and professional master's programs.

Next, the College of Science and Mathematics' department of Psychology completed its most recent accreditation in April 2019 with commendations. The American Psychological Association Committee on Accreditation (APA-CoA) celebrated the department for its strengths in research, access to a range of varied practicum training sites, and focus on multiculturalism.

The Psychology department has modified their dissertation proposal process and the degree clearance criteria for obtaining the master's degree leading to the PsyD program. The department is utilizing APA-CoA's recommendations to streamline its assessment of specific knowledge area of cognitive-affective bases of behavior to ensure that each student has attained graduate level competence in affective areas of behavior, cognitive aspects of behavior, and the integration of cognitive and affective bases of behavior (V.3.10).

The CESW continues to be responsive to state mandates and benchmarks set by NCATE and CAEP. During the last NCATE accreditation in 2014, the NCATE team reported that not only has the College of Education met the six NCATE standards, but also, the College has responded positively to state mandates and implemented a four-stage field experience model that includes observation, exploration, pre-student teaching, and student teaching. It is important to note that since the last NCATE visit, two of the programs have achieved national recognition from their Specialized Professional Association (SPA) with the revised assessment instruments.

Academic Program Review Assessment

All programs are reviewed at five-year intervals as part of the Academic Program Review (APR) process, and program review reports are then sent to the state system (V.2.10). At WCU, the APR process is intended to enhance educational effectiveness on curriculum improvement, and on student and faculty achievements. The curriculum is reviewed and revised based on data collected from faculty and students, alumni, community, and other stakeholders.

All academic programs are reviewed every five years unless they have completed an accreditation process during their fourth year since the prior review or are in the process of reaccreditation during their fifth year. The APR process is well documented and follows a one-year timeline, starting at the end of the spring semester and ending at the beginning of the fall semester of the following year. The required evidence for the APR includes the items listed below:

- Faculty curricula vitae
- Advising sheets and handbooks
- CAPC reviewed syllabi
- Program enrollment and budgeting information
- Student assessment data

Also uploaded in the Nuventive system, the APR highlights faculty and student achievements and student learning outcomes. The curriculum assessment

map reports on the progress made on each goal and objective, as they align to the College's and university's mission.

The university is committed to being responsive to regional needs, improving access, and serving the educational needs of a diverse student body. We strive to be a leading educational and cultural resource and partner in fostering the economic, social, and cultural vitality of southeastern Pennsylvania. Thus, the APR is expected to include an environmental analysis focused on the need for new programs and marketing of existing programs, and if applicable, justifying the need for additional physical and fiscal resources.

The report, and its supporting evidence, is reviewed by an external faculty member, generally from a peer-institution, and by the dean of the College. The two reviewers' reports are submitted to the APR Coordinator and to the Associate Provost for Accreditation and Assessment, who will issue recommendations for improvement in the areas of assessment and curriculum, recruitment, and governance. Once the APR process is complete, the program will develop and implement an action plan to meet the recommendations and be flexible enough to integrate new developments in the field of inquiry and additional accreditation requirements. The subsequent APR report must report on the process of implementation of the prior recommendations and evaluation of the results, or it must justify the lack of implementation.

Assessment of Online Education Courses

In November of 2019, the university was awarded the Quality Matters (QM) Online Teaching Support certification, which according to QM "recognizes programs that require all online faculty to undergo training in best practices for online course delivery, provide faculty with ongoing pedagogical support, encourage faculty professional development to increase their knowledge and skill in online teaching, emphasize instructor availability and feedback to learners, and collect and use feedback from learners to improve online teaching." To achieve program certification, three years of data across five criteria must be submitted and reviewed by a QM review team.

A committee that consists of representatives from both academic and administrative offices across campus has been formed to examine and improve our current academic and student services with the goal of achieving the QM Online Learner Support certification. Fully online programs are encouraged to pursue QM Program Design Certification and QM Student Success

Certification. Implementing Quality Matters aligns with the institutional mission of focusing on student success through improved course design. This provides avenues to demonstrate access to learning and continuous improvement, specifically by expanding professional development offerings inspired by the QM Rubric and improving our online programs and services with appropriate processes and procedures recommended by QM program review committees (re: Student Advisory Committee) and final QM reports.

At the course level, faculty are encouraged to submit their courses for QM Course Review. A QM Course Review is based on the QM Higher Education Rubric which consists of eight General Standards and 42 Specific Review Standards. The review is conducted by a team of three faculty, two from outside the institution and at least one subject matter expert. For a course to meet QM expectations, a course must meet all three-point essential standards and result in a total overall score of 85 or higher out of 100 points.

Excellence in Action

During the 2017-2018 academic year, the Office of Distance Education offered an initiative in which a cohort of faculty agreed to attend the QM Applying the Rubric workshop, then work with their instructional designer over the next academic year to prepare a course of their choosing for QM Course Review. The initiative was renewed for a second academic year resulting in a total of 30 QM certified courses across five academic departments as of Fall 2020 (II.1.2).

In addition to the implementation of QM, online instructors are encouraged to collect student feedback through the Learning Management System using a recommended list of 35 questions incorporating QM Standard Elements. The Office of Distance Education has also administered multiple university-wide online student surveys throughout the past five years.

Use of Results for Improvement of Educational Effectiveness (Criterion 3; ROA 8,9,10)

Assessment of Academic Support (Tutoring and Supplemental Instruction)

To promote student learning and success, the Learning Assistance and Resource Center (LARC) provides academic support through tutoring and academic success coaching to enhance independent and active learners at WCU. In addition, the LARC adopted a Supplemental Instruction (SI) model, a nontraditional form of tutoring that focuses on collaboration, group study, and interaction for assisting students in

historically difficult courses. While there are several academically rigorous courses that pose challenges to students, the LARC's SI targets Biology and Chemistry courses that have high rates of students that drop, fail, withdraw (DFW rates), and then provides enhanced peer-assisted study sessions on course materials outside the classroom. Peer tutors attend course lectures and facilitate weekly review sessions for students. The LARC currently utilizes the SI tutoring model for ten Biology and Chemistry courses (V.3.11). LARC staff members are actively seeking improved methods to further assess the SI program including a comparison analysis of SI and non-SI users and exploration of SI course expansion beyond Biology and Chemistry courses based on DFW grade reports.

The Learning Assistance and Resource Center utilizes mid- and end-semester surveys to monitor the progress of tutored students. These surveys require students to provide self-reported feedback in areas around study skills, tutoring assistance, communication, employing quantitative concepts, critical thinking, ethical decision making, and responding thoughtfully to diversity (V.3.12). Survey results are analyzed each semester by LARC staff and used to update programming.

Excellence in Action

Each semester, the LARC conducts a grade analysis to determine the effect of SI attendance on final course grade. Results from Fall 2018 show a positive correlation between the number of SI sessions attended and course GPA (V.3.13).

Supporting Student Learning, Achieve! (FY4) and the Success Coaching Model

In 2016, the LARC initiated programming to address the needs of students who were deemed academically "at-risk" by the WCU Admissions Office. Due to their academic background the Achieve! students were previously admitted to the university with a reduced academic load of 12 credits. With this initiative, the Achieve! students were allowed to take a full academic load of 15 credits. These students were accepted into the Achieve! special admissions program and received one-on-one academic coaching support.

Excellence in Action:

During the first year of implementation, the Achieve! program proved to be successful in two different areas in terms of second fall retention and total number of academic credits earned. Of the total of 260 students who initially enrolled in the program in Fall 2016, 210 returned to WCU in the Fall 2017 semester,

corresponding to a 2nd fall retention of 80.8%. The percentage of Achieve! students who earned between 12 and 15 credits for the 2016 and 2017 cohorts at the end of their first semester was 79.5% and 73.7% respectively compared to 30.6% for 2014 cohort and 33.3% for the 2015 cohort. However, in Fall 2019, as a result of changes in the university Strategic Plan, the Achieve! Program was reorganized into a success coaching service model that promotes the success of all undergraduate students. The Success Coaching model is described in Standard IV.

The Academic Success Program (ASP)

Committed to its access and diversity mission, WCU's ASP (formerly Academic Development Program) continues to provide quality academic enrichment program to students. The ASP is a nationally acclaimed program at WCU that provides educational opportunities and accessibility for academically underprepared students. Its mission is grounded on the philosophy of educational access, inclusion, and opportunities for students who do not meet current admissions requirements but who demonstrate the potential to succeed in college. The program assists students in developing basic academic skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and speaking. In addition, the program provides academic support for students through academic advising, tutoring, mentoring and academic monitoring, counseling, financial aid assistance, and cultural enrichment. Sensitive to the unique differences among individual students, the program endeavors to create an inclusive community environment conducive to learning and holistic development.

Based on its assessment and Periodic Program Review (PPR), the ASP has made strategic changes to its program structure and curriculum over the past three-four years. These changes are a culmination of various sources of information such as course grade reports and national best practices (V.3.14). Also, to increase their yield and reach to a larger student pool, the program strategically moved their admission deadline from January/February to December, recruited a learning specialist to provide proactive support and assessment of students to enhance their learning, and redefined the responsibilities of the program's mentoring coordinator into Student Success Coordinator with specific initiatives to support student learning and retention.

Curriculum Changes

Using their Periodic Program Review (PPR), the ASP made two major curriculum changes to improve students' learning. First, ASP adopted Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS) as an effective

instructional modality for teaching developmental mathematics courses. ALEKS is a nationally recognized online tool that provides adaptive math modules based on a student's current skill level. Second, historically the ASP has relied on a standard reading placement test by Pearson. However, using its internal assessment data, ASP worked with the Literacy Department and created a placement test that better assess the reading levels and learning needs of the ASP students. This led to the creation of a for-credit course, EDR 120 (College Reading and Study Skills). Starting in Summer 2019, students in ASP no longer take a developmental reading course, a move that should impact student retention, credit accumulation, and timely graduation. With the discontinuation of the reading placement test, we see approximately 97% of the students earning a passing grade EDR 120 and earning college credit. This is the direction developmental programs across the nation are moving, and WCU is proud to follow suit.

Indicators of Student Success

The Office of Institutional Research publishes university and college-level retention and graduation rates on an annual basis. The rates are shared via a dashboard system on the university website. The annual results are shared with college deans and university administrators

at the Provost's Executive Cabinet and President's Cabinet. The most recent rates are shown in the figure below. The university has access to further retention and graduation rate data through the Office of Institutional Research (V.3.15).

Excellence in Action

WCU continues to track disparities in the success rates of African American males as compared to other populations on several achievement measures. Building on past projects, including the Equity Score Card, an evidence-based initiative was designed and implemented, addressing the priority of Learning in the *Pathways to Student Success* strategic plan. Launched in 2019, the URM Task Force seeks to rapidly remediate the minority achievement gap for African American men, whose four-year graduation rate is over 30 percentage points lower than the university's overall graduation rate. The goal is to move the minority achievement gap within three-points of 53.23% by Fall 2023, which was the university's four-year graduation rate at the time of implementation.

Also, WCU's Student Success and Retention Council, discussed in more detail in Standard IV, was created to analyze retention and persistence data in order to address needs of students as they arise. The Council

Summary of Retention and Graduation Rates: First time, Full-time, First Year Degree Seeking Students

Category		2nd Fall Retention		4 Yr Graduation Rate		6 Yr Graduation Rate	
		N in F18 Cohort	% Retained to 2nd Fall	N in F15 Cohort	% Graduated Within 4 Yrs	N in F13 Cohort	% Graduated Within 6 Yrs
University	All FY	2771	85.5	2381	52.3	2292	76.6
Admissions Type	Regular	2225	86.5	1996	56.1	1893	79.3
	ASP - ACT101	61	80.0	75	16.0	73	53.4
	ASP - Non-Act101	116	87.9	106	30.2	108	65.4
	ACHIEVE!	369	79.7	204	42.2	218	67.4
Underrepresented Minorities	URM	559	79.2	480	31.7	419	61.5
	Non-URM	2162	87.2	1889	57.8	1871	80.1
Race/Ethnicity by Gender	Black Female	167	77.8	168	31.0	134	65.7
	Black Male	104	78.8	83	19.3	97	41.2
	Latina Female	128	79.7	91	47.3	70	74.3
	Latino Male	65	81.5	68	26.5	52	56.9
	White Female	1283	88.7	1150	63.7	1195	83.8
	White Male	782	84.5	681	48.4	616	72.9

Red - Rate is lower than prior year || Blue - Rate is higher than prior year

includes one faculty representative from each College/School, four representatives from Student Affairs, Student Success Coordinators from each college, and representatives from other areas as needed. Rapid Action Task Forces are deployed to identify and address gaps in student success, retention, and persistence.

Assessment of the Effectiveness of Assessment Processes (Criterion 5; ROA 8,10)

WCU regularly engages constituents in evaluating assessment processes. The University Academic Assessment Committee (UAAC), made up faculty, administrators, and students, assess their processes annually (V.5.1). The committee solicits feedback around the process from the associate deans and assessment coordinators (V.5.2). The committee then discusses trends seen throughout the review cycle and hosts brown bag lunches on topics of interest or one-on-one sessions with individual departments (V.3.6).

Annually, the UAAC recognizes and celebrates academic programs that are engaged in effectual and exemplary work to demonstrate student learning outcomes. Those programs achieving high scores are considered for inclusion in the WCU Exemplary Practices in Academic Program Assessment Plans document (V.5.3). This document helps not only in the review of the assessment process but also to celebrate the many successes that come from assessment of student learning.

As WCU navigates the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential to assess student learning achievement. The Office of the Provost and the UAAC will be developing a plan to assess what ramifications were seen throughout the Spring and Summer 2020. The ASL process continued through the pandemic with the faculty associate for assessment providing flexibility to the colleges by adjusting deadlines to the ASL review cycle.

Excellence in Action

After heat map feedback was received from associate deans, changes were made to the assessment cycle. Some viewed heat map scores that fell on the lower end of the scale as punitive in nature with little room for improvement (V.2.1). UAAC took this feedback into consideration and viewed two changes as opportunities for improvement to the process. First, the committee identified the need to promote and communicate the ASL process as an ongoing improvement cycle. The programs that fall on the lower end of the scale have time to improve in upcoming assessment cycles. In addition, the committee added a step to the process

during the 2017-18 assessment cycle. A secondary review period was added in which changes can be submitted to committee members to clarify scores on the rubric. After implementation, the committee has received positive feedback on these changes.

General Education assessment processes have been continually assessed since the adoption of the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics. Most recently, the process has been enhanced by lengthening the term the General Education Assessment Director serves. Previously, the position rotated on an annual basis, which contributed to a lengthy adjustment period as each new faculty member learned the role and responsibilities. By assigning a dedicated individual in this role, as in the ASL process, more professional knowledge can be built and shared with peers. As with the ASL process, the general education assessment process continued through the Spring and Summer 2020 semesters, while navigating a national pandemic. The Director and Associate Provost offered faculty members who volunteered to participate in the 2020 general education assessment process the preceding fall semester an option to withdraw from participating, yet the majority of the faculty members continued with plans to move the general education assessment process forward as planned.

Conclusion

WCU's assessment processes allow faculty to measure the effectiveness of our educational programs supporting student learning and success. The programs and processes that have been developed help make the assessment activities sustainable and achievable. Throughout the ASL process, Program Review, and external Programmatic Accreditation activities, WCU uses results to ensure changes and improvements are made to support educational effectiveness long term. There are strengths we have realized throughout this self-reflective process but also several important areas for improvement. The highlights are listed below.

Strengths

- As a result of WCU's strong commitment to operating under a financially sustainable model, budget dollars are earmarked to support assessment efforts through direct compensation to faculty leads.
- The assessment process is further supported through a strong culture of assessment across divisions.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Assurance of Student Learning (ASL) and General Education assessment processes that are championed by separate faculty leads could be streamlined to build an even greater sense of culture around assessment.
- The strong work of improved assessment efforts over time could now be celebrated more consistently, showcasing best practices across the entire university.
- New strategies to close racial and gendered equity gaps in access to the university and to student success are still needed, despite consistent efforts, given that the gaps persist.





STANDARD VI: PLANNING, RESOURCES, AND INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENT

Introduction

Success does not just happen, at least that is not how it happens at West Chester University (WCU). We drive our institution toward success by carefully aligning our resources with our goals, and by continually assessing our goals to make sure they will allow us to achieve our mission. WCU uses a variety of assessment strategies to guide our planning and resource allocation processes. We have effectively utilized our planning processes to reorganize university administrative structures, increase efficiency, and adapt academic programs and student support services. We have built the facilities and infrastructure necessary to house these programs and services, and we have allocated human and financial resources to maintain focus on our mission of nurturing graduates to succeed personally and professionally and contribute to the common good.

The university's strategic plan serves as the foundation of our planning processes at WCU and reflects the institution's mission and goals. The current plan, *Pathways to Student Success* (I.1.2), lays out five priority areas that are clearly linked to the university's mission: (1) Learning, (2) Community Engagement, (3) Personal & Professional Development, (4) Diversity & Inclusion, and (5) Sustainability. These priorities are reflected in the planning and resource allocation priorities: fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community; supporting student success and learning; and maintaining financial strength.

In our prior strategic plan, *Building on Excellence* (2013-2018) (I.1.3), we identified an opportunity for improvement within the university administrative structures. The work began with engaging stakeholders in 2015-16 through a review process of administrative workload and credit hour production. This resulted in restructuring several colleges and related offices in academic affairs, student affairs, and other divisions. These changes led to increased efficiencies in financial aid, enrollment management, admissions and human resources.

Since that time, we have made several changes in our structure to ensure that we continue to be competitive in our market and meet students' needs and expectations. Examples include the remodeling some of our facilities, restructuring some of our human resources, and adding new academic programs, including four new doctoral programs. This is the kind of continuous improvement process that has bolstered our success.

The process initiated by the university to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic was nimble, allowing for timely response that was anchored to the strategic plan and based on public health guidelines. The process included:

- Balancing unprecedented moral, civic, and public health obligations simultaneously
- Adhering to guidance from the governor and the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education
- Reviewing internal and external data to assess alternate modes of instruction
- Determining the provision of additional support services to ensure student success
- Considering the physical reorganization of service delivery

The internal university process involved evaluations by divisions, departments, university curricular committees, and administrators. It was determined that the modality of instruction must be (a) consistent with the university's mission and goals as delineated in the strategic plan, (b) sustainable for an underdetermined amount of time, and (c) beneficial to the student population who would be accessing the alternate modality.

Outside of adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic, arguably, the biggest dilemma that WCU has faced in recent years is managing tremendous enrollment growth (22% growth since 2010, as shown in the table on the following page) (VI.1.1), while simultaneously planning for expected decline in the number of high school graduates in the region—the demographic group that traditionally contributes the most to WCU's first-year and transfer classes. While enrollment growth has required the expansion of facilities, human resources, student support services, and academic programs, we understand that strategic growth must support the university's mission and anticipate potential fluctuations in enrollment.

Assessment for Planning and Improvement (Criterion 1,2 & 9)

Institutional Effectiveness Plan

WCU's student success and institutional achievement are the result of a steadfast commitment to continuous change and institutional improvement. The WCU Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP) (VI.2.1), first developed in 2020, supports the implementation of these efforts by guiding the campus community to

Student Headcounts for Fall 2019 and Fall 2018

Fall 2019	Total Headcount	Full time	Part time	Male	Female	White	International (Nonresident alien)
Undergraduate	14,615	13,044	1,571	5,952	8,663	10,810	58
Graduate	3,054	1,050	2,004	929	2,125	2,203	51
TOTAL	17,669	14,094	3,575	6,881	10,788	13,013	109

Fall 2010	Total Headcount	Full time	Part time	Male	Female	White	International (Nonresident alien)
Undergraduate	12,232	11,139	1,093	4,967	7,265	10,258	34
Graduate	2,258	795	1,463	647	1,611	1,873	60
TOTAL	14,490	11,934	2,556	5,614	8,876	12,131	94

effectively design and use assessment and planning processes. As addressed in Standards I, IV, and V, the IEP outlines how the WCU Mission (I.1.1), strategic plan (I.1.2), assessment of student learning (V.1.3), and administrative assessment processes are implemented.

WCU Strategic Plan

Our current strategic plan, *Pathways to Student Success* (2019-2022) (I.1.2), was developed through an inclusive, collaborative, university-wide effort which set priorities based on assessment results from the preceding strategic plan, *Building on Excellence* (2013-2018) (I.1.3). A committee was established for each of the five strategic priorities and each was led by three co-chairs, or “tri-chairs.” Each tri-chair team is made up of one faculty member, one staff member and one administrator, ensuring that the committee’s leadership represents the voices of all WCU employee constituent groups (this leadership model was so successful, that the MSCHE Self-Study Steering Committee replicated this structure). The strategic priority committee members were made up of faculty and staff who worked on creating goals, outcomes and initiatives. The final plan was composed based on feedback from faculty, staff, community partners, President Fiorentino, President Fiorentino’s Cabinet, and the Council of Trustees. Initiatives were reviewed and prioritized based on a timeline. Progress on the initiatives is measured at the end of the fall and spring semester, and tracked using the university’s assessment software system, Nuventive (VI.9.1). This information is used by the Steering Committee members (made up of all of the tri-chairs) and members of President’s Cabinet to monitor progress and identify

future needs. After the conclusion of year one of *Pathways to Student Success*, a summary was developed to examine the the status of strategic initiatives in Fall 2020 (VI.9.2).

The strategic planning process at WCU helps the university define and communicate our priorities to WCU stakeholders and provides a mechanism for evaluating progress in achieving key objectives and outcomes. Individual unit mission statements and strategic plans are designed to align with the institutional mission and strategic plan. This further promotes progress toward the university’s strategic planning outcomes. This is true in many places, some of which include plans in Facilities, Information Services and Technology, the WCU Climate Action Plan (VI.6.1), Student Affairs, Finance and Administration, University Affairs, as well as each college, and administrative and educational support units.

Administrative and Educational Support Units

Historically, the assessment of administrative and educational support (AES) units at WCU has occurred at varying levels. Each unit uses appropriate methods for evaluating progress, from engaging in external reviews to conducting student surveys and acting on results. As leaders prepared for the MSCHE self-study process, a gap was identified in the administrative oversight of assessment. The position of Associate Provost for Accreditation and Assessment was created at the beginning of the self-study process to provide more effective oversight and to support the regional accreditation process. An inventory of assessment activities across the university was completed, and the need for standardized processes and forms was

identified. This process is now laid out in the 2020 WCU Institutional Effectiveness Plan (VI.2.1). The AES process allows for varying capabilities among university units, supporting those units needing assistance and affording flexibility to units with a historically strong assessment culture in place (e.g., the Division of Student Affairs). All university units complete a standardized annual summary report which enables effective communication of results.

Financial Planning and Resources (Criteria 3, 4, & 7, ROA 11)

Budgeting Process

WCU's budgeting process is further evidence of well-developed improvement and planning processes that are guided by the university mission (I.1.1) and strategic plan (I.1.2). At WCU, we assess the effectiveness of the budget process at multiple points using a variety of feedback and assessment tools. The budget planning process has been enhanced using financial management software tools and a collaborative, comprehensive strategy for involving stakeholders. Baseline budgets are assessed for validity and their likelihood to address critical needs in achieving specific objectives of the strategic plan.

The budget planning process starts with several "what-if" scenarios to model a multi-year budget. WCU's planning is often challenged by the uncertainty of state appropriations and tuition rates. As a member of the PASSHE, WCU's share of state appropriations and tuition increases are determined by the BOG. Tuition increases are voted upon at the April Meeting. Because of this uncertainty, WCU budget scenarios are developed, in collaboration with institutional research, using a number of different factors: specifically, changes in enrollment, impacts of tuition rate changes, increases in collective bargaining agreements as well as different expenditure assumptions. The Budget Review Committee (VI.4.1) was established in 2015, with the goal of promoting transparency, evaluating critical needs requests for each division, and making recommendations to the president. The president finalizes the university budget and prepares it for review and approval by the Council of Trustees.

The university functions independently from PASSHE; however, being part of the system enables the university to share resources and benefit from economies of scale. To systematize those benefits, PASSHE is implementing a system redesign for all PASSHE institutions, which includes a new financial sustainability plan (VI.3.1) and a series of key metrics based on NACUBO standards

(VI.3.2). Despite receiving the least amount of state allocation per student in the past, WCU consistently performs at the highest level in all categories of the metrics.

We use the budget process as a strategic tool to support growth at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. *Building on Excellence* (I.1.3), established objectives to 1) increase and support academic success with high-quality teaching, research, and scholarly activities, and 2) establish an inclusive and diverse learning environment that promotes equal access to education. To support these objectives and to accommodate the rise in enrollment in both undergraduate (2.8%) and graduate (28%) programs (VI.1.1) in the last five years, the university has consistently allocated financial resources to cover both permanent tenure-track and temporary adjunct faculty positions. The largest expansions in faculty resources were in colleges or departments with significant increases in enrollment. For example, the College of Business and Public Affairs received 19 new tenure-track lines, representing a 25% increase in five years (VI.4.2). The Department of Social Work received eight new tenure-track lines, representing a 44% increase in five years that is largely due to success of the social work program at the Philadelphia campus (VI.4.3).

At WCU, our strategy for evaluating the effectiveness of our planning and budget processes includes regular and transparent communication to, and solicitation of feedback from, the campus community. Senior leadership utilizes a variety of methods designed to connect with a broad and diverse university audience, including digital communications via websites, videos, and email messages, open public forums and presentations that are publicized campus-wide, and printed articles and reports. The President's Office, for example, organizes an annual Fall Welcome Address, publishes a blog (VI.2.2), creates monthly "First Friday" videos (VI.2.3) and periodically sends email updates to the entire campus community. While not all of these communications are directly related to financial planning, they reflect the broader principle of transparency and information-sharing that undergirds institutional assessment efforts. Most recently, the President's Cabinet held townhall meetings separately for faculty, staff, and students to discuss the change to remote learning for Fall 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As planning processes advance, key stakeholder groups are informed of progress and on proposals for new policies and programs. These stakeholder groups include administration, staff, faculty, and two student

representatives (one undergraduate student and one graduate student). Student groups are also consulted to provide feedback on student-related budgets.

The purpose of this inclusive and participatory approach to planning and budgeting is to ensure that the strategic plan and other key planning documents are developed and implemented in ways which reflect the priorities and input of all university stakeholders. By ensuring diverse and knowledgeable contributions, accurate quantitative and qualitative data are collected, assessments are done which permit efficient allocation of financial and human resources, and the university's mission statement, vision, goals, and objectives are effectively applied in decision-making and operations.

Allocation of Resources

Because WCU continues to demonstrate a strong financial position and assesses its effectiveness, the university has adequate fiscal and human resources, including physical and technical infrastructure, to support our operation now and in the future. WCU has documented financial resources, a funding base, and a plan for financial development adequate to support its educational purposes and to ensure financial stability (VI.3.3). The institution demonstrates a record of responsible fiscal management, has a prepared budget for the current year, and undergoes an external financial audit on an annual basis (VI.7.1). The annual audited financial statements have resulted in clean, unqualified audit opinions with no management letter comments. Cash balances amounted to \$220 million as of June 30, 2019 (VI.7.2). Net capital assets have increased to \$183 million, and overall net position totals \$465 million prior to the adoption of Gasb 68 & 75, which are actuarial-calculated liabilities for post-retirement benefits and pension liabilities (VI.7.3).

Allocation of fiscal and human resources, as well as physical and technical infrastructure at WCU are determined largely by the strategic plan and ongoing assessment of areas in need of additional support. Examples include our planning and resource allocation for enrollment management and the creation of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Office of Sustainability.

Student Success & Enrollment Management

The competitive market has forced WCU to reassess our enrollment management approach and to adopt a more inclusive and coordinated process with deans, service units, and the budget office. In 2017, the university contracted with Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL) on four specific enrollment management initiatives: (1) developing a

Strategic Enrollment Management Plan, (2) increasing application demand, (3) growing the pool of prospects, and (4) creating a financial aid leveraging model. This partnership has helped undergraduate admissions enhance the recruitment plan and develop strategies to convert more prospects to applicants. Indeed, we saw a 20% increase in prospects turning to applicants from Fall 2018 to Fall 2019. The university reallocated some of its existing Education and General (E&G) financial aid scholarship budgets and added significant funding to support the financial aid leveraging model in order to provide greater access to a WCU education.

Building on work with RNL, WCU is in the third year of utilizing this financial aid leveraging model and is projected to spend \$5.4 million in scholarships and grants for new and returning students. Through the model, institutional gift aid for underrepresented minority (URM) students increased from \$551,358 in Fall 2017 to \$1,225,954 in Fall 2019, an increase of 122%, as URM enrollment during the same period increased by 6.5% (VI.1.3). Overall, the university-funded gift aid expense increased 106% from \$2.7 million in 2015 to \$5.6 million in 2019 (VI.1.4). By fiscal year 2023, the university plans to annually invest \$8 million in financial aid to continue supporting recruitment and retention efforts and to ensure affordability for WCU students.

Understanding the enrollment challenges WCU will face in coming years motivated us to reexamine and redefine our role as an institution of higher education. Rather than viewing the shifting demographics as an enrollment problem, we sought ways to better prepare as an institution for the students who will need us: adult learners, Latinx learners, learners with increasing financial concerns, learners with mental health challenges, and learners who need to develop diverse and adaptable skills for an ever-changing employment world. In other words, alongside the strategic budgeting process, we had an opportunity to meet our access and diversity mission.

Diversity Equity and Inclusion

Based on community feedback and the strategic plan, the university has invested significantly in the creation of a new Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer (CDIO) position, which has been discussed in previous standards. The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) incorporates expanded functions, including Equal Opportunity and Title IX compliance. A second investigator position was created to help meet new federal Title IX guidelines. ODEI is housed in the division of University Affairs, and the ODEI budget is allocated through the divisional vice president. In Spring 2020,

ODEI held open forums regarding the results of a Spring 2019 climate study, the results of which are posted on the ODEI website. Related to the recently renewed Black Lives Matter movement, ODEI conducted a benchmarking analysis on diversity programs and proposed an Institute for Cultural Competence and Inclusive Excellence (VI.1.5). ODEI also administers the university's Innovations in Diversity and Inclusion Grants (formerly the University Forum grant), which focuses on supporting diversity-related initiatives. Projects funded for two or more years are eligible for permanent funding. Examples of projects with permanent funding include the annual Latino/a Communities Conference and Green Dot.

Sustainability

In support of the strategic plan goal for sustainability, the Office of Sustainability was created in 2017 when a full-time Director was hired. Prior to this, the university's sustainability efforts were coordinated by a faculty member who received six credits of Alternative Work Assignment. The Office of Sustainability's responsibilities focus on implementing the objectives identified in the 2013 Climate Action Plan (VI.6.1), monitoring and assessing progress towards carbon neutrality, supporting faculty, staff and student initiatives coordinated by WCU's Sustainability Council and its seven committees, and developing and managing new sustainability programs to support the university's commitment to student success and preparing students to understand and play positive roles in addressing environmental, social, and economic sustainability challenges.

Decision Making (Criterion 5)

WCU has well-defined decision-making processes and clear assignment of responsibility and accountability. The administrative structure and reporting relationships are clearly documented in the organizational chart. Decision-making processes have been described throughout this chapter with respect to strategic planning, academic reorganization, budgetary decisions, facilities planning, and more. Examples in this section focus on the allocation of resources and decision-making for expansion into Philadelphia and support of new programs.

In recent years, WCU has seen significant growth in new programs. Consistent with the 2013 strategic plan, *Building on Excellence* (I.1.3), much of this growth was focused on the development of four new doctoral programs in areas of strength at the university: public administration, nursing practice, education, and clinical psychology. In addition, two undergraduate programs

were developed, the BS in Biomedical Engineering and BS in Planning as well as an MS in Human Resources. These new programs have impacted space/facilities, faculty hiring/personnel resources, and tuition revenue.

The planning process for new programs is integrated into existing systems, including the university's procedure for adding new programs, which is governed by the Curriculum and Academic Policies Council (CAPC) (VI.5.1). This process is inclusive, with professionals within the academic community voicing interest in developing a program that they, based on their professional expertise, believe is (a) consistent with the university's mission and goals as delineated in the strategic plan, (b) fulfills a need in the community, and (c) benefits the student population at WCU. Program proposals undergo internal evaluation by departments, university curricular committees, and upper administration (i.e., deans and provosts). The proposal submission proceeds through a clear workflow of approvals in the Curriculum Information Management (CIM) system.

The new program proposal is submitted to CAPC for review by relevant sub-committees, e.g., Undergraduate Programs Committee, Graduate Programs and Policy Committee, and the General Education Committee. A recommendation for the new program is made by CAPC, and the Provost then determines whether the new program proposal will be submitted to PASSHE for adjudication by the Board of Governors and by the Chancellor's office, which gives the final approval.

The curriculum review processes for both the university and PASSHE are well aligned. Both require programs to articulate their alignment with the strategic goals of the state system, the university, and the goals and learning outcomes of the unit in which the program will reside. PASSHE's new program proposal process requires assessment of program demand and sustainability with the support of an external evaluation. WCU utilizes services of Hanover Research when exploring new academic offerings including new master's and doctoral programs (VI.5.2) Upon PASSHE approval, the program is slated for a process of regular review: for non-accredited programs, the PASSHE five-year program review process and the annual WCU process for reporting on results of student learning outcomes assessments, as discussed in Standard V. Accredited programs participate in their specific accreditation review requirements. All of these processes help the university assess program effectiveness and needs over time. All four new doctoral programs are now accredited and as such have established to the satisfaction of discipline-specific accreditation agencies that: (a) they have resources

sufficient to fulfill their objectives, (b) their mission is consistent and well-supported by the university, (c) they have sufficient resources to improve student achievement measures, and (d) they have assessment plans.

Program proposals also require a five-year enrollment and financial projection. Resource planning, therefore, is required at early stages of program development to anticipate additional faculty workload related to new programs, the additional credit hours that would be generated, and the number of new students needing support in the departments. Together, the new doctoral programs as well as the BS and MS programs described above anticipate needing an additional 12 new tenure-track hires and four non-tenure track staff and manager positions by 2024. In addition, the graduate programs require additional graduate assistantships. These programs have projected financial break-even timelines as short as one year and as far out as 10 years, after which they expect to generate additional tuition revenue.

Space allocation for new programs and the financial commitment to support renovations and new construction is incorporated into the campus master plan (VI.6.2), the university budget, and the strategic plan. In recent years, for example, Wayne Hall (a former residence hall), was renovated for use for faculty office space, laboratory space, and a home for the new Community Mental Health Clinic for the Doctor of Psychology program. The planning and ground-breaking for the new Sciences and Engineering Center and the Commons, scheduled to open in 2021, were initiated to house multiple departments and programs, including nursing and biomedical engineering (VI.5.3).

Expansion in Philadelphia

Responding to the increase in demand for adult programming in Center City, Philadelphia, WCU's Philadelphia location continues to increase program and course offerings. This location enrolls over 300 students with the largest undergraduate and graduate programs in social work (VI.5.4). Recently, the university began offering the Bachelor of Science in Management and the Master of Science in Transformative Education at the Philadelphia campus. The Master of Public Administration will launch in Fall 2021 and offer in-person and online courses.

The Philadelphia location is a partnership with PASSHE, in which WCU sub-leases space from the state system. Staff from both organizations work collectively to ensure faculty and students have the resources and

tools needed for success. Annually, WCU invests more than \$1.8 million in the Philadelphia location to recruit, enroll, support, retain, and graduate the diverse student body (IV.1.2). In October 2018, WCU acquired additional space in the building, providing a new and more visible location with additional classrooms and faculty offices, and a new student success center, which now provides tutoring, collaborative workspaces, technologies, and library materials.

The Philadelphia location has four full-time staff members: an associate director of student services, an associate director of student support, an assistant director for recruitment, and an administrative assistant position that is shared with PASSHE. The university also added four graduate assistantship positions at the Philadelphia location. Three of the positions support student learning in the student success center and the fourth supports the financial aid office for Philadelphia students.

Utilization of Resources (Criteria 6 and 8)

To facilitate planning for important areas of growth such as technological resources, facilities, and human resources, WCU has developed comprehensive plans that are closely linked to the university strategic plan and to the university budget. At WCU, we employ multiple methods of assessing the adequacy and efficient utilization of institutional resources for technology, infrastructure, facilities, institutional organization and personnel.

The Information Services & Technology (IS&T) portfolio is built on an organizational structure separating support services into clear operational units: Strategic Planning & Project Management, Infrastructure Services, Technical Support Services, EdTech & User Services, Information Security, and IS&T Budget Management (VII.1.6). Decisions flow through a hierarchical process from unit managers to directors, to the Senior Associate Vice President / Chief Information Officer (AVP/CIO) and Deputy Provost and Vice President of Academic Administration, following governance through collective bargaining and other key campus stakeholders including President's Cabinet when appropriate. The IS&T Leadership Team consists of each unit manager/director who are responsible for the operations of their respective unit and is accountable for the performance and productivity of the staff. There is strong cross-unit collaboration and routine communications among the Leadership Team with clear direction and support from the AVP/CIO.

The IS&T Strategic Plan (VI.6.3) is driven by the university's strategic plan, Pathways to Student Success, and focuses on continuous improvement within five key priorities – University Cyberinfrastructure, Digital Learning, Digital Transformation of University Business, Governance and Stewardship, and Support and Training. More detailed and specific plans describing unit goals, and associated budget, timelines, and assessment methods are developed by each unit within IS&T.

Major IS&T projects related to the university strategic plan are measured bi-annually following project management disciplines and are tracked using SharePoint and Smartsheet. Additionally, short-term projects, services and associated technologies are routinely assessed through cross-disciplinary collaboration to monitor project health, identify successes and or establish follow-up actions if necessary. IS&T also solicits feedback through online surveys, data mining Help Desk activity and maintains transparency through governance with campus stakeholders and advisory committees which include representatives from faculty, staff, collective bargaining units, and the student government association. WCU actively participates in the EDUCAUSE Core Data Service which provides comparative analysis of like-sized IT organizations in higher education with a Carnegie Classification. This has enabled IS&T to closely monitor industry trends, gauge maturity, establish benchmarks, and make data driven decisions about the future of enterprise level systems and instructional technologies.

In January 2020, IS&T had already begun to work on several initiatives based on assessment and planning, including a new ticketing management system and a new communications infrastructure. The effectiveness of assessment, planning and implementation was put to the test during the university's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Both of these systems subsequently facilitated the smooth transition to remote work, teaching, and learning modalities. The ticketing system provided a streamlined and easily accessible method to report and track IS&T problems and a new phone system allowed for enhanced interoperability between voice, email, and video. The department developed its Continuity of Work website to provide a central resource for the campus community. IS&T also immediately responded to the need for remote technology, establishing a Loaner Equipment Program, increasing FAST (Faculty and Staff Training) efforts, and support for technology applications such as Zoom, Kaltura, and other educational software.

The plan for using campus buildings, infrastructure, and fiscal and material sustainability was developed in collaboration with the goal of maximizing efficiency for years to come. Ongoing assessments and data collection informed campus master planning and maintenance plans. These included but were not limited to detailed building utilization statistics and energy consumption data from WCU's automated Building Management System (VI.8.2). The information and reports provided data points to be used for long-term capital expansion planning, negotiations with PASSHE, local, state, and federal partners, and collaborative decision making. In addition, open forums on facilities planning efforts were used to share information with the WCU community and gather feedback. WCU's 2017 Landscape Master Plan (VI.6.5) serves as one example.

In 2010, WCU signed the American College and University President's Climate Commitment (ACUPCC), joining hundreds of other institutions of higher education in pledging to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from university operations. WCU also committed to supporting teaching and research to equip WCU graduates with the knowledge and skills they need to effectively promote sustainability in their professional and personal lives. Three years later, the university's Climate Action Plan (CAP) (VI.6.1) set a carbon neutrality target and 72 specific goals in areas such as buildings and energy, climate-related curriculum and research, and waste and recycling, which demonstrated to both our internal constituents and external communities – local, regional, state, federal and global – that WCU is committed to leadership in the areas of environmental, social, and economic sustainability. A key CAP objective was achieved in 2017 with the creation of an Office of Sustainability that has successfully initiated educational programs and community collaborations, implemented assessment and evaluation systems, and supported student, faculty, and staff efforts. In 2020, WCU achieved Silver status for this work in the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Reporting System (STARS) (VI.8.4).

The former strategic plan, *Building on Excellence* (I.1.3), charged the institution to transform itself into a university whose organizational structures are strategically arranged to facilitate excellence in teaching and learning (Academics Objective 2.1; pg. 10). To this end, the university engaged in a self-study to better understand the impact of enrollment growth on our organizational structure. By the 2013-2014 academic year, assessment, including an internal study of the then College of Arts and Sciences, revealed that significant enrollment growth at WCU gave rise to structural imbalance among the colleges within Academic Affairs,

resulting in inefficiencies and significant inequity in resources and workload. Consequently, the university engaged in a reorganization of Academic Affairs to ensure that all university resources, including financial and human, are aligned and to create a more evenly distributed structure of administrative support, thereby evening out administrative complexity and balancing the student credit production among a reorganized university college structure (VI.8.5). The year-long process of reorganization was transparent, providing open forums and information shared on the provost's website. The process was also built on the principle of shared governance, involving the Council of Chairs and the faculty union collaborating on the plan that was presented to the university president in 2015. Starting in 2016, the reorganization was implemented which resulted in the renaming of many of the colleges and the creation of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies. In 2017, the School of Music was established to strategically align resources and leadership for the specialized discipline of music. The School was re-named the Wells School of Music in 2018 after a three million-dollar donation by alumni, Dr. James R. Wells '54 and Mr. Richard G. Wells '58. WCU continues to assess its organizational structure to ensure student success.

A further review of existing organizational structures was conducted to ensure strategic alignment of personnel and financial resources in all areas of the university's operations, focusing especially on the increased demand on student service areas. As a result, the enrollment services staff was increased by 34.4% over the last five years (VI.8.6). The largest increases occurred in the following areas:

- Registrar – 13.5 - 21.0 FTE
- Admissions – 18.6 to 23.0 FTE
- Financial Aid – 16.5 - 18.0 FTE
- Enrollment Management and Student Success – 2.0 to 6.0 FTE

Today, the organizational structure of the Division of Academic Affairs is reviewed regularly and adjusted to accommodate the changing needs of the university and its constituents.

In a parallel effort, the Division of Student Affairs also engaged in self-evaluation and reorganization when the Vice President for Student Affairs was hired in August 2016. The vice president met with each department and director to conduct a cross-divisional situational/gap analysis. Results indicated that departments needed more than one staff member in order to offer

consistent services to meet student needs. Based on this information, temporary positions were funded, and permanent positions were gradually built into the budget over time. Over the past five years, the full-time equivalent of personnel increased overall from 47.5 to 73.9 (VI.8.7).

In addition, the analysis indicated that additional operational support was needed to better coordinate, plan, assess, and market co-curricular programs and services. New positions were created to meet those needs: Assistant Vice President for Administrative Services and Special Projects, Executive Director of Assessment and Planning, Director of Communications and Marketing, Director of Parent and Family Programs, Coordinator of WCU Pride and Spirit, and Assistant Dean of Students to oversee dining and facilities. Most recently, six new senior director positions have been created to ensure each department has a manager-level leader and provide more time for assistant vice presidents to focus on higher-level initiatives. The senior director position for the Office of Multicultural Affairs was created to meet current and future needs based on enrollment. The senior director of the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life was created to better manage risk, education, and respond to substantial increases in fraternity and sorority memberships. Additionally, a Student Ombuds position has been created to support student success and remove barriers to retention and graduation.

Conclusion

In sum, WCU has established systematic methods for continuously assessing the effectiveness of planning and resource allocation in support of the university mission. Our clear emphasis on student success at WCU permeates all planning and encourages investment in and by faculty, staff, students, and management.

In large part because of how closely aligned our planning processes, resources, and structures are with one another, WCU is in a strong financial position, the strongest in the PA State System of Higher Education. While the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic response has required additional financial resources at the same time revenues have fallen, university decision-makers have prioritized the health, safety, and welfare of the WCU community and worked to identify cost-savings to minimize the financial impacts on students and employees.

We have clear strengths in our enrollment processes, communications, information and technology systems, and integration of strategic plan priority areas. At WCU,

we continue to adapt to our rapid growth in terms of space and increasing student-to-faculty ratio. Mindful of our stated value of inclusion at WCU, we strive to provide easily accessible documentation about university processes and procedures so that they are made clear to a wider array of our stakeholders.

In recent years WCU has responded to critical twenty-first century social, economic, and environmental challenges by establishing and funding the work of two new offices: the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Office of Sustainability. The staff, students, and faculty working in and with these offices help ensure that the implementation of the *Pathways to Student Success* strategic plan (I.1.2) acknowledges the high priority given to Diversity and Inclusion and Sustainability. But the potential to integrate these commitments more fully into assessment, planning, and budgeting processes remains.

Strengths

- We have demonstrated our ability to utilize space and money effectively in a changing enrollment landscape so that we can be intentional and proactive rather than primarily reactive. In terms of facilities and space, we have been rated by Sitelines as using space most effectively, compared to peer institutions.
- WCU has adapted our Human Resources planning in academic and student affairs to meet the demands of enrollment and maximize student success.

- The strong partnership between academic and student affairs in their planning efforts in support of student success.
- We have invested appropriately in efforts to increase diversity and inclusion at the university by the creation of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and increased resources for the Dowdy Multicultural Center.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Further integrate and highlight the strategic goals for diversity, equity, inclusion and sustainability.
- Develop new and effective strategies to make progress on the university's carbon neutrality goals – by working across divisions – in order to permit WCU to demonstrate its leadership in higher education sustainability.
- Conduct an analysis of the use of the university's planning efforts and resource allocation during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to discover lessons learned that might improve our business practices and reveal opportunities for permanent innovation triggered by the disruption.





STANDARD VII: GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, AND ADMINISTRATION

Introduction

Since West Chester University's (WCU) last review, our leaders have dedicated themselves to clarifying and improving our various organizational structures, empowering members of our community of educators by increasing opportunities for shared governance, and enhancing the efficiency and transparency of our budget process to best position WCU to respond to contingencies, both planned and unexpected. As we have done this, one benefit has been an increased appreciation for and reliance on deep and meaningful shared governance that goes well beyond required commitments.

This was mostly recently exemplified by the proactive actions taken at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, both in March at its onset, and over the course of summer discussions over fall plans. An ad hoc shared governance group composed of leadership from the faculty union, the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties (APSCUF), Faculty Senate, the faculty Curriculum and Policies Council (CAPC), and the Council of Chairs (COC) was constituted, and all major academic decisions have been made only after thorough discussion. Despite this considerable conversation, WCU was still the first area school to settle on a plan in March, and has also been the first to step back from fall re-opening plans that had lost their viability as infection numbers in the Commonwealth increased.

Because of the successes of these efforts, WCU has strengthened its viability and is positioned to act decisively in the face of the significant challenges currently confronting higher education. While many benefits were apparent before the changes necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, they are being realized in an especially pronounced way as WCU has been able to combine high levels of engagement from various stakeholders with timely decision-making. Despite an uncertain landscape, WCU is positioned as well as possible to continue to reap the benefits of its recent efforts.

Transparent Governance Structure (Criterion 1)

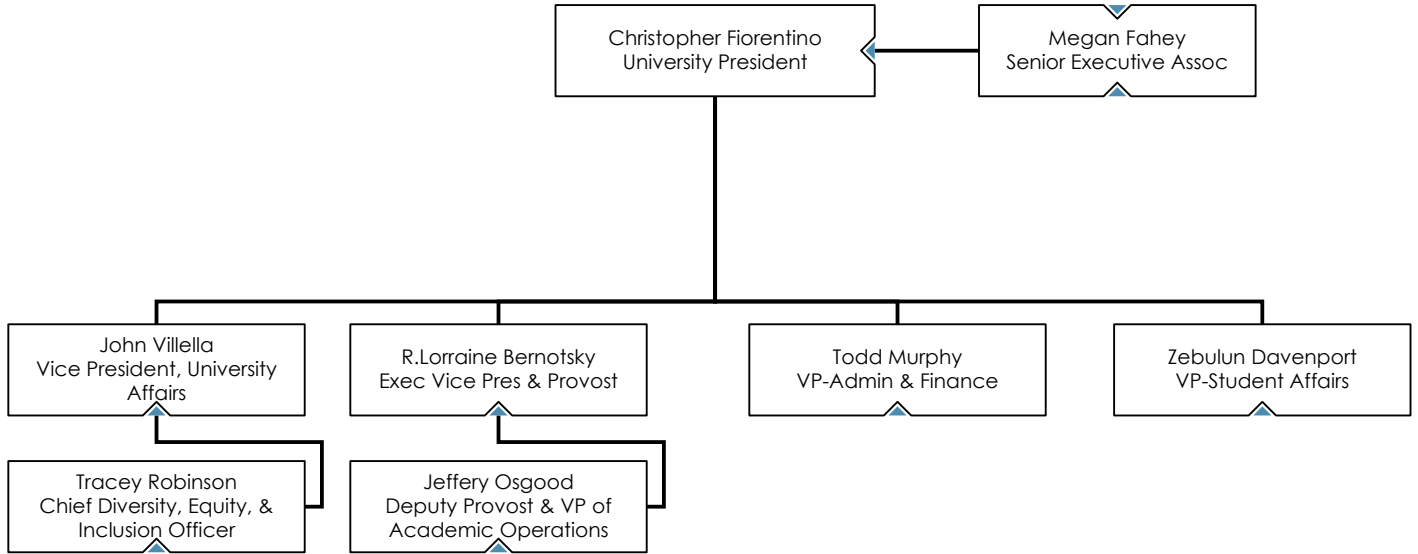
WCU is one of 14 schools in Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). Created by Act 188 of 1982 (VII.1.1), PASSHE's purpose is "to provide high quality education at the lowest cost to the students. The primary mission of the system is the provision of instruction for undergraduate and graduate students to and beyond the master's degree in the liberal arts and sciences and in applied fields, including the teaching profession."

Act 188 and the recently enacted Act 50 of 2020 (VII.1.2) clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of PASSHE, its Board of Governors (BOG), and its chancellor, as well as each university's Council of Trustees (COT) and its president. The 20-member BOG (VII.1.2) is responsible for planning and coordinating development and operation of PASSHE. The BOG establishes broad educational, fiscal and personnel policies, and oversees the efficient management of PASSHE (VII.3). Among other tasks, the board appoints the chancellor and university presidents, approves new academic programs, sets tuition and coordinates and approves the annual PASSHE operating budget.

Act 50 includes reforms to the governance structure of PASSHE and its institutions, including WCU. Pursuant to Act 50, the BOG may create, expand, consolidate, transfer, or affiliate a university, except for a university with a Fall 2019 headcount enrollment greater than 10,000 students. Per the statute, this does not apply to WCU. Act 50 reforms that do impact WCU are contained within the sections of Act 188 titled: Powers and Duties of the Board of Governors, Powers and Duties of the Council of Trustees, Powers and Duties of University Presidents, Campus Police Powers and Duties, Student Records, and Appointment Process for student members of the University's Council of Trustees.

The 11-member Council of Trustees governs WCU (VII.1.4, VII.1.5). Its members are nominated and appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate serving a term of six years, and until their successors are appointed and qualified. At least two members of the group are alumni of the institution and one member is a full-time undergraduate student. The

President's Cabinet



COT meets on a quarterly basis at the university or from time to time as may be called upon by the president, chairperson, or upon request of three of its members. Meetings of the BOG and the COT are subject to the Pennsylvania Public Agency Open Meeting Law.

WCU is led by President Christopher Fiorentino, Ph.D. The president is appointed by the BOG of PASSHE to be the university's Chief Executive Officer.

Administrative Governance Structure

At the executive level of operations, the President's Cabinet (Cabinet) establishes WCU's overall commitment to shared governance. The Cabinet is composed of the university's Executive Vice President and Provost, Vice President for Administration and Finance, Vice President for Student Affairs, Vice President for University Affairs, Deputy Provost and Vice President for Academic Operations, and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer. The Cabinet provides advice and counsel to the president on matters regarding policies, budget, procedures and strategic planning. The Cabinet discusses mission, vision, allocation of university resources, programs, services, major events, and university goals. This team guides the implementation of the President's priorities through their respective areas of leadership and are held accountable for quantitative and qualitative results. The final approval of policies and responsibility for alignment with both WCU and PASSHE policies and priorities rests with the President and Cabinet. This body also ensures the alignment of the Institutional Priorities and Strategic Plan: *Pathways to Student Success*, as discussed in previous Standards.

In response to several retirements, changing technological and analytic needs, and increased pressure from the office of the Chancellor to re-think the organization of PASSHE, the President reorganized and streamlined the administrative units of the university in alignment with the university mission and the available talent of our employees. In addition to the reorganization, the President also created the position of Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer (CDIO). The administrative units include Academic Affairs, Finance and Administrative Affairs, Student Affairs, and University Affairs. The President is aided in day-to-day operational oversight by members of his Cabinet. The university organizational chart (VII.1.6) reflects the division of responsibilities among units, colleges, departments, and other aspects of the university.

Like the President, the Executive Vice President and Provost regularly convenes the Provost's Executive Cabinet (PEC), which includes the Deputy Provost and

Vice President of Academic Operations, the Academic Deans, the Vice Provosts, the Associate Provosts, the Associate Vice Presidents, and other senior managers that manage departments. This allows for clear planning, communications, and coordination across undergraduate, graduate studies, and administrative operations.

Each unit is organized to combine a clear leadership structure with an efficient distribution of responsibilities, allowing for most decisions to be made quickly at the most proximate level of impact. This commitment to shared governance is articulated across several policies that delineate the responsibilities of multiple constituent bodies in support of WCU's oversight of academic, curricular, co-curricular, and student life matters.

Shared Governance

Formally, shared governance arrangements are driven by the various collective bargaining agreements entered into by WCU (and PASSHE). In particular, the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between PASSHE and APSCUF provides the basis for adversarial (grievance procedures) and non-adversarial ("meet and discuss") faculty/management communications and the creation of a curriculum committee (CAPC).

Informally, because of the high level of comity between the administration and the primary faculty bodies—APSCUF, Faculty Senate, CAPC, and the Council of Chairs, among others—shared governance is far more deeply realized than the four corners of the CBA. Collaboration in governance includes numerous committees composed of management, faculty, staff, and students, such as the Budget Review Committee (BRC) as well as ad hoc groups like the committee that has been pivotal in aiding with planning WCU's response to the COVID-19 outbreak (mentioned above).

Organizationally, WCU's internal governance structure is illustrated in three organizational charts: academic/curricular, co-curricular and student life, and budget. Numerous committees serve as important shared governance units to be consulted on both matters of policy and operations:

- BRC (VII.1. 7-9)
- CAPC (VII.1.10-12)
- Council of Chairs (VII.1.13)
- Council for Diversity, Inclusion, and Academic Excellence (VII.1.14-15)
- Campus Climate Intervention Team (VII.1.16)
- Sustainability Council (VII.1.17)

- President’s Commission on the Status of Women (VII.1.19-20)
- Multicultural Faculty Commission (VII.1.21)
- Athletic Advisory Board (VII.1.23)

In addition to the formal reporting process, several campus-wide committees offer feedback on curricular, co-curricular, and budget policies and operational practices.

Academic/Curricular

A key element in shared governance at WCU is the Faculty Senate (VII.1.24-25). It is composed of over forty elected faculty representatives and meets monthly to discuss matters of faculty concern. The Senate annually elects officers and an Executive Committee. Senate meetings provide an outlet, open to all faculty, to hear directly from managers with the opportunity for dialogue about relevant policies, priorities, and academic/educational objectives. As is the case with APSCUF, management regularly invites Faculty Senate representation on both search and standing committees above and beyond any contractual requirements.

As the CBA explicitly mandates a curriculum committee, CAPC plays a role of heightened importance in advancing curricular and pedagogical interests on campus. While CAPC bylaws are negotiated between APSCUF and management, CAPC exercises substantial operational autonomy and provides important input regarding initiatives affecting the academic mission of the university. In the last several years, WCU has substantially reorganized its academic structure and made important revisions to its General Education program. In each case, management heavily involved CAPC throughout the process.

The Graduate Council was formerly chaired by the Deputy Provost and Dean of the Graduate School along with 1-3 student representatives selected from and by the Graduate Student Association and the graduate coordinators. The Graduate Council meets a minimum of once each semester (VII.1.26). The Graduate Council, by its faculty membership, elects an Executive Secretary who serves as the chairperson of the Graduate Council’s Executive Board. WCU exceeded over 3,000 graduate students for the first time in the 2019-2020 academic year, and we have now determined that the Dean of the Graduate School position should no longer be part of a dual role but rather a full-time role. An interim Dean of the Graduate School was named in May of 2020 with the goal of a permanent dean starting with the Spring 2021 semester. This is critically important as WCU further

enhances graduate education to include the transition of our Carnegie Classification from Master’s Colleges and Universities—Larger Programs to Doctoral Universities—High Research Activity.

The Council of Professional Education (CPE) (VII.1.27), discusses and recommends to the appropriate person or body changes to the programs, courses, and policies affecting the Educator Preparation Programs. The General Education Council serves as an “ad hoc” committee of CAPC and is a group of dedicated individuals charged with leading and stewarding the new General Education program. They are subject matter experts in innovative pedagogies that provide support for various parts of the General Education curriculum by identifying best practices in their respective areas of responsibility, convening workgroups comprised of faculty and staff to develop policy and curricular proposals for review by CAPC, and creating related ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

Co-curricular/Student Life

There are also formal governance structures for students. The Student Government Association (SGA) (VII.1.29) is the official governing body of all undergraduate students at WCU and is overseen by elected representatives. The Budget and Finance Committee of the SGA manages funds collected from student fees. The SGA also nominates student representatives to the various campus-wide governing committees such as the University Forum and CAPC’s curriculum committee. Graduate students are represented by the Graduate Student Association (GSA) (VII.1.30), which appoints students to university-wide committees and advocates for common concerns for the welfare of the student body, as well as for the continued progress and betterment of graduate studies at WCU. As a consequence of the last MSCHE self-study, the GSA bylaws were substantially revised to account for significant growth in the graduate student population at WCU.

Budget

Subsequent to the last self-study, WCU has replaced its Administrative Budget Committee (ABC) with the Budget Review Committee (BRC). The Budget Review Committee was formed in Fall 2015 by then President Greg Weisenstein to engage and promote transparency in the university budgeting process. The BRC is responsible for reviewing the university’s preliminary annual budget and making recommendations to the President for revisions to the budget prior to finalization in support of the

University Mission, Values Statement, Vision Statement, and Strategic Plan. The inclusive composition of the BRC includes nearly thirty members and is made up of administrators, faculty, staff, and students, and meets regularly to hear information relevant to the budgetary process, including the setting of budget priorities. BRC members are expected to communicate this information back to their various constituencies in the service of greater understanding and transparency.

Meet and Discuss

At WCU, the Faculty-Management Committee, also known as Meet and Discuss, serves as a shared governance body. This contractually mandated body brings together representatives from APSCUF (VII.1.31-33) and management to discuss issues affecting the university. Similar Meet and Discuss meetings are held for the other bargaining units, which include: American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (VII.1.34-35), The State College & University Professional Association (VII.1.36), Security, Police, and Fire Professionals of America (VII.1.37), Office of Professional employees International Union Healthcare Pennsylvania (VII.1.38-39). A Manager's Association also holds regular meetings for non-represented staff. The particulars of these and other aspects of administration-employee relations were covered in greater detail in Standard II.

Legally Constituted Governing Body (Criterion 2 a-e ROA12, 14)

The COT is the legal governing body of WCU. The eleven members of this body are appointed by the Governor with approval from the state Senate. The COT members possess sufficient expertise to effectively govern and guide a university. Currently, the COT includes six alumni who provide a sense of university history and context with pride. Members possess significant leadership experience from business, industry, government and non-profit sectors, and bring extensive knowledge of policymaking, fiduciary responsibility, and strategic thinking to the Council. The council meets at least five times a year, and its by-laws contain provisions related to the ways it conducts its affairs.

The COT helps to govern the university in a variety of ways. Act 188 specifies its responsibility is to serve the "interest and needs" of the public and the university by assisting "the president in developing proper relations and understanding between the institution and its programs and the public, in order to serve the interests and needs of both." It is not, however, involved in the day-to-day operations of the institution. *The Role of Trustee in Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education*

(VII.2.1), written by the Pennsylvania Association of Councils of Trustees (PACT), explains this idea more fully: "in principle, trustees should not be involved in the day-to-day administration of their institutions. Act 188 clearly delegates the management function to the president. However, oversight by a local council can make an invaluable contribution to institutional integrity, vitality and engagement" The COT is also held accountable for academic quality, institutional planning and policies, and fiscal well-being.

During this accreditation cycle, the Office of the Chancellor commissioned a review of the PASSHE through the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, *Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education: Strategic System Review, Findings, and Recommendations* (VII.2.2). Similarly, the Commonwealth legislature commissioned a System-wide review of PASSHE under the leadership of the RAND corporation. The RAND report, *Promoting the Long-Term Sustainability and Viability of Universities in Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education*, was published in Spring 2018 (VII.2.3). The impact of the current System Redesign work, proposed legislation to aid in the System Redesign, and implications for new funding and allocation formulas are still being reviewed, and there are still many unknowns. In addition, the new model of a unified accreditation process being sought by the University of Maine system bears close scrutiny.

Evaluation of the CEO (Criterion 2 f)

PASSHE's BOG, upon the recommendation of the COT, appoints the university President, who serves as the Chief Executive Officer. Act 188 gives the Council the power "to make recommendations to the chancellor for the appointment, retention, or dismissal of the president following consultation with students, faculty, and alumni." BOG Policy 2002-03-A: Evaluating Presidents (VII.2.4) specifies the process and provides for a three-person Evaluation Committee composed of Council members appointed by the Chair of the COT that evaluates the President's performance annually and every three years (VII.2.4, pp. 3-4). The triennial evaluation is conducted by the COT to include guidance from a consultant with expertise in presidential and university leadership. This process also includes formal input from university constituencies and PASSHE University Presidents. Performance measures are developed in consultation with the Chancellor and COT and largely based upon the institution's Strategic Plan. The evaluation consists of a Professional Development Plan devised by the President, the Chancellor, and the

Council's chair, and the Evaluation Committee prepares a report for review by the BOG.

Principles of Good Practice and Conflict of Interest (Criteria 2 g-i, ROA13)

The COT adheres to principles of good practice in board governance. It is a member of the Pennsylvania Association of Councils of Trustees (PACT), which provides training and development opportunities for Council members. Periodic workshops hosted by PACT support the development of best practices related to legal obligations, conflicts of interest, and ethics.

The Council has a clearly written conflict of interest statement that all members must abide by and sign annually. Said statements obligate Trustees to disclose any conflict of interest that may arise at any time during their tenure, be they payments for services, contractual relationships, employment, or any matters involving familial or financial interests. Further, the members of the COT must abide by BOG Policy 2012-01: Conflict of Interest (VII.2.5). It states, among other things, that "if a friend, family member, or business associate of a Council member applies for a position with a State System university or the System itself, the Council member must recuse himself from the selection process" (VII.2.5, p. 3). COT members must also abide by several Pennsylvania policies designed to prevent conflicts of interest (PA Public Official and Employee Ethics Act; Executive Order 2015-01 (VII.2.6); Governor's Code of Conduct 1980-18 Amended (VII.2.7); State Adverse Interest Act (VII.2.8); Right to Know Law, (VII.2.9). Policies like these maintain the impartiality of the university's governing body.

The Council supports the President in maintaining the autonomy of the institution as prescribed by Act 188 and other BOG policies. Some of these BOG policies allow for individual institutions to operate more autonomously.

Presidential Autonomy and Support (Criterion 3)

As explained above, WCU's President is appointed and evaluated by the Council and the Chancellor. Selection of the President is governed by BOG Policy 1983-13-A: Process for Recommending Presidential Appointment (VII.3.1). Following the policy, the WCU COT forms a Presidential Search Committee that will consist of representatives of faculty, staff, students, and alumni, as well as Council members and a current or former President at a similar university. Some members of the Search Committee are selected by the COT, others are elected or selected by the group on campus they represent (VII.3.1, pp. 1-2).

President Christopher Fiorentino's educational background, faculty experience, and administrative roles serve him well leading WCU. President Fiorentino holds B.A., M.A. and PhD degrees from Temple University. Inaugurated as WCU's 15th president on April 21, 2017, following his appointment as interim president in 2016, his roots at WCU are broad and deep. He began teaching at WCU in 1983 while working on his Doctoral degree, rose to become the Dean of the College of Business and Public Affairs (now College of Business and Public Management)—a position he held for more than 20 years—and, in 2013, became the Vice President for External Operations.

President Fiorentino has been active in numerous leadership roles on campus, helping to secure AACSB accreditation for the School of Business; developing off-campus academic centers, including the Graduate Center in West Goshen Township; and working with faculty and supporters to create the Cottrell Entrepreneurial Leadership Center. As vice president for External Operations, President Fiorentino helped WCU fulfill its mission to serve local communities and the Commonwealth as a source of knowledge and skill development, a research center, and a service provider. His responsibilities included overseeing the university operations at the State System's Center City Philadelphia site.

The President of WCU has the authority and autonomy to fulfill the responsibilities of the position as established by Act 188. According to Act 188, the President establishes and implements policies and procedures related to: instructional programs and academic standards; administration of the institution; admission and enrollment; use of institutional facilities; student activity fees; and operating and capital budgets. While the COT oversees many of the same areas, Act 188 simply grants them the right to "review and approve such matters." It is the President, acting autonomously, who carries out these responsibilities directly.

Upon assuming his presidency, President Fiorentino transitioned the university away from a culture of distributed leadership and corresponding lack of overall strategic direction to an empowered, inclusive, and transparent culture that is clear about the overall vision and associated strategic plan. Faculty, staff, and administrators are empowered to set, measure, and achieve goals thereof. President Fiorentino has emphasized student success as a critical part of WCU's comprehensive Strategic Plan. This emphasis drove the college re-organization in Academic Affairs and led to the creation of the position of Associate Provost for

Student Success. Additionally, each executive and faculty search includes language that directly mentions student success.

WCU has recently re-organized some of its key inclusion and equity efforts, particularly with the creation of the position of Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer as described in previous standards. Following a national search, WCU hired Dr. Tracey Ray Robinson, who has already begun instituting several initiatives. West Chester now regularly conducts a Campus Climate Survey to gauge potential areas of concern. All new department chairs now participate in a “Chair’s Boot Camp,” to familiarize the chairs with various processes and resources connected to chairing a department, including programming specifically focused on issues of diversity and inclusion.

WCU made the decision to create the strategic role of an Associate Vice President and Chief Human Resource Officer (AVP CHRO) to oversee both Human Resources and Labor Relations in an effort to provide operational transparency and strengthened support to its staff. Through this position, immediate implementation of strategic practices have increased lines of communication between non-represented and represented constituents across campus. Today, the AVP CHRO makes regular appearances at Provost’s Executive Cabinet meetings; multiple trainings and open forums are now held for Deans, Associate Deans and Managers; and the university actively participates in, as well as shares PASSHE-wide communications regarding new collective bargaining contracts.

A Faculty Ombuds Office, reporting to the Deputy Provost and Vice President for Academic Operations, was created in Spring 2020 to serve as an informal and impartial resource to assist faculty with issues and concerns related to their work experience. The goal of the Faculty Ombuds Office is to provide a free, confidential space for faculty to bring issues and concerns, to be heard, and to receive assistance in strategizing and exploring options. The work of the Ombudsperson is three-fold: 1) listening; 2) strategizing, exploring options, and information gathering; and 3) identifying patterns and instances of concern, and where appropriate, recommending policy or procedure change.

The President is responsible for carrying out assessments of the institution’s efficiency and effectiveness. Act 188 specifies that Presidents have the responsibility “to develop and implement policies and procedures for the administration of the institution” (See Standard VII: Act 188, p. 12). President Fiorentino has provided the necessary resources to review current practices

of institutional assessment to include the hiring of an Associate Provost for Assessment and Accreditation to oversee all administrative assessment practices as referenced in Standard VI. President Fiorentino is aided by well-qualified administrators. A review of their curricula vitae demonstrates that members of executive cabinet have the appropriate degrees and work experience.

Administration and Organizational Structure (Criterion 4 a-d)

WCU’s administrative structure and reporting relationships are clearly documented in the appendices (VII.1.6). The credentials and professional experience of executive cabinet members can be seen through a review of their curricula vitae (VII.4.1).

The search process ensures that the appointed individuals have the functional knowledge and the skills to perform their duties. For each vacancy, the hiring supervisor reviews and, where appropriate, updates the job description and knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) to reflect the current and future needs of the position and department. Human Resources (HR) also reviews, updates and approves submitted job descriptions to ensure postings are compliant and reflective of current and future university needs. Job descriptions are then used to create accurate job announcements, advertisements, HR approved applicant screening matrices, and interview tools which assess the KSAs and experience required for success in the position. Many positions require multiple professional references and applicants are also tested through participation in open forums as needed.

Managers are aided by a variety of information systems that help them to perform their duties. After administrators are hired, they receive training on use of technology applications that are specific to their department and business processes if they are not already familiar with them (VII.4.8). As the President has brought on new team members, he has been intentional in approving the structure of divisions that support them in achieving their goals.

Engagement with Faculty and Students (Criteria 4e)

President Fiorentino believes that self-reflection, listening, and feedback from the entire university community are critical to student and university success. The President holds an open forum or town hall style meeting at least once each semester, with faculty, students, and staff, respectively. The meeting with

students typically occurs in the evening at an event held and well-publicized by the Student Government Association (SGA). In most semesters, there are multiple availabilities with faculty, one at a regularly-scheduled Faculty Senate meeting, and another during a standalone question-and-answer session, each well publicized in advance. President Fiorentino is regularly joined by Cabinet members who can speak directly to issues of concern to the relevant constituents. The level of commitment to these exchanges was apparent during the Spring 2020 semester, when leadership ensured the open forums continued, albeit virtually, due to the global pandemic. The President instituted Lunch at Tanglewood (the President's official residence) as an opportunity to engage and listen to various constituency groups such as transfer students, adult students, veterans, underrepresented minorities, high school counselors, and many more.

In addition, President Fiorentino implemented the WCU Presidential Shadow program, during which he spends a day shadowing a WCU employee, because he believes each employee is a valued and important part of ensuring student success. This is a testament his "community of educators" leadership philosophy. He has shadowed the Director of New Student Programs at an orientation session, the Interim Director of WCU's Lawrence A. Dowdy Multi-Cultural Center, and a WCU Purchasing Manager, to name a few. These are captured in part of his First Friday Video series and highlighted in his blog (VII.4.9).

Evaluation of Administrative Units (Criterion 4 f)

All WCU managers participate in an annual planning process to develop and document individual and unit goals that are aligned with the university's goals, outcomes and initiatives outlined in the strategic plan, *Pathways to Student Success* (I.1.2). Cabinet approved language that encourages each manager to include an annual goal to "...optimize departmental/ process productivity, efficiency and effectiveness and operationalize WCU's strategic plan." Through ongoing dialogue, periodic check-ins and the year-end appraisal process, employees and administrative units are evaluated on their results and effectiveness. Increasingly, employees and departments use quantitative data in their reporting. These results are available to the divisional Vice Presidents and President. Incomplete and new initiatives identified in the appraisal process are used to help establish individual and unit goals for the subsequent year. Lastly, progress towards achieving strategic plan initiatives is measured twice a year and

tracked using the university's assessment software system; this allows Steering Committee members and members of President's Cabinet to easily monitor progress and identify areas that need attention.

As examined in Standard VI, Administrative Assessment is guided by WCU's Institutional Effectiveness Plan. The assessment of administrative unit goals is on a rotating schedule so that each unit goal is assessed at least once over a four year period. This allows units to focus assessment efforts and lead to a more thoughtful process. Annual summary reports allow units to reflect on the year and highlight key accomplishments of their assessment efforts. The summary reports are submitted to the Associate Provost for Accreditation and Assessment and their respective Vice President who in turn can identify shared outcomes across and within divisions. Best practices are shared at annual university wide assessment events.

Periodic Assessment of the Effectiveness of Governance, Leadership, and Administration (Criteria 5)

WCU does not have authority to assess the effectiveness of the governance of PASSHE, the BOG, or the COT as it relates to WCU. Local committees serve as important shared governance units on matters of policy and operations, and their purpose, structure, and deliverables are reviewed by the Administration and committee leadership; where appropriate, updates are made to maximize value-added contributions to the university and its leadership. For example the BRC was re-envisioned and formed in Fall 2015 by the President to engage and promote transparency in the university budgeting process by reviewing the university's preliminary annual budget and making recommendations to the President for revisions to the budget prior to finalization in support of the University Mission, Values Statement, Vision Statement, and Strategic Plan.

The President has the authority to review the effectiveness of his "at will" leadership team and take appropriate action using the goal setting and appraisal process previously addressed (VII.5.1). In addition, the President, his Cabinet and the individual Vice Presidents have made decisions to restructure departments and reporting structures to meet the changing needs of the university. Examples include changes to Information Services and Technology, Enrollment Management, and reassignment of Employee and Labor Relations from Human Resources to the Deputy Provost and Vice President for Academic Operations.

Conclusion

WCU's growth has occurred both from significant increases in undergraduate enrollment, and at the graduate level through the creation of many new graduate programs to include the professional doctorate credential. With each newly created graduate program, decisions must be made about department governance. In some instances, undergraduate and graduate programs share a department; in some cases not. One specific challenge is determining how best to serve the graduate student population. There exists a Graduate Student Association (GSA), but graduate student needs do not mirror those of undergraduates. Determining how best to empower this governing body is a continuing process.

As a member of the PASSHE, WCU is the largest of fourteen organizations. Like its sister institutions, WCU is participating in a System Redesign instituted by the new Chancellor, Daniel Greenstein. The redesign is likely to impact multiple aspects of WCU's own Strategic Plan, *Pathways to Student Success*. A key challenge for WCU is to maintain its areas of excellence and continue to tackle existing challenges while recognizing the need to plan for multiple contingencies to include impact of the recently legislated Act 50. While not everything is foreseeable, presentations to the BRC have emphasized the need to budget under a range of assumptions. President Fiorentino also regularly notes the need to prepare for multiple futures in his appearances before faculty and student groups.

During these unprecedented times, WCU will need to remain student-focused, flexible, innovative, yet true

to its mission and culture of shared governance as we emerge from the global pandemic.

Strengths

- The university's institutional effectiveness model is clearly articulated in WCU's 2020 Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP) and represents WCU's steadfast commitment to student success and institutional achievement. This reflects WCU's ability to adapt to change and make institutional improvements through our assessment processes.
- WCU leadership continually engages and, in some cases, leads the System Redesign planning efforts with the Chancellor, Board of Governors, and other PASSHE university leadership, and as such WCU will be prepared for any impending new realities.

Opportunities for Improvement

- WCU should take institutional effectiveness to the next level by establishing an Institutional Effectiveness Committee that is charged with assessing the progress and effectiveness of the IEP to include the university mission, strategic plan, and administrative assessment in conjunction with relevant existing committees. The charge for this committee should include developing a communications strategy that ensures transparency of this ongoing work.
- WCU should continue to ensure that personnel are efficiently deployed or aligned to respond to emerging needs and priorities and communicate organizational changes clearly and transparently to all stakeholders.





Conclusion

Over the past two years, WCU has engaged our campus community in a thorough analysis of our institution in order to determine our success in meeting all of the MSCHE standards for accreditation and requirements affiliation. We also examined our ability to achieve three institutional priorities that are aligned with our mission and strategic plan:

- student success and learning
- diversity, equity, and inclusion
- financial strength

The seven working groups, led by our steering committee, scrutinized our policies, practices, and processes, offering compelling evidence to demonstrate our success. We are incredibly proud of their work and of the university's accomplishments, including our passion for continuous improvement that has allowed us to identify 16 opportunities for building on our success for the future. Those recommendations are listed below by standard.

Standard I – Mission and Goals

Opportunities for Improvement:

- WCU should continue to enhance awareness and visibility of the mission statement in order to create greater intentionality with regard to our community's use of the mission language. This can be achieved through facility signage and planning, website prominence and consistency, inclusion within course syllabi, and in official university communications.

Standard II – Ethics and Integrity

Opportunities for Improvement

- Examine ways to improve student preparation to engage in constructive discussions during courses that cover difficult topics and with visitors to our campus who use inflammatory rhetoric.
- Increase transparency about the process used to document and resolve non-union complaints.
- Continue to increase the clarity about the fee structure and total costs of attending college for students.
- Continue to address the underemployment Black and LatinX faculty, along with faculty in other underrepresented categories.

Standard III – Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

Opportunities for Improvement

- Harness the success of our Philadelphia and Delaware County Community College (DCCC) programs to foster greater integration of students who are learning at alternate locations.
- Continue to demonstrate ability to recruit high-quality faculty to increase the complement of Black and LatinX faculty.

Standard IV – Support for the Student Experience

Opportunities for Improvement

- Continue to formally examine campus climate issues and make changes to enhance equity, inclusion, and support of the student experience.
- Continue the commitment to the co-curricular transcript by enhancing the professional development program designed to increase faculty adoption of transcribed programs that enhance classroom learning.

Standard V – Educational Effectiveness Assessment

Opportunities for Improvement

- Assurance of Student Learning (ASL) and General Education assessment processes that are championed by separate faculty leads could be streamlined to build an even greater sense of culture around assessment.
- The strong work of improved assessment efforts over time could now be celebrated more consistently, showcasing best practices across the entire university.
- New strategies to close racial and gendered equity gaps in access to the university and to student success are still needed, despite consistent efforts, given that the gaps persist.

Standard VI – Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

Opportunities for Improvement

- Further integrate and highlight the strategic goals for diversity, equity, inclusion, and sustainability.
- Develop new and effective strategies to make progress on the university's carbon neutrality goals – by working across divisions – in order to permit WCU to demonstrate its leadership in higher education sustainability.
- Conduct an analysis of the use of the university's planning efforts and resource allocation during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to discover lessons learned that might improve our business practices and reveal opportunities for permanent innovation triggered by the disruption.

Standard VII – Governance, Leadership, and Administration

Opportunities for Improvement

- WCU should take institutional effectiveness to the next level by establishing an Institutional Effectiveness Committee that is charged with assessing the progress and effectiveness of the Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP) to include the university mission, strategic plan, and administrative assessment in conjunction with relevant existing committees. The charge for this committee should include developing a communications strategy that ensures transparency of this ongoing work.
- WCU should continue to ensure that personnel are efficiently deployed or aligned to respond to emerging needs and priorities and communicate organizational changes clearly and transparently to all stakeholders.

We are pleased to report that several initiatives are already underway related to the opportunities for improvement identified above, and we are eager to begin to assess their effectiveness. While continuous improvement is an ongoing project, the process of identifying these opportunities made clear that some could be attended to almost immediately, which is a positive outcome.



Steering Committee and Working Group Members

Steering Committee Tri-Chairs

Jen Bacon, Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities

Jeffery Osgood, Deputy Provost & Vice President for Academic Operations

Stefanie Schwalm, Associate Provost for Accreditation & Assessment

Standard I: Mission and Goals

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Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

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**denotes a tri-chair for the workgroup*



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