

### 3. Challenges and Opportunities

376 One of the institution's chief accomplishments, reflected in the section above, has been ensuring that  
377 assessment procedures are in place for both student learning and institutional effectiveness. This was  
378 both a challenge and an opportunity to significantly overhaul the way in which the University engages  
379 in assessment. In addition, as noted in the decennial self-study, declining state support, coupled with  
380 increased personnel costs mandated by collective bargaining agreements, continues to be a challenge  
381 for the institution. Furthermore, an aging infrastructure with limited opportunity to expand the  
382 institution's physical footprint through new buildings poses significant challenges to using enrollment  
383 growth as a way to replace decreasing state funding. Responding to these challenges, the University  
384 has continued to be successful in increasing enrollments strategically (within a constrained physical  
385 space) via off-site and distance education programs as well as selected main campus expansion.  
386 Despite significant geographic competition, and through the development of new academic  
387 programs, WCU has used its innovative planning and resource allocation strategies to sustain  
388 manageable growth and fiscal stability. This section describes these challenges and opportunities,  
389 consistent with Middle States' *Characteristics of Excellence*.  
390

#### I. Ensuring Assessment Procedures Are In Place (Standards 4, 7, 11,14)

392 The institution has significantly increased its focus and commitment to assessment since the last  
393 decennial visit. Both human and financial resources have been added, and results of progress and  
394 success have been shared with the entire campus community. In addition, the ways in which  
395 programs have used assessment outcomes to inform programmatic and course-level changes have  
396 also been collected and shared. One reason for this improvement has been the ability to standardize  
397 reporting structures as well as the addition of technological resources.

##### *Excellence in Action (Closing the Loop): Assessment Processes*

398 The University has had access to the *TracDat* software system for several years, although until  
399 recently, it has been underused. Since then, and following the decennial self-study, additional  
400 financial resources were committed for training for administrators and faculty to better understand  
401 and leverage the system. Initially, the system was only used for student learning outcomes  
402 assessment. However, the institution is now using it for the reporting, monitoring, and evaluation of  
403 the institutional strategic plan as well. Using the system for the assessment of strategic plan  
404 objectives allows for a single interface and reporting structure as well as the ability to generate reports  
405 as needed for each area of the strategic plan to demonstrate accomplishments and areas of concern  
406 related to particular objectives. In addition to the strategic plan, all academic program majors and  
407 student support service areas now have assessment plans housed within the software platform to  
408 measure learning outcomes.  
409

410 Since the last decennial report, the institution has strengthened its reporting of student learning  
411 assessment through the use of an institution-wide rubric.<sup>9</sup> The rubric is not used to evaluate program  
412 results related to outcomes but to ensure core elements of student learning assessment are included in  
413 each program's assessment plan. For the last three years, all program assessment plans were  
414 evaluated annually using the rubric. This has allowed for consistent communication across campus as

415 to the institutional expectations for student learning assessment. Programs are provided  
416 independent feedback to document strengths or suggest ways they can improve their ability to  
417 demonstrate student learning outcomes. Scores representing the quality of the plan's components are  
418 reported annually in the form of heat map charts for all constituents to see and are posted on the  
419 TLAC website.<sup>8</sup> Additionally the TLAC website contains more explicit information regarding the  
420 institutional expectation for student learning assessment and shares exemplary practices from across  
421 the institution following their annual reviews.<sup>10</sup>

422 The University has also strengthened its ability to measure and track progress towards institutional  
423 goals specified in the strategic plan. For the first time, in spring 2015, "Big Plan Days"<sup>10</sup> were held on  
424 campus for constituents to receive information about the accomplishments and future directions of  
425 the strategic plan. Using Theme Team tables to reflect each of the substantive areas of the strategic  
426 plan, *TracDat* reports were shared with attendees and documented the progress made in pursuit of  
427 strategic objectives. Attendees were able to comment on the documents, make suggestions for edits,  
428 as well as provide recommendations for ways to refine objectives for the following academic year  
429 based upon their interpretation of the results presented in the reports.

430 Each of these strategies has contributed to more organized and systematic assessment processes. As  
431 a result, the institution is better able to engage in campus-wide discussions and evaluation of  
432 assessment outcomes in ways that were not possible before the implementation of this  
433 comprehensive software-based approach. More information related to each of these areas will be  
434 discussed in section five below.

435

## 436 **II. Declining State Support And Financial Implications of the State System (Standards 2, 3, 4, 437 6)**

438 Reduced public investment in higher education, including decreases in state funding, rising salary and  
439 benefit costs, and the PASSHE Board of Governors longstanding practice of holding tuition  
440 increases at or below inflation are major factors challenging resource planning at WCU. In addition,  
441 WCU's external governance structure is complex and impacts institutional flexibility. Even with  
442 those challenges, however, the university has developed and maintained a very strong financial  
443 position and has creatively addressed these challenges.

### 444 *Governance Structure*

445 WCU's governance structure includes the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE)  
446 and its Board of Governors (BOG), and the WCU Council of Trustees (COT). Internally, WCU is  
447 comprised of six divisions: Academic Affairs, Administration and Finance, Advancement, External  
448 Operations, Information Technology, and Student Affairs. The six divisional vice presidents report to  
449 the president and, along with the director of social equity and the chief of staff/executive deputy to  
450 the president, form the President's Cabinet.

451

452 *Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education:* In 1982, the Pennsylvania State System of Higher  
453 Education was established with the passage of Act 188 which prescribes the association between the  
454 system office and the 14 member universities, as well as the responsibilities and operations of such  
455 campus leadership as the COT and president. The University's state budget allocation (including base  
456 and performance funding), tuition, and technology fees are all developed by the system office with

457 some campus input and presented to the BOG for approval. State funds are distributed to the  
458 System universities according to a BOG-approved formula. In addition to its budget authority, the  
459 State System creates and monitors operational policies and procedures and reviews and approves all  
460 academic programs prior to presentation to the BOG.

461  
462 Being part of a State System also impacts the ability of the institution to ensure building projects are  
463 approved and/or completed in an efficient timeframe. It also limits the institution's ability to select  
464 vendors, contractors, and/or products for construction on campus because of requirements State  
465 statutes and regulations placed upon the Department of General Services (DGS), which must be used  
466 for all construction projects that involve any amount of state funding. DGS requires the institution  
467 to select the lowest bid for contractors, and selection of architects often is made without regard for  
468 the university's needs or preferences. Currently, the first architect for the construction of the  
469 Business and Public Affairs Center was dismissed, as was the first general contractor, both of which  
470 have resulted in significant delays and increased costs for this project over which the institution has  
471 little control.

472  
473 *Board of Governors:* A 20-member Board of Governors (BOG) is responsible for planning and  
474 coordinating development and operation of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education. The  
475 BOG establishes broad educational, fiscal, and personnel policies and oversees the efficient  
476 management of PASSHE. Among other tasks, the BOG appoints the chancellor and university  
477 presidents, approves new academic programs, sets tuition, and coordinates and approves the annual  
478 PASSHE operating budget. The BOG meetings occur quarterly and are attended by President  
479 Weisenstein and his Chief of Staff and Executive Deputy, as well as others. WCU's Council of  
480 Trustees (COT) must present decisions on property purchases and new academic programs to  
481 PASSHE for final approval.

482  
483 Recently the BOG adopted a revised funding formula to allocate base appropriation funding from  
484 the State to the universities. The new funding formula redistributed approximately \$3.5 million  
485 (phased-in over a three-year period) from West Chester to other institutions. In the year prior to the  
486 revised funding formula, an ad hoc adjustment to the formula redeployed \$1.6 million from WCU to  
487 other System schools. These resource transfers affect the University's ability to serve students and  
488 the community, de-incentivize entrepreneurial behavior and do not address the real problems  
489 outlined in the 2012 Governor's Advisory Commission on Postsecondary Education Report (falling  
490 public investment and demographic changes that suggest Pennsylvania has too many universities).<sup>12</sup>  
491 In response to the declining state support and constraints of the State System including the revised  
492 funding formula, two state legislators introduced the Transfer Institution Act into the Pennsylvania  
493 Senate in 2014. The legislation was to provide a mechanism for State System universities meeting  
494 certain qualifications to leave the System and become state-related. While the legislation was not  
495 approved, it did open a conversation between the State System, its member institutions, and the  
496 public regarding the challenges of declining state support, State System constraints, and over-  
497 regulation. Among the specific outcomes resulting from that dialogue were:

- 498 • Modification of the approval process for new academic programs to create more efficiency at  
499 the State System level. Specifically, the Chancellor of the State System has directed the

- 500                   central office to complete its review and recommendation of new academic programs within  
501                   60 days.
- 502                  • Legislation has been reintroduced to allow state-owned universities and employees of state-  
503                   owned universities to enter into certain economic development agreements to commercialize  
504                   intellectual property and general economic development opportunities. Currently system  
505                   faculty and staff are subject to the limitations imposed by state regulations. The Senate  
506                   unanimously approved the bill in October 2015 and the House is expected to do so shortly.
- 507                  • The Board of Governors has approved greater flexibility for universities to use institutional  
508                   funds to support scholarships and to pilot alternative tuition rates to attract special populations  
509                   (e.g. out-of-state students) and encourage enrollment in high-need academic programs.

510

511 *Addressing the Challenges*

512 Over the past five years there has been a consistent decline in the amount of state support provided  
513 to the University for both capital projects and operations. Presently only 21.5% of WCU's annual  
514 operating budget for Educational and General programs comes from the Commonwealth of  
515 Pennsylvania; including federal stimulus funds, over 31% came from the Commonwealth in 2011.  
516 The West Chester University Foundation has been a critical partner in helping the University bridge  
517 the fiscal gap caused by decreasing state funds. The West Chester University Foundation is an  
518 independent, nonprofit entity (501(c)3) that is affiliated with the University through a memorandum  
519 of understanding and related service contracts. The Foundation's primary purpose is to raise money  
520 to meet the needs identified by the University including operations, scholarships, endowment,  
521 equipment, and construction. The Foundation is also responsible for developing student housing on  
522 campus through its subsidiary, University Student Housing (USH). The Vice President for  
523 Advancement and Sponsored Research serves as the liaison between the University and the  
524 Foundation to assure the Foundation's fundraising and support activities remain focused on  
525 institutional priorities.

526 Gift income has grown markedly under the Foundation's leadership. The annual fund and capital  
527 campaigns provide the University and its colleges with external financial resources to build and  
528 renovate facilities as needed, purchase or invest in new equipment and technology, develop special  
529 programs and services to enrich student learning, sponsor art or cultural performances to benefit  
530 communities, provide scholarships and engage in other similar activities. Upon the release of West  
531 Chester's strategic plan three years ago, the University and Foundation launched the *Becoming More*  
532 campaign to raise \$50 million by June 30, 2017. As of May 2016, 85% of the \$50 million goal (\$42  
533 million) has been raised and the campaign is on target to reach its goal by December 31, 2017.  
534 Campaign projects reflect the most important institutional needs as defined in the strategic plan  
535 including: the Business and Public Affairs Center, the move of several Health Sciences programs to a  
536 new building The Commons, facilities improvements and renovations, academic and administrative  
537 equipment, and endowments that support scholarship and campus operations.

538 In addition to fundraising, the Foundation serves the University through a variety of entrepreneurial  
539 activities to help achieve institutional and student success. In 2015 the Faculty and Student Research  
540 (FaStR) grant programs began making awards. Up to \$75,000 is committed annually by this program  
541 to support the research and scholarly activities conducted by WCU faculty working with  
542 undergraduate and graduate students. The Foundation works closely with the Office of Research and

543 Sponsored Programs on this initiative. In addition, the Foundation provides a mechanism for faculty  
544 to pursue research and outreach activities that the University finds difficult to implement given state  
545 regulation. Examples include the Amazon Center for Education and Environmental Research in  
546 Peru, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Autism Resource Center, and the proposed field station in  
547 Rwanda to support WCU faculty and student research on primates. The Foundation also hosts the  
548 Troops to Teachers program, an initiative of the U.S. Defense Department, which prepares and  
549 places retired military in teaching positions in schools. And revenues generated by USH provide  
550 WCU with more than \$1 million annually in new unrestricted funds that support initiatives and help  
551 overcome reductions resulting from changes in the funding formulas. USH also provides funding  
552 for the annual Presidential Lecture Series which brings noted speakers to campus such as Bob  
553 Woodward, Dan Rather, Cokie Roberts, and Jane Pauley.

554 West Chester University's Alumni Association is a 501(c)3 organization affiliated with the University.  
555 Its mission is to increase alumni engagement with the University leading to financial support and  
556 advocacy. Serving more than 90,000 graduates, the Alumni Association and the Office of Alumni  
557 Relations sponsor an array of activities and events ranging from active social media communications  
558 to more than 100 annual events held both on campus and across the nation. The Association also  
559 offers alumni discount programs for goods and services and awards scholarships from the revenues  
560 generated by those programs. Since the adoption of the *Becoming More* fundraising campaign, the  
561 Alumni Relations Office has more than doubled its program offerings, established nearly a dozen  
562 new alumni chapters, and has increased web-based memberships (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and  
563 Pinterest) by nearly 150 percent. These efforts have played a significant role in connecting alumni to  
564 their alma mater and encouraging philanthropy. To that end, the Alumni Association and WCU  
565 Foundation have developed a close working relationship to identify, cultivate, solicit and steward  
566 alumni donors. This includes the joint purchase of a new facility in 2014 to house both organizations  
567 and expand the space available for cultivating alumni involvement and support.  
568

### 569 **III. Limited Space for Growth and An Aging Infrastructure (Standards 1, 2, 5, 11, 13):**

570 One of the most significant challenges for the institution is space and an aging infrastructure.  
571 Implementation of the ten-year facilities plan continues on target by improving current facilities with  
572 minimal debt to the institution. However, there is little room for physical expansion of new facilities  
573 on the main campus to help meet the demands of increasing student enrollment. The University has  
574 been innovative in addressing these challenges through the creation of a new Cabinet-level position;  
575 Vice President of External Operations. This type of leadership position – which focuses on  
576 expanding the University's off-campus and distance programs – is the first within the State System  
577 and speaks to the institution's commitment to responding to challenges strategically. The External  
578 Operations Division has enabled the University to look for ways to turn potential growth into real  
579 growth while offering alternative paths to student access. Expanding educational delivery options,  
580 establishing strong connections with community partners, and creating ways to increase the diversity  
581 of WCU's student population all help to accomplish the goal of increased enrollments. External  
582 Operations has oversight for the following areas: Distance Education, the Graduate Center (including  
583 off-site educational programming), WCU in Philadelphia, the Center for Community Solutions, and  
584 Dual Enrollment Programs. Each of these areas has been instrumental over the last five years in  
585 allowing the institution to address this challenge and meet the mission and vision of the institution as

586 it pertains to providing access, offering high quality education, and partnering with other schools,  
587 government agencies, businesses, and non-profits

588 *Distance Education*

589 Over the last four years, the University has seen tremendous growth in the area of distance education.  
590 In FY 2014-2015 there were 602 distinct students who were new to WCU and enrolled in online  
591 courses (defined as those with online content between 80% to 100%) and there were a total of 8412  
592 total distance education student seats in classes. When compared to FY 2013-2014, distance  
593 education has increased by nearly 69% in total seats. While significant growth via distance education  
594 has been achieved, the institution has been conscious of ensuring resources are allocated to support  
595 this burgeoning area. Specific examples within the last several years include the increase in the  
596 number of instructional designers from one full-time individual to three and adding two online  
597 support specialists and one E-learning technology and training specialist. Online support specialists  
598 provide technical assistance during non-traditional times throughout the day because most online  
599 students and faculty engage in their courses outside of conventional business hours. An e-learning  
600 technology and training specialist provides additional assistance in direct support of continued  
601 growth within the online education marketplace. Such support includes assisting faculty in the  
602 integration of effective and attractive technology tools for courses as well as the development of a  
603 student training program to ensure learner readiness in an online environment.

604

605 *Graduate Center and Off-site Education Programming*

606 The Graduate Center (GC, formerly the Graduate Business Center), which opened in 2002, was the  
607 University's first institutionally-owned "additional location." The GC is located three miles north of  
608 campus and is a 47,000-square-foot building that provides a professional and convenient off-campus  
609 learning environment. The MBA, MPA, DPA, and Counseling programs, as well as the Southeastern  
610 Pennsylvania Autism Resource Center (SPARC) are all housed there. It also hosts an array of  
611 executive education and outreach activities.

612

613 The institution's Center City location offers quality, affordable educational opportunities that WCU is  
614 known for, along with accessibility and convenience that come with being in the heart of a major city.  
615 WCU in Philadelphia is located at the PASSHE Center City building. In 2013, WCU offered its first  
616 program, a graduate degree in special education and post baccalaureate certification. Today we offer  
617 six programs at the Center City location. These programs include both undergraduate (criminal  
618 justice, social work, and a degree completion for nursing) and graduate programs (communication  
619 studies, criminal justice, and social work). There are currently over 300 students at the Center City  
620 location, which has steadily increased from the initial cohort of 35 three years ago. This location has  
621 provided access to students who otherwise may have not had the opportunity for a WCU education.  
622 This location serves the needs of degree completers and/or adult learners who are balancing work  
623 and family obligations. Additionally, it is proving to be an important way to attract students from a  
624 variety of cultural backgrounds, as about 85% of WCU students at the Center City campus are  
625 underrepresented minorities. The institution is committed to providing resources to ensure success  
626 in this area. Specific examples of this include the hiring of a program counselor in Philadelphia to  
627 serve as a link between main campus departments and services. Other examples of support include  
628 ensuring students have access to a WCU psychologist, the creation of student advisory boards, onsite

629 writing tutors, and the offering of student success workshops within the areas of time management,  
630 study skills, and test taking.

631

632 *Dual Enrollment Programming*

633 Beginning in 2015-2016 West Chester University began a targeted effort in offering dual enrollment  
634 to a cohort of junior and senior students from regional high schools. Students who participate in the  
635 dual enrollment program simultaneously earn college credits through WCU and high school credits  
636 through their respective high schools. Courses are taught by WCU faculty and are held at the  
637 Graduate Center in West Chester. This opportunity allows students to have earlier access to WCU  
638 and helps alleviate space constraints at the West Chester campus.

639

640 **IV. Enhancing student recruitment, admission, and retention (Standards 1, 2, 8, 9)**

641 WCU's strategic plan states:

642 *As a public University which promotes academic excellence and emphasizes global education,  
643 West Chester University is committed to providing educational and employment opportunities to  
644 previously excluded, disadvantaged, challenged, and marginalized populations. Therefore we will  
645 recruit, retain, and graduate diverse cohorts of students.*

646 The University is located in a crowded marketplace competing for students with over 100 higher  
647 education institutions within a 50-mile radius. While this may be a difficult obstacle for some  
648 institutions, the University has embraced this challenge by strategically enhancing its student  
649 recruitment, admission, and retention efforts over the past five years. This has been critical to the  
650 University's financial stability in the face of steadily declining state appropriations. In response to the  
651 enrollment goals outlined in the strategic plan, WCU has increased its investment in marketing from  
652 \$350,000 to \$1.7 million annually. Based on the enrollment goals established through the University's  
653 enrollment management process and approved by Cabinet— to increase out-of-state, graduate and  
654 off-campus enrollments – the Office of Communications creates targeted marketing plans that  
655 address those objectives. In addition, the Communications team has been charged with increasing  
656 general awareness (branding) of the University beyond WCU's traditional market (Greater  
657 Philadelphia) to other areas of the Mid-Atlantic region. Examples of tactics for each of the targeted  
658 populations as well as the general brand awareness effort include a station-domination marketing  
659 tactic in which there is a high concentration of WCU advertisements at several train stations  
660 throughout the Interstate 95 corridor including the Long Island Railroad, as well as the Baltimore  
661 Metro and Washington D.C. Union Station terminals. In addition to enlarging the institution's  
662 geographical focus, the University has deliberately expanded its reach using digital media outlets  
663 (Google Adwords, Facebook, Pandora, LinkedIn, and Spotify). Each of these tactics has also assisted  
664 in another key goal of the institution, which is the admission of underrepresented minority students  
665 (URMs).

666 In 2008 the University set a goal of increasing new degree-seeking URM enrollment 23% by the end  
667 of 2014. Figure 3.1 demonstrates the multicultural undergraduate and graduate headcounts for the  
668 last several years. In addition, undergraduate goals for URM students have been achieved on an  
669 annual basis. Specific funds and plans that have been undertaken in the last five years include Check

670 Us Out Day (which encourages multicultural students to attend information sessions on campus),  
671 targeting community colleges, and phone-a-thons for accepted URM students.

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674 **Figure 3.1: Multicultural Undergraduate and Graduate Headcount**

Race/Ethnicity	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015
<b>Undergraduate Headcount</b>					
African American/Black	1,140	1,145	1,247	1,350	1,490
Native American/Alaskan Native	26	19	15	14	14
Asian	239	253	290	294	306
Latino	549	614	636	690	762
White	10,628	10,914	11,138	11,032	11,072
Non-Resident Alien	48	48	44	41	68
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3	7	8	14	17
Two or More Races	164	226	322	363	409
Unknown Race or Ethnicity	37	75	13	51	88
NRA or Unknown	85	123	57	92	156
Underrepresented Minorities <sup>1</sup>	1,859	1,973	2,179	2,377	2,618
Non-URM (White/Asian)	10,890	11,205	11,477	11,380	11,452
Percent URM [URM/(URM+Non-URM)]	14.6%	15.0%	16.0%	17.3%	18.6%

Race/Ethnicity	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015
<b>Graduate Headcount</b>					
African American/Black	231	236	250	295	319
Native American/Alaskan Native	3	4	5	4	2
Asian	58	57	53	62	62
Latino	53	57	63	67	76
White	1,840	1,634	1,642	1,681	1,796
Non-Resident Alien	47	53	75	85	84
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	1	1	3	-
Two or More Races	21	20	27	32	37
Unknown Race or Ethnicity	12	52	18	13	9
NRA or Unknown	59	105	93	98	93
Underrepresented Minorities <sup>1</sup>	306	314	339	394	428
Non-URM (White/Asian)	1,901	1,695	1,702	1,750	1,864
Percent URM [URM/(URM+Non-URM)]	13.9%	15.6%	16.6%	18.4%	18.7%

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<sup>1</sup>The Education Trust 'Access to Success' definition of URM includes any student who self-identifies as Black, Hispanic, Native American, Hawaiian, or Multiracial when at least one of those race/ethnic categories is identified.

Non-URM includes any student who self-identifies as White, Asian, or Multiracial (White & Asian).

Students with no race or ethnicity specified and international non-resident alien students are excluded from both the numerator and denominator in the Percent URM calculation.

<https://edtrust.org/issue/access/>

676

677 While the admission and recruitment of diverse and qualified students is very important, equally  
678 important is the retention and graduation of students. The institution's retention and graduation  
679 rates regularly exceeded the national norm over the last four years. Table 3 displays the four- and six-

680 year graduation rates of the institution using the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System  
681 (IPEDS) report for 2014.

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Figure 3.2: Comparison of IPEDS Four and Six Year Graduation Rates

Category	4 Yr. Grad. Rate F08 Cohort	6 Yr. Graduation Rate F14 Cohort	% Graduated within 6 Yrs. Black	% Graduated within 6 Yrs. Hispanic
All US Degree Granting Institutions with Bachelor's or Higher (n=3069)	33	47	38	45
All M1's (n=390)	33	51	39	45
All Public, M1's (n=168)	23	47	37	42
All Public, M1's, Mid East DE DC MD NJ NY PA (n=39)	32	55	45	49
PASSHE (n=14)	34	54	41	54
West Chester University	44	67	54	69

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688 The University's ability to successfully retain students is the outcome of a suite of student support  
689 services. Upon admission to the institution, students are placed into one of four admission categories.  
690 Regularly admitted students have a combined SAT score of 1070 or greater. Students admitted under  
691 the Academic Development Program (ADP) include ACT 101 participants (students whose family  
692 incomes are below 150% of the national poverty level) and non-ACT 101 participants who are  
693 educationally disadvantaged, having both SAT scores and grade point averages below those of regular  
694 admission criteria. Students offered admission to the institution in a category other than regular  
695 admission are automatically connected with support services to ensure academic success.

696 ADP is housed within the Undergraduate Student Support Services (USSSS) unit, which includes the  
697 Learning Assistance and Resource Center, Pre-Major Advising, as well as the Office of Services for  
698 Students with Disabilities. ADP admits approximately 180 academically high-risk students (many of  
699 which are low income, first generation, and/or URM) each summer for a bridge program prior to  
700 their full matriculation in the fall. Throughout their first year these students are provided academic  
701 support through academic advising, tutoring, mentoring, academic monitoring, and counseling.  
702 When compared to students who do not participate in the program, ADP students persist at higher-  
703 than-expected retention rates.

704 Students admitted in the special admission category have either SAT scores or grade point averages  
705 below those of the regular admission criteria and take a reduced (12-credit) course load during their  
706 first semester at WCU. Figures 3.3 and 3.4 display the five-year average rates for second semester fall  
707 retention and for fourth- and sixth-year graduation rates by admittance and transfer type.

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Figure 3.3: First time, Full Time, First Year Degree Seeking Students Retention and Graduation

Category		2nd Fall Retention		4 Yr Graduation Rate		6 Yr Graduation Rate	
		N in F14 Cohort	% Retained to 2nd Fall	N in F11 Cohort	% Graduated Within 4 Yrs	N in F09 Cohort	% Graduated Within 6 Yrs
University	ALL	2344	87.9	2283	47.7	2241	70.7
Admissions Type	Regular	1968	88.7	1893	51.8	1847	73.1
	ADP - ACT101	68	80.9	55	21.8	54	48.1
	ADP - Non-Act101	112	83.9	104	17.3	109	66.1
	Special	196	84.2	231	34.3	231	59.3

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Figure 3.4: Transfer Students Retention and Graduation

Category		2nd Fall Retention		2 Yr Graduation Rate		4 Yr Graduation Rate		6 Yr Graduation	
		N in F14 Cohort	% Retained to 2nd Fall	N in F13 Cohort	% Graduated Within 2 Yrs	N in F11 Cohort	% Graduated Within 4 Yrs	N in F09 Cohort	% Graduated Within 6 Yrs
University	ALL	1331	83.5	1350	17.5	1275	66.7	1179	70.6
Load	Full-time in 1st Fall	1171	85.5	1174	17.2	1138	67.8	1051	72.2
	Part-time in 1st Fall	160	68.8	176	19.3	137	57.7	128	57.0

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Additionally, the University engages in continuous improvement efforts designed to ensure there is currency in student success and retention activities. In 2012 the University was one of 13 institutions in the State System to participate in the Center for Urban Education Equity Scorecard (ES) project. ES is a data-driven, organizational learning process designed to foster institutional change by identifying and eliminating racial disparities among college students. Consistent with the institutional mission of providing access and high-quality undergraduate education, the aim of this project was to identify structurally hidden and unintended inequalities leading to racial disproportions in the following: access to the University, retention, degree completion, and involvement in high impact activities, such as internship, honors, and undergraduate research. At the conclusion of this project, a total of 45 recommendations were made to administration. The recommendations are designed to close the racial equity gap in the areas of access, retention/completion, and excellence. To date 60% of the recommendations have been acted upon.<sup>11</sup> Over the last four years, the University has increased the number of URM students enrolled and increased and exceeded national retention rates for URM students. The University will continue to build upon excellence in this area by following through on remaining ES recommendations that have yet to be implemented.

Student success is at the core of every decision made at the University. *Building on Excellence* states, “West Chester University is dedicated to excellent academic programs while supporting an academic environment that ensures student success.” Over the last five years, the development of several programs has assisted in the retention and graduation rates for both URMs and the overall student population. Beginning in 2012-2013, the Office of Multicultural Affairs launched a mentoring program for first-year and transfer multicultural students. During its inaugural year, the program had 171 participants and currently serves nearly 249. The program’s purpose is to assist multicultural students in their transition to WCU by assigning them to both a peer mentor (an upper-class student) and a faculty/staff mentor who will provide guidance, information, and support during the initial year of enrollment. When comparing the retention rate of the mentoring group to all other multicultural students who do not participate, the program boasts a 4% greater retention rate for the last three

745 cohorts of participants. Because of early success with first year students, the program was expanded  
746 in 2015 to also include transfer multicultural students.

747 In 2013 the African American and Latino Male Student Retention Task Force was developed to help  
748 URM students overcome historically low graduation rates. The Brother to Brother program is the  
749 outcome of a task force recommendation. Launched in 2014, Brother to Brother, which is organized  
750 within the Learning Assistance and Resource Center (LARC), has created a council of ambassadors  
751 from campus organizations, holds special events, and reaches out to teen minority males in  
752 Philadelphia and nearby towns. Lastly, the Early Alert program within LARC is a proactive system of  
753 communication and collaboration of professors, program staff, academic advisors, and University  
754 students. The goals of this program are to promote academic success by identifying students having  
755 trouble with course material, provide students with timely support and direction in the use of campus  
756 resources, enhance communication with faculty, and help make the college transition more gratifying  
757 by providing a framework for academic success. Early Alert was expanded to all 100 and 200 level  
758 general education courses as a result of a strategic plan objective. Annually there are 1,100 early alerts  
759 that are sent to students, which serves as an initial outreach for them to meet with their advisor  
760 and/or sign up for tutoring at the LARC. Most recently institutional resources were dedicated for  
761 the initial hiring of a full time staff line to assist with diversity retention. In the Fall of 2015 an  
762 assistant director of Social Equity and Coordinator of Diversity Initiatives was hired. This individual  
763 is responsible for identifying diversity and inclusion opportunities for students and staff; engaging  
764 students in educational outreach opportunities; serving as the student liaison/contact representative  
765 for the Office of Social Equity; conducting and collaborating on educational and training programs  
766 on diverse issues for the campus community, and working with several campus constituencies that  
767 are linked to academic and student success such as University Forum, the Council for Diversity,  
768 Inclusion and Academic Excellence and the Diversity 411 Program.

769 *Conclusion*

770 Ensuring meaningful responses to the challenges and opportunities developing since the decennial  
771 site visit has strengthened WCU. The University has pursued significant improvements to  
772 assessment processes, both at the level of student learning outcomes as well as institutional  
773 effectiveness. The University has also implemented specific strategies to combat the financial effects  
774 of declining state appropriations exacerbated by the BOG's practice of constraining tuition increases  
775 at or below the CPI. These strategies include strengthening the role of the Foundation and the  
776 Alumni Association as well as meeting strategic enrollment management targets. In response to  
777 limitations on physical space, the institution has developed alternate sites for program delivery as well  
778 as alternative modalities for delivering instruction (distance education) to support increased  
779 enrollments. Finally, the University has successfully achieved enrollment growth despite being  
780 located in a very competitive market by providing not only access to high quality public higher  
781 education, but also ensuring the success of students as measured by retention and timely graduation  
782 rates.

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