

1206

## 5. Institutional Effectiveness and Student Learning

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1208 Since the last re-accreditation self-study the University has developed an appropriate infrastructure to  
1209 ensure institutional effectiveness as well as the documentation of student learning. The 2011  
1210 MSCHE report provided a non-binding finding for improvement, which suggested the University  
1211 “create a more coordinated and systematic approach for both institutional and student learning  
1212 assessment and better integrate its outcome results.” Since then, the University has committed itself  
1213 to coordinating a more systematic structure for both institutional effectiveness and student learning.  
1214 The leadership for these efforts began with the unveiling of the strategic plan *Building on Excellence* in  
1215 2013. Engaging in the process of developing a new strategic plan provided institutional leaders the  
1216 opportunity to examine what had been done previously and explore ways to coordinate more  
1217 effective processes. Beginning with the President’s office, the search commenced for a tool that  
1218 would effectively report, monitor, and evaluate progress of the strategic plan. A team of individuals  
1219 worked in collaboration with the President’s office as well as the Strategic Planning Assessment  
1220 Advisory Council to leverage existing software to provide a coordinated and systematic way of  
1221 demonstrating institutional effectiveness at varying levels.

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1223

### Institutional Effectiveness

1224 Institutional effectiveness at WCU is achieved through an intentional commitment to pursuing  
1225 evidence-based decision-making in pursuit of goals found in the strategic plan, *Building on Excellence*.  
1226 Additionally, there are complementary processes which support the pursuit of institutional  
1227 effectiveness, including: annual reports, State System accountability reports, five-year program  
1228 reviews and specialized accreditations, institutional assessments and student learning outcomes  
1229 assessment.

1230 *Building on Excellence*

1231 The start of a new strategic plan enabled the University to re-examine its processes related to the data  
1232 collection, reporting, and evaluation procedures. One key decision was to utilize planning software  
1233 for the reporting, monitoring, and evaluation of the plan to enable better communication and  
1234 decision-making. Rather than introduce a new software system across campus, which would be an  
1235 added expense as well as introducing new complexity, the University used the existing planning  
1236 software system, *TracDat*, and leveraged it for institutional strategic plan needs.

1237

1238 *Building on Excellence* is composed of five themes: Academics, Diversity, Engagement, Enrichment,  
1239 and Sustainability. Each of the themes has goals that guide the development of objectives and  
1240 outcome actions, which are assigned to constituents to complete each academic year. Figure 5.1  
1241 provides an overview of the strategic plan themes and goals.

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1243

Figure 5.1: Strategic Plan Themes and Goals

Building on Excellence: Education for Success					
Themes	Academics	Enrichment	Sustainability	Diversity	Engagement
Goals	Assuring student learning and academic excellence	Supporting student personal, professional, and civic development	Promoting sustainability focused on society, the economy, and the environment	Promoting and supporting diversity, inclusion, and equity	Strengthening academic and co-curricular programs with external stakeholders
	Strengthening the academic environment	Integrating and promoting enrichment activities	Developing and managing fiscal, human, and physical resources sustainably	Recruiting and retaining a diverse community of students, staff, faculty and administrators	Increasing institutional visibility and reputation
	Expanding academic opportunities		Establishing enrollment levels that sustain long-term viability and quality		Expanding local community involvement
	Supporting teaching excellence		Preserving, promoting, and cultivating WCU's long-term health, safety, and vitality		Increasing alumni outreach and partnerships

1245

1246 Using the plan’s objectives as a guide, each Theme Team meets to develop objectives and outcome  
 1247 actions for each of three phases of the strategic plan, which are comprised of three-year periods.  
 1248 Outcome actions for each objective are then assigned to outcome leaders (administrators, faculty, or  
 1249 staff) who are responsible for inputting information into *TracDat* related to the outcome action. As  
 1250 of May 2016 the institution has concluded the first phase of the strategic plan and has been successful  
 1251 in using results to improve programs and services and to inform planning and resource allocation  
 1252 decisions throughout each of the five themes. The effectiveness of this process can be attributed to  
 1253 the careful review of outcome actions prior to their assignment to the respective leaders and  
 1254 supporters so as to ensure they have been operationalized (wherever possible), which ensures that  
 1255 progress can be measured and tracked. In addition, the University intentionally made one of the two  
 1256 Theme Team leaders for each theme a member of cabinet.<sup>19</sup> Given that each member of Cabinet has  
 1257 a specific portfolio of responsibilities, ensuring that they are assigned as a co-chair of the appropriate  
 1258 strategic plan Theme Team supports institutional effectiveness by creating synergies between daily  
 1259 tactical operations and strategic plan priorities.

1260 The President's Chief of Staff and Executive Deputy is responsible for the leadership of the strategic  
 1261 plan, serving as the central point of contact to the campus community and working closely with the  
 1262 Theme Team chairs, the Strategic Planning Assessment and Advocacy Committee (SPAAC) and the  
 1263 reporting coordinator. The reporting coordinator carries out the oversight, monitoring, and  
 1264 implementation of the plan. This work involves meeting with Theme Team leaders to ensure  
 1265 outcome actions are operationalized so appropriate data can be obtained and building an  
 1266 infrastructure in *TracDat* that allows for an easy way to monitor progress. As a result of this work,  
 1267 the institution is able to provide reports that demonstrate alignment of the strategic plan with the  
 1268 MSCHE standards<sup>2</sup> and reports that show how budget and resource allocations for the strategic plan  
 1269 are utilized annually.<sup>3</sup>

1270 SPAAC provides guidance, support, and  
 1271 assistance to the University community in  
 1272 advancing the strategic plan objectives. SPAAC  
 1273 presents to the President’s Cabinet the progress  
 1274 made, issues needing to be addressed, and  
 1275 recommendations for the following year using the  
 1276 bi-annual reports that are provided in November  
 1277 and April for respective strategic plan objectives.<sup>20</sup>  
 1278 The members of SPAAC function in teams with  
 1279 each focusing on progress for a single theme.  
 1280 The strategic plan reporting, evaluation, and  
 1281 implementation cycle (closing the loop) is also  
 1282 directly aligned with the University budgeting  
 1283 cycle. Figure 5.2 demonstrates the strategic plan  
 1284 reporting, evaluation/implementation cycle and  
 1285 how it coincides with the university budgeting timeline (a more detailed overview is provided in  
 1286 section six on page 50).

Figure 5.2: Integration of Planning and Budgeting



1287 *Excellence in Action (Closing the Loop): Strategic Plan Results*

1288 Each of the strategic plan themes contains objectives with outcome actions that are reported on by  
 1289 assigned outcome leaders (administrators, faculty, or staff) twice per year (November and April). The  
 1290 November report serves as a status update so that outcome leaders are aware of what they need to do  
 1291 prior to the April collection date, which serves as the year-end reporting date. Following each of  
 1292 these dates, reports are provided to the Theme Team leaders so that appropriate modifications can be  
 1293 made and then given to SPAAC for their independent review.<sup>21</sup> As a result of these processes, the  
 1294 institution has been able to track the completion of objectives and share this information throughout  
 1295 the institution.<sup>4</sup> Significant accomplishments made during the first two years of the plan for each of  
 1296 the themes are highlighted below.

1297 *Academics Theme:*

- 1299 • Nationally, universities are seeing graduate enrollments decline. However, graduate  
 1300 enrollments at WCU exceeded targets last year, with an increase of almost ten percent in new  
 1301 graduate students. WCU's first doctorate, the Doctorate of Nursing Practice, was launched in  
 1302 2014 and has out-performed initial enrollment goals with 32 students. Two additional  
 1303 doctoral programs have been approved in Public Administration and Education while others  
 1304 are in development.
- 1305 • The establishment of off-campus sites such as the State System campus in Philadelphia have  
 1306 proven to be popular. WCU enrollment at the Philadelphia campus outdistances any of the  
 1307 other State System institutions offering classes at that location. Such initiatives enable WCU  
 1308 to build new revenue streams that are critical to future financial stability. Philadelphia tuition  
 1309 revenue increased from just over \$175,000 last fall (2014) to more than \$550,000 this past fall  
 1310 (2015).

- 1311 • The University is also actively expanding academic opportunities via distance education.  
1312 WCU's distance education, both fully online and blended programs involving limited campus  
1313 time, has grown significantly increasing by nearly 69% since 2013..
- 1314 • Using strategic plan funding, the University has implemented a document management  
1315 system (OnBase), which provides true document workflow capabilities. This, software is  
1316 being used to significantly reduce the amount of paper and time typically associated with  
1317 campus processes across divisions, including tenure and promotion, financial aid processing,  
1318 as well as graduate and undergraduate admissions.  
1319

1320 *Diversity Theme:*

- 1321 • The Office of Multicultural Affairs' Mentoring Program set a new record in 2013 with 188  
1322 multicultural participants. In 2014, 233 students were enrolled in the program.
- 1323 • The Office of Undergraduate Admissions hired an assistant director of multicultural  
1324 recruitment and community outreach to increase recruitment of underrepresented minorities  
1325 from the local and surrounding areas. Over the last five years the institution experienced a  
1326 34% gain in African American students and an 84% gain in Latino students.
- 1327 • WCU's presence at the State System's Philadelphia (Center City) campus is proving to be  
1328 another important way to attract students from a variety of educational, cultural, and  
1329 economic backgrounds. About 85 % of WCU students at the Center City campus are URM  
1330 students.
- 1331 • In 2013, the African-American and Latino Male Student Retention Task Force was  
1332 established to help more of these students overcome historically low graduation rates. An  
1333 initiative related to the work of this committee is the Brother to Brother program. Launched  
1334 in 2014, Brother to Brother created a council of ambassadors from campus organizations,  
1335 holds special events, and reaches out to teen minority males in Philadelphia and nearby  
1336 towns.  
1337

1338 *Engagement Theme:*

- 1339 • The University has seen tremendous growth in the number of domestic students taking  
1340 advantage of international programs. Study abroad participation by WCU students increased  
1341 by 50% in the last three years. In 2012-13, WCU sponsored 251 international learning  
1342 experiences, by 2013-14, that number had soared to 357 and is currently at 475 for 2015-  
1343 2016.
- 1344 • WCU has increased the number of international students from 50 different countries on  
1345 campus from 110 in 2013-2014 to 151 at the beginning of the Fall semester of 2015.
- 1346 • The strategic plan calls for adding five new agreements between WCU and international  
1347 partners for cultural, educational, and scholarly exchanges. Agreements were signed with  
1348 Hosei University, University of Cape Coast, Ulsan University, the University of Costa Rica,  
1349 and the University of the Cayman Islands. The University is continuing to forge new  
1350 partnerships as part of efforts to internationalize its educational experiences and offerings.  
1351 WCU is expanding its outreach to China via a program sponsored by AASCU and the China  
1352 Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE). The goal is to recruit Chinese

- 1353 undergraduate and graduate students and build additional institutional partnerships with  
 1354 universities and high schools.
- 1355 • The Alumni Relations Office has exceeded its goal to sponsor at least 60 alumni events  
 1356 annually by holding more than 90 events both locally and nationally during 2014-15.
  - 1357 • The Division of Information Services held the 19th annual RECAP Conference, a technology  
 1358 conference for teaching and learning in higher education with over 175 attendees from  
 1359 PASSHE universities, local area universities, K-12 and organizations. The conference  
 1360 provides a forum that fosters sharing best practices and innovations, encourages collaboration  
 1361 and addresses current topics of interest in the use of technology in the classroom.  
 1362

1363 *Enrichment Theme:*

- 1364 • In 2014, the Twardowski Career Development Center and the Alumni Relations Office  
 1365 launched a job shadow program, pairing sophomores with WCU alumni.
- 1366 • WCU also has forged internship and co-op relationships with regional businesses, nonprofits  
 1367 and government organizations.
- 1368 • Service learning allows WCU students to take their place as productive members of society.  
 1369 Student hours from service learning and other volunteerism totaled more than 812,000 in  
 1370 service learning courses in the 2014-2015 academic year, with more than 90,000 additional  
 1371 hours provided through co-curricular activities, a new University record. WCU students also  
 1372 raised \$106,527 for local charities.
- 1373 • In 2014-2015, The Office of Student Leadership increased the number of students  
 1374 participating in leadership development programs by 25%, and also increased the number of  
 1375 URM students by 64%. In addition, student participation in academic and professional/  
 1376 musical organizations grew by 20%.

1377  
 1378 *Sustainability Theme:*

- 1379 • In the area of human resources, and as part of the development of a comprehensive  
 1380 workforce succession planning program, the University has secured software that will help to  
 1381 coordinate performance and talent management.
- 1382 • Resource stewardship at West Chester University is being met through a variety of initiatives,  
 1383 robust fundraising, and efficient and sustainable operations. Over the past five years,  
 1384 donations to WCU have grown at twice the rate as for all Pennsylvania State System  
 1385 institutions. During 2015-16, the WCU Foundation anticipates raising the largest amount in  
 1386 University history; exceeding \$5.2 million in cash gifts and \$3 million in planned gifts. More  
 1387 than 9,200 alumni, corporations, foundations, parents and friends are expected to donate to  
 1388 WCU in 2015-16.
- 1389 • As WCU seeks to diversify its resources, the West Chester University Foundation publicly  
 1390 launched the *Becoming More* capital campaign in spring 2013. The campaign is the largest in  
 1391 WCU's history and has already reached more than 85% of its \$50 million goal, raising \$42.5  
 1392 million to date.
- 1393 • The University heats and cools 50 percent of its square footage with geothermal energy and  
 1394 50 percent with high-efficiency natural gas boilers. By transitioning to these new energy  
 1395 sources, the University is reducing its annual carbon footprint by 7,500 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. Beyond

1396 the geothermal initiative, WCU's building projects are designed with environmental  
 1397 sustainability in mind. Our new construction, including the Business and Public Affairs  
 1398 Center, will be LEED certified.

1399  
 1400 *Performance Funding Program (PFP)*

1401 Another demonstration of institutional effectiveness can be measured by the realization of State  
 1402 System performance funding goals. Annually the institution must collect, analyze and interpret data  
 1403 related to the PFP that is managed by the State System. The PFP is designed to measure the impact  
 1404 of the institution as it relates to the strategic direction of the System. Given new leadership in the  
 1405 Office of the Chancellor, the system office changed the measures and methodology in determining  
 1406 the performance on the measures. In 2012 this program was modified to align with three themes:  
 1407 student success, access, and stewardship (see Figure 5.3 below).

1408  
 1409 Ten measures are used to assess performance funding, four are mandatory (noted with an asterisk in  
 1410 the figure below) and institutions choose six. Each measure is worth one point and there are  
 1411 subpoints within each point. For example, the measure of degrees conferred is broken into two  
 1412 parts: number of associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degrees conferred (.50) and baccalaureate  
 1413 degrees awarded per FTE undergraduate enrollment (.50).<sup>22</sup> All points are totaled for each university  
 1414 then weighted by the university's base appropriations as determined by the allocation formula. The  
 1415 weighted points are divided into the total performance funding pool to create a dollar per point value  
 1416 that is multiplied by the number of points the university earned to establish the allocation. Objectives  
 1417 for several themes within *Building on Excellence* align with the PFP as seen in the table, and many align  
 1418 with PASSHE measures that the University has not selected (the boxes in white), one more example  
 1419 of the ways in the goals of the institution overlap with State System goals. Over the last three years,  
 1420 the institution has chosen the measures that are shaded in the figure below.

1421  
 1422 **Figure 5.3: State System Performance Funding Program Measures**  
 1423 **\*Mandatory State System Measure**  
 1424

Student Success	Access	Stewardship
Degrees Conferred*	Closing the Access Gaps for Freshman* <i>Academics 1.6</i>	Private Support <i>Sustainability 2.2</i>
Closing the Achievement Gaps for Freshman* <i>Academics 1.6</i>	Faculty Diversity* <i>Diversity 2.1</i>	Facilities Investment
Value-Added	Faculty Career Advancement	Administrative Expenditures as % of education cost
STEM-Health Profession Degree Recipients	Employment (Non-faculty) Diversity <i>Diversity 2.1</i>	
Closing the Achievement Gaps for Transfer Students <i>Academics 1.6</i>	Student Diversity <i>Diversity 2.2</i>	Employee Productivity <i>Academics 1.4</i>
Student Persistence <i>Academics 1.6</i>	Closing the Access Gap for Transfers <i>Academics 1.6</i>	

1425

1426 During the last two years, the institution has ranked in the top four among State System institutions  
1427 in the total number of points earned in meeting performance expectations.<sup>23</sup> While the 2013-14 total  
1428 number of points did decrease from the previous year, this shift can be partially attributed to a  
1429 change in the methodology in how performance was measured. Additionally, given the growth in  
1430 both majority and URM students, two of the performance measures related to closing the  
1431 achievement gap for first year retention and graduation rates for URM students were impacted. The  
1432 institution increased enrollment for both cohorts of students, which is a good thing, however this  
1433 negatively impacted the enrollment gap. To ensure strong connections between budgeting and  
1434 strategic planning processes, many of the PFP measures are included in the strategic plan, which is a  
1435 demonstration of the institution's commitment to linking State System goals, institutional goals, and  
1436 resource planning. The system-defined measures do not exclusively drive institutional decision-  
1437 making, nor do they prescribe how the University defines institutional effectiveness, rather they  
1438 provide a measure of the University's ability to meet the needs of the State System while also serving  
1439 the mission and vision of the institution.

1440

1441 *Program Review and External Accreditation*

1442 Academic, academic-support, and student-support programs that are not accredited by a specialized  
1443 accrediting body participate in a program-review process once every five years according to PASSHE  
1444 policy.<sup>24</sup> These reviews address program viability in the marketplace, the alignment of program  
1445 content with changing disciplinary requirements, and an examination of student learning outcomes.  
1446 External reviewers participate in the reviews at least every ten years (for academic programs, it is  
1447 every five years); the process culminates with each program establishing goals and action steps for  
1448 program improvement. Program reviews provide an opportunity for programs to assess, recalibrate if  
1449 needed, and develop strategies to achieve a new set of outcomes in the intervening five years.

1450

1451 Academic programs with elected, specialized accreditation also require self-study on a regular basis  
1452 and review by external reviewers. Specialized accrediting bodies have embraced the importance of  
1453 the achievement of student learning relevant to the respective professions and expect programs to  
1454 have articulated learning goals, methods to achieve these goals, methods of assessment with  
1455 benchmarks, evidence of the discussion of results, and changes in curricula and/or program based on  
1456 the results. West Chester University takes pride in the achievement of specialized accreditations in  
1457 specific areas. More than 30 degree programs are accredited by national or international external  
1458 accreditation agencies.<sup>25</sup>

1459

1460 *Institutional Assessments of Students*

1461 The University utilizes a number of institution-wide assessments to further assist in the evaluation of  
1462 progress toward its goals, as well as for allowing for comparisons to peer and aspirational institutions.  
1463 Several of these assessments (BCSSE, Campus Climate Survey, National Survey of Student  
1464 Engagement (NSSE), Academic Advising Survey) serve as measures for outcome actions within the  
1465 strategic plan. Figure 5.4 reflects all institution-wide surveys conducted

1466

1467

1468

Figure 5.4: Institution-Wide Student Assessments

Instrument/Assessment Tool	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
BCSSE	U	U		U		U
Campus Climate Survey						U
Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)	U			U		
National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)	U	U	U	U		U
PASSHE One-Year-Out Alumni Survey				S		
Program Review Process	S,P	S,P	S,P	S,P	S,P	S,P
System Accountability Report (SAR)	S,U	S,U	S,U	S,U	S,U	S,U
Sightlines	U	U	U	U	U	U
Student Rating of Instructor Survey (SRIS), DE SRIS, STSAF, Nursing Clinical Questionnaire, Student Evaluation of Pre-Major Academic Advisor, ADP Academic Counselor*, Counselors, and Coaches Surveys.	U	U	U	U	U	U
Academic Advising Survey	U		U			
Athletic Interest and Abilities Survey	U	U	U	U	U	U
Graduating Student Survey (First Destination Survey)	U	U	U	U	U	U
Key: S=System Office, U=University, P=Program						
*There is only one ADP Academic Counselor. Therefore, ADP Academic Counselor Student Evaluation Survey is administered whenever the counselor is due for promotion. It was administered in 2014-15.						

1470

1471

1472 *Excellence in Action (Closing the Loop): Using Institutional Assessment Results*

1473 The University has administered the NSSE for the last eight years and for the first time, in 2013,

1474 administered the faculty companion survey (the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)). The

1475 results from each have helped provide data that inform the crafting of strategic plan objectives and to

1476 ensure progress in this area is made. Following the 2013 administration of the FSSE, an institution-

1477 wide “We Heard You” campaign provided faculty selected results from the survey that align with the

1478 strategic plan. Additionally results related to the quality of academic advising and engaging in faculty-

1479 led research have helped shape and produce tangible outcomes related to strategic plan objectives.

1480 Results from questions related to academic advising have aided the institution’s advising task force in

1481 determining the state of advising, which has resulted in a just-published set of recommendations

1482 related to the creation of college-based advising centers. Additionally, the 2013 FSSE results revealed

1483 that 75% or more of the faculty felt it was important to inform students of important deadlines,

1484 academic support options, rules, and policies, while 2013 NSSE results indicated that less than 50%

1485 of seniors felt as though advisors were meeting these needs on a consistent basis. Using this

1486 information, as well as information obtained from an institutional advising survey, the Advising Task

1487 Force created an advising website to ensure clear communication regarding timelines, support

1488 options, as well as policy and procedures related to academic advising. This website has information  
1489 for both faculty and students to enhance the advising partnership.<sup>6</sup>

1490  
1491 Additionally a review of NSSE and FSSE data also resulted in an action plan to start new experiential  
1492 learning programs for students. In 2013 and 2014, WCU seniors were asked if they had worked with  
1493 faculty on research projects while at WCU. The results revealed lower levels of engagement than the  
1494 national averages in this area. In response, the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP)  
1495 in partnership with the recently formed Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) created the  
1496 Summer Undergraduate Research Institute (SURI). This program increases the opportunities for  
1497 undergraduate research in all disciplines by providing a focused research opportunity for students.  
1498 SURI promotes collaboration among students and between students and faculty for scholarly  
1499 research, consistent with WCU's Teacher-Scholar model. Participants spend five weeks over the  
1500 summer conducting research and scholarly/creative work under the direct supervision of a faculty  
1501 mentor. During the last two summers, 40 WCU undergraduates and 40 WCU faculty mentors have  
1502 participated.

1503  
1504 *Communication Regarding Institutional Effectiveness*

1505 Communication to campus constituencies is transmitted in a multitude of ways. The first is through  
1506 the Office of the President's website.<sup>26</sup> This site provides a centralized area for members of the  
1507 campus community to access information related to the strategic plan and progress towards related  
1508 goals. Additionally, the comprehensive facilities plan, the President's annual report, and Council of  
1509 Trustees' page can all be retrieved from here. Furthermore, the President communicates regularly to  
1510 the campus community via his *Excellence in Action* and *News You Can Use* newsletters to ensure  
1511 administration, faculty, staff, and students stay connected to the latest happenings throughout the  
1512 institution.<sup>27</sup> A final example of communication related to institutional effectiveness are the Big Plan  
1513 Days that have been discussed in prior sections. These campus-wide events encourage all  
1514 constituencies to meet with campus leaders (Theme Team co-chairs) as well as Theme Team  
1515 members to discuss strategic plan progress and future directions. In its first year the event proved to  
1516 be a success with over 250 individuals from across campus attending.

1517  
1518 **Assessment of Student Learning**

1519 *Programmatic Student Learning Assessment*

1520 The University offers approximately 118 undergraduate and more than 70 graduate  
1521 programs/certificates that are distributed across five colleges. In the fall of 2012, under the direction  
1522 of the Associate Provost and Faculty Associate for Teaching, Learning and Assessment, the  
1523 Assurance of Student Learning initiative (ASL) was launched for all academic programs in order to  
1524 create a more organized and sustainable process. Now in its fourth year, it is no longer an initiative  
1525 but part of the institutional culture. The goals of the ASL are to communicate a consistent message  
1526 regarding the institutional expectations and requirements for program level student learning  
1527 outcomes assessment, develop a process for academic and non-academic programs (student affairs  
1528 and student support services) to receive feedback on their plans, and allow administration (Provost  
1529 office, Deans, and Associate Deans) to understand the status of program level student learning  
1530 outcomes within and across the five colleges. For a number of years, the University has dedicated  
1531 PASSHE performance funding to support assessment efforts. As a result, the ASL has provided the

1532 institution with tangible evidence of how these financial resources have impacted improvement in  
1533 student learning outcomes. In fiscal year 2015, the University committed \$xx,xxxx in funding to  
1534 support the work of student learning outcomes at the program level. This funding is provided via  
1535 alternate workload assignments (AWA) for faculty within the five colleges. Faculty members receiving  
1536 these assignments serve as program-level assessment coordinators and are key players in ensuring  
1537 consistency in the assurance of student learning throughout the University. Their responsibilities  
1538 include the execution, implementation, data collection, and reporting of the respective assessment  
1539 plan. Associate Deans in each college have administrative responsibility to ensure coordinators are  
1540 completing work according to the university approved assessment policy. With regard to specialized  
1541 accreditation and related faculty development, the Associate Deans and the Faculty Associate work in  
1542 concert with one another to ensure that those assessment needs are met. Without exception, *TracDat*  
1543 planning software is used to track all assessment plans for both accredited and non-accredited  
1544 programs.

1545  
1546 Beginning in fall of 2012, all academic programs were evaluated on their assessment plans' ability to  
1547 articulate several core elements. The evaluation of program plans was conducted using an institution-  
1548 wide rubric. The rubric contained a four-point scale for each of the elements below:

- 1549 • Program learning outcomes that are specific and direct
- 1550 • Curriculum maps that indicate where outcomes are introduced, practiced, and assessed at the  
1551 program level
- 1552 • Use of both direct and indirect assessment measures
- 1553 • Assessments measures that provide appropriate rationale for their use
- 1554 • Criteria for success (i.e. benchmarking) for each assessment measure
- 1555 • Appropriate reporting of results
- 1556 • Action plans tied to the results

1557 The rubric has enabled the institution to communicate the same expectation regardless of discipline  
1558 or specialized accreditation so that programs understand the University's expectations related to  
1559 student learning assessment. The Faculty Associate coordinates the annual assessment cycle (Figure  
1560 5.5) with assistance from the Assessment Advisory Committee and the respective Associate Deans  
1561 for each college.

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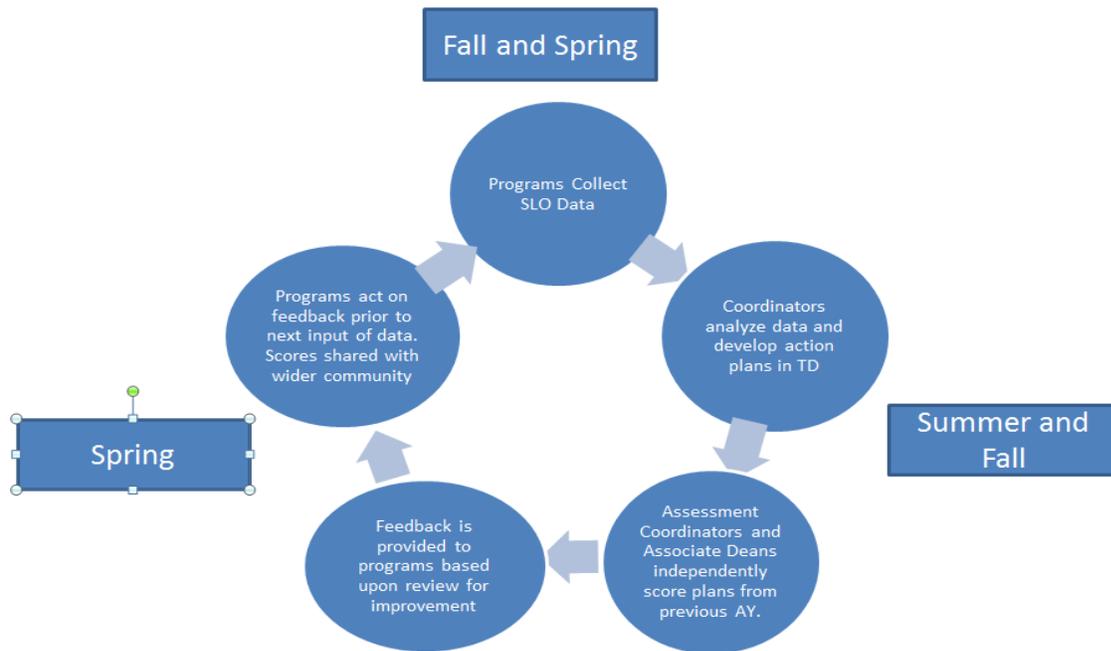
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Figure 5.5: Assurance of Student Learning Process



1571

1572 The Assessment Advisory Committee is composed of faculty from each of the colleges as well as  
 1573 representatives from library services, student affairs, and student support services. Annually, during  
 1574 the first week of November, assessment coordinators upload previous year's results and action plans  
 1575 into *TracDat*. The University-wide committee and the respective Associate Dean(s) using the rubric  
 1576 then review the respective plans. Feedback is then sent back to the programs to document strengths  
 1577 or areas of improvement for the next cycle.

1578 This process is mutually beneficial for both academic programs and the institution. The academic  
 1579 programs are provided specific feedback to document their strengths or areas of improvement as it  
 1580 relates to the quality of their plan while the institution is able to assess how well all programs within a  
 1581 college and across the institution are responding to the results of their learning outcomes. The  
 1582 Faculty Associate meets annually with the Provost, Vice Provost, and College administrators to  
 1583 distribute heat maps.<sup>28</sup> Heat maps are data visualization tools that allow everyone to understand  
 1584 where programs are in the process. The University publically discusses this work on the TLA  
 1585 website. This practice has provided information at the institution level to improve the teaching and  
 1586 learning process. As a result of all programs having assessment plans, the institution is able to clearly  
 1587 document achievement or improvement of student learning outcomes with evidence and share  
 1588 effective practices. A document communicating exemplary practices related to student learning  
 1589 assessment for others to model was shared with the university community in spring 2015.<sup>10</sup>  
 1590 Identifying and sharing this type of information was not possible before the ASL because not all  
 1591 programs were consistently using *TracDat*. The ASL has been an effective tool in facilitating the  
 1592 coordination of a systematic University-wide review of student learning outcomes. In keeping with  
 1593 our commitment to distributed leadership, the ASL achieves excellence without dictating to programs

1594 what they have to measure. It ensures a level of quality control in the assessment plans and better  
1595 enables the University's evaluation of student learning across the institution.

1596 Over the last three years, the University has seen a statistically significant change in each of the  
1597 respective areas of the rubric, which demonstrates an effectively organized, systematic, and  
1598 sustainable process to assess the achievement of learning outcomes. Several sample program-level  
1599 student learning assessment plans over the last three years are provided from each of the colleges in  
1600 the appendices.<sup>29</sup> Finally, in linking with institutional effectiveness, the ASL process is part of the  
1601 Academics Theme goal of assuring student learning and academic excellence. The impact of this is  
1602 evaluated each year through *Building on Excellence* Academics Objective 1.1: *Strengthen and support the*  
1603 *assurance of student learning outcomes and the use of high-quality academic programming.*

#### 1604 *General Education Assessment*

1605 Upon the completion of one full cycle of general education assessment, the institution developed  
1606 action plans to further strengthen the process and engage additional faculty. The previous structure  
1607 consisted of the assessment of two (of six) general education goals being assessed each year.  
1608 Conducted initially by the Curriculum and Academic Policies Council (CAPC) general education  
1609 committee chairperson, the process began with the identification of courses where general education  
1610 goals were embedded. Identified instructors were then asked to submit one student artifact for each  
1611 randomly selected student enrolled in the general education class. Selected faculty would work each  
1612 summer to evaluate those artifacts using scoring rubrics (these were locally developed by CAPC  
1613 representatives). This approach represented a clear and important attempt to measure the goals of  
1614 the general education program. It went beyond individual courses and allowed the University to look  
1615 for evidence of student attainment of goals across a broad range of approved general education  
1616 courses. However, after completing a full cycle several important limitations of this process were  
1617 identified:

- 1618 • Course assignments were not developed with the assessment of the general education goal in  
1619 mind. Faculty rarely considered using the rubric provided in the development of an artifact  
1620 for the course. This resulted in an unpredictable number of assignments/artifacts addressing  
1621 all of the criteria included in the University-wide rubric. Thus, the institution needed to  
1622 consider ways to help faculty more closely align course assignments to general education  
1623 program assessment.
- 1624 • Assessing student learning in lower level general education courses was not the best way to  
1625 determine if students were achieving the goals as a result of the general education curriculum.  
1626 For example, WCU General Education Goal 1: Communicate Effectively was assessed via  
1627 artifacts from the first year writing program (WRT 120) and from the required public  
1628 speaking course (SPK 208 or 230). These courses lay a foundation for students to build upon  
1629 within the general education curriculum, but they do not demonstrate mastery of those goals.  
1630 Thus, it was not sufficient to measure outcomes from introductory level courses to assess  
1631 general education goals.
- 1632 • After several years of collecting general education artifacts, it was clear that instructors of  
1633 general education courses were not always fully aware of the general education goal  
1634 requirements and, therefore were not fully addressing the goals associated with those general  
1635 education courses. In this context, instructors of general education courses and other

1636 advanced courses that could be included in the assessment of general education goals needed  
1637 to be directly involved in the process.

1638

1639 *Excellence in Action (Closing the Loop): General Education Assessment*

1640 During the 2013-2014 academic year, a new general education assessment process was piloted, which  
1641 provided additional guidance and professional development for faculty teaching general education  
1642 courses. The pilot identified two general education goals, Goal 1, effective oral and written  
1643 communication, and Goal 5, responding thoughtfully to diversity, as initial targets of the effort.  
1644 Instead of measuring artifacts from entry-level writing courses, Goal 1 was measured by assessing  
1645 assignments from general education writing emphasis courses and discipline-specific capstone  
1646 courses that included an oral presentation requirement. Goal 5 was measured by assessing  
1647 assignments from diverse communities courses. Instructors teaching these courses in spring 2014  
1648 were invited to participate in the pilot program. Faculty attended a workshop following the fall  
1649 semester, which engaged them in an assessment rubric comparison of the locally developed  
1650 assessment rubrics to the Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE)  
1651 rubrics from the Association of American College and Universities (AAC&U) for each goal. Twenty-  
1652 eight faculty members participated in this formative assessment.

1653

1654 As a result of this review, the faculty identified VALUE rubrics as being most effective for the  
1655 assessment of Goal 1 (one rubric for written communication and another for oral communication)  
1656 and a locally developed rubric was chosen to assess students' ability to apply a diverse communities  
1657 perspective (Goal 5). In addition to selecting the optimal rubric, faculty engaged in a discussion  
1658 regarding the differences between the grading of assignments and assessment of general education  
1659 goals. As a result, participating faculty were better able to construct course assignments that were  
1660 appropriate for measuring general education goals and outcomes. Later in the semester, faculty  
1661 required students to complete these assessment centric assignments and collected them for review  
1662 later in the summer. In May of that year, groups of instructors met to discuss the assessment of their  
1663 goal using the artifacts supplied and the agreed upon rubric. Multiple training and coding sessions  
1664 were held to ensure inter-rater reliability, which resulted in a norming process being developed. Sets  
1665 of artifacts were divided among coders in each group and assessments were completed over the  
1666 summer.

1667

1668 A majority of the faculty involved reported that the process provided valuable information and  
1669 informed their approach to teaching future general education courses. Additionally, faculty reported  
1670 having a better understanding of the overlapping purposes of general education assessment and  
1671 course-based assessment and would revise their assignments to better align with general education  
1672 goals. During the fall 2014 semester, a report outlining the results of this project and providing tips  
1673 for faculty who teach general education courses was distributed to the entire campus community.<sup>30</sup>  
1674 Given the positive feedback from faculty, the process was repeated for an additional year. Those  
1675 who had been involved in the assessment of effective communication (written and oral) before were  
1676 invited to participate again. They collected artifacts from their students during the spring 2015  
1677 semester and participated in another set of training and coding sessions using the rubrics that had  
1678 been modified in light of feedback from the previous year's work. A different approach was taken  
1679 with regard to the assessment of a diverse communities perspective. Despite the existence of a

1680 faculty-approved definition of a “diverse communities” course and a specifically designed set of  
 1681 expected student outcomes for those diverse communities courses, the pilot phase of the project  
 1682 indicated varying levels of consistency across campus. Thus, it was decided to develop a set of  
 1683 faculty development workshops to allow instructors teaching diverse communities courses to work  
 1684 together to develop shared goals and practices.

1685  
 1686 Following the 2015 assessment cycle, participating faculty reported that they had a much more  
 1687 sophisticated understanding of the process of assessing student learning outcomes. They reported  
 1688 that participation in this process was, in some cases, the best faculty development experience they  
 1689 have ever had. Faculty reported an increased level of confidence in their teaching abilities as a result  
 1690 of this experience and that their students are better writers and/or oral communicators because of  
 1691 the improvement in their pedagogical approach. Preliminary assessment data provide support for  
 1692 these qualitative assertions. Administrative support for this project has been significant to allow this  
 1693 project to be successful. For the past two years annual funding in the amount of \$30,000 from  
 1694 Academic Affairs has been dedicated to allow for summer faculty compensation to complete this  
 1695 work. General education assessment follows the timeline outlined below Figure 5.6:

Figure 5.6: General Education Assessment Cycle

Goal	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
1	Year 1 assess	Year 2 assess w/participant workshops	Repeat assess w/participant workshops	Post-assessment resource development		Pre-assessment workshops	Year 1 assess w/participant workshops
2	Year 2 assess				Pre-assessment workshops	Year 1 assess w/participant workshops	Participants share w/campus + Year 2 assess
3				Year 1 assess w/participant workshops	Participants share w/campus + Year 2 assess	Post-Assessment resource development	
4	Post-assessment workshops			Pre-assessment workshops	Year 1 assess w/participant workshops	Participants share w/campus + Year 2 assess	Post-assessment resource development
5	Pre-assessment workshops	Year 1 assess w/participant workshops	Workshops thru Gen Ed Reform process	Post-assessment resource development			Pre-assessment workshops
6				Year 1 assess w/participant workshops	Participants share w/campus + Year 2 assess	Post-assessment resource development	

1698  
 1699 Participant Workshops: Pre- and post-semester sessions with participant faculty that include preparation/training for assessment, discussion of  
 1700 assessment rubrics and practices, and final collection of assessment data.

1701 Pre-Assessment Workshops: Spring semester luncheon session with invited faculty who will be teaching goal- approved general education courses  
 1702 during following academic year. VALUE rubrics will be introduced and discussed. Faculty will be asked to develop student assignments that will allow  
 1703 post-semester assessment via VALUE rubric.

1704  
1705  
1706  
1707

Post-Assessment Resource Development: Video and/or audio captures will be developed to include sample artifacts demonstrating high and low ratings on each rubric dimension as well as tips/advice from participant faculty intended for other faculty who teach similarly approved courses. Resources will be sent to faculty assigned to teach such courses and will be made widely available on the WCU TLA web-page.

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