**INTRODUCTION**

As we prepare these essays for our Capacity and Preparatory Review, we want to affirm the description of our context that appeared in the Institutional Proposal. In fact, the characterization of the college as being “poised between unprecedented accomplishments and unprecedented challenges” remains even more pronounced than a year ago when the proposal was completed.

The college continues to experience unprecedented momentum in such areas as admissions (applications were up almost 20 percent last year.) The ethnic diversity of our entering class reached a new high for the college: 24 percent. Our five new faculty hires bring with them exactly the balance of scholarly interests, teaching and mentoring abilities and commitment to our institutional vision of Christian liberal arts that we look for in our new faculty. The annual fund brought in more support for the college budget than ever before, and the endowment has more than quadrupled since 1997.

On the program side, the new general education program began with the class of 2008, which entered this fall. The Program Review Committee has been remarkably successful in bringing the faculty and student life staff to a new level of understanding and specificity in thinking about program review around the student learning standards.

But challenges remain. The process for gaining approval of the Master Plan continues to impede our efforts to move forward with the two buildings funded in the last campaign. We value the opportunity to educate our community about Westmont and its goals, but the time, energy and financial resources tied up in the process are not available for other ventures within the institution.

In the midst of this process, the Office of College Advancement is going ahead with plans for the next capital campaign, which will focus on building the endowment and acquiring funds for the ongoing project of completing campus buildings. This preparation has involved the Academic Senate, the President’s Advisory Council and the president’s staff, as well as the Office of College Advancement and, of course, the president and Board of Trustees.

**Process of Preparing the Capacity and Preparatory Review**

During the past year, the WASC Steering Committee continued to give leadership to our institutional preparation for the WASC visits. This committee is composed of vice presidents or their deputies in each of the main areas of the college, on both the program and operations sides, the director of institutional research, the associate dean of curriculum, faculty representatives from each of the academic divisions, and the associate dean of student life.
The committee has met together about once a month to consult about the various areas of the college and to work on the development of the Capacity and Preparatory Review essays. Drafts of the essays have been discussed by the Academic Senate (department chairs), the President’s Advisory Council and the president’s staff as well as by the WASC steering committee. This season of WASC preparation has been more sustained over months of preparation and more extensive in involving large parts of the community than in the past.

The preparation of the essays and the institutional portfolio has taken place through ongoing dialog across campus. The essays respond to the evidence we have gathered for demonstrating our capacity to carry out the mission of the college. In the course of writing these documents, we became aware of ways that we could strengthen the portfolio.

Perhaps best of all, this process has brought the institution to the place where review of educational standards and improvement based on evidence are practices embedded in our day-to-day operations. The fact that the portfolio is part of our permanent institutional database and that everything we have done in this preparatory process is tied to the governance structure of the institution portends well for our future as a learning organization.

Review of Proposal Commitments for the Capacity and Preparatory Review Process

In the Institutional Proposal, we committed to giving special attention to:

1. The examination of the structures by which we seek to align our institutional resources to our institutional mission. An example is the way we build institutional ownership for our financial priorities.
2. Strengthening the structures and the practice of program review around the six educational standards — both for general education and for our individual academic and student life departments.
3. Developing resources that result in more extensive and systematic review of information throughout the institution — especially information related to educational effectiveness.

During the past year, we believe we have made significant progress in moving toward these goals. Survey data has demonstrated, despite administrative perception to the contrary, that many faculty and staff aren’t aware of decision-making process for allocating resources. Not surprisingly, this was especially true among the staff, who have fewer built-in avenues for input in setting the budget. The President’s Advisory Council discussed these survey results and the vice presidents are working to establish more effective channels of communication in both directions about budget concerns. President Stan Gaede sent a memo this fall to faculty and staff discussing the process for setting budget priorities. In the course of the discussion, interesting questions emerged, such as,
“What kinds of numbers would we view as evidence of successful engagement of the community in the budgetary process?”

In the past year, the Program Review Committee, the General Education Committee, and the Diversity Committee, as well as the Academic Senate, have been crucial in strengthening the structure of our program review processes around the six standards. Given the fact that the new general education program began this fall, the processes for reviewing that program are only now being established and implemented. The General Education Cohort for Review has just started meeting to discuss their role in the process of general education program review. WASC preparation has coincided with the Irvine Campus Diversity Initiative, resulting in greatly strengthened efforts and focused attention on the diversity standard. The attention the Irvine Foundation requires in their review process has given us an opportunity to practice being a learning institution in one particular area. We expect this experience to spill over into our dialog in other program standards.

Finally, the process of developing the fact book and Web-based portfolio will greatly enhance ready access to information on an ongoing basis.

**Conclusion**

Throughout the process of preparing for the upcoming WASC visit, we have been mindful of the next stage of this process, the Educational Effectiveness Review. We believe that we have the structures in place that will enable us to move toward an ever clearer vision of our institutional mission, more stringent alignment of resources with our mission, and a dynamic awareness of whether the experiences of our students meet our declared educational objectives. We know we have not achieved all our goals in any of these areas, but we are encouraged by the depth and breadth of our institution-wide commitment to become an institution with the means and the desire for continuous growth and improvement.
STANDARD 1
DEFINING INSTITUTIONAL PURPOSES AND ENSURING
EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Charting the Vision

The institution defines its purposes and establishes educational objectives aligned with its purposes and character. It has a clear and conscious sense of its essential values and character, its distinctive elements, its place in the higher education community, and its relationship to society at large. Through its purposes and educational objectives, the institution dedicates itself to higher learning, the search for truth, and the dissemination of knowledge. The institution functions with integrity and autonomy.

Preserving Continuity and Relevance of Mission in Changing Times

From the beginning, Westmont College has been committed to providing a rigorous, holistic liberal arts education rooted in the Christian faith with a strong emphasis on service to the church and to the world. Wallace Emerson, Westmont’s first president, began working in the late 1940s toward accreditation for the new institution and articulated a vision for an academic program of the highest quality to prepare graduates for a wide range of vocations.

Throughout the years, the college has remained focused on this vision. The current mission statement, formally adopted in the 1980s, describes this longstanding approach to education: “The mission of Westmont College is to provide a high quality undergraduate liberal arts program in a residential campus community that assists college men and women toward a balance of rigorous intellectual competence, healthy personal development, and strong Christian commitments.” Remaining true to this vision over the years requires ongoing attention both to the traditional commitments of the college and to the cultural changes that may require us to articulate these commitments in new ways. Through this process, we seek to keep the mission alive and compelling for each succeeding generation.

A desire to keep our traditional commitments vital amidst changing conditions both within the church and the larger culture motivated the 1995 Long Range Plan. This process resulted in the development of such documents as “What We Want for Our Graduates” and the philosophy of education statements in the college catalog. Initiatives that grew out of the Long Range Plan included: strengthened collegiate ethos, revision of general education, enhancement of our diversity efforts and more strategic financial planning. The completion of the Long Range Plan coincided with our preparation for the last WASC visit. At that point, the WASC team encouraged us to proceed with the Long Range Plan but to more intentionally integrate its concerns with the materials emerging for our WASC review, especially those relating to our approach to program review.
Pursuing the goals of the Long Range Plan in concert with the issues identified in the last WASC review has guided our efforts for the past 10 years as we sharpen the execution of our educational vision.

At this point, we are making good progress on all the recommendations of the Long Range Plan. In addition to refining our regular governance structure, we have created various ad hoc committees to focus on the initial stages of the recommendations. These bodies have included the Ethos Task Force, the Diversity Task Force, the Faith Statement Task Force, the General Education Task Force, the Program Review Task Force, the Strategic Planning for Advancement Task Force, the Athletic Task Force and the Hiring for Mission Task Force. Each of these groups operated for two or three years until it accomplished its work and submitted its recommendations to existing governing bodies at the college. In some cases, the college appointed standing committees to carry on the work within the institution (e.g., the Diversity Committee, the Program Review Committee and the General Education Committee). The two most recent task forces are just beginning their work (the Hiring for Mission Task Force and the Athletic Task Force).

The Faith Statement Task Force provides a helpful example of the operation of these groups. This committee worked specifically on translating Westmont’s historic mission for the present time. (Further discussion of general education, diversity, financial planning and program review will occur later in the essays.)

The mandate of the Faith Statement Task Force was to sharpen the language of the statement of faith to preserve the same basic theological commitments stated in the original document without the flavor of the late 1930s and 1940s when the college was founded. The goal was to craft a statement that inspired and reflected current faculty and staff faith commitments to replace one that simply reflected the college’s heritage. The president and the provost chose the task force, which included members of the Board of Trustees, faculty and staff. The committee met regularly for three years and sought periodic feedback from both faculty and trustees. Their work was far from perfunctory. Even though the Board of Trustees was the only body that formally voted on the revision, the task force engaged the faculty through focus groups on several occasions so that the final revision would enjoy widespread ownership within the community. Not surprisingly, the controversial issues that emerged among the faculty were the same ones that occupy theologians in the church today. To keep from losing the complexity of these discussions and to clarify the context for the final wording, an interpretive document accompanies the revised statement of faith. At this point, the new statement is in place, and the faculty personnel committee is discussing how to integrate it more intentionally into the hiring and tenure process.

The current Hiring for Mission Task Force represents the second part of the process of clarifying our historic mission for various contemporary constituencies. This Task Force focuses specifically on our strategies for recruiting and developing faculty who are truly...
effective across the full range of responsibilities (e.g., teaching, scholarship, mentoring) that are part of the complex context of a Christian liberal arts college.

As a Christian liberal arts college, we take seriously our character as both “Christian” and “liberal arts.” We are keenly aware of the challenge and the opportunity to pursue our studies with the highest commitment to open inquiry while also making explicit certain presuppositional commitments. The practice of stating one’s presuppositional commitments in the educational context has not been widespread since the Enlightenment, but we believe that openness about our presuppositions, rather than stifling inquiry, actually encourages more comprehensive critical reflection at all levels. Our own efforts to be fair-minded and even-handed in approaching knowledge are routinely open to the scrutiny of the various scholarly and professional guilds that review our faculty’s articles and papers and accept our students to graduate and professional schools. Furthermore, the effort to find this balance of “faith commitment” and “academic openness,” which is our self-styled trademark within the world of higher education, gets tested continually in the market of the various academic guilds where we go to recruit faculty. Are we able to attract the faculty and the students we want: faculty of the highest caliber in their academic fields who could be hired at a wide range of institutions? Do these faculty see themselves filling long-term positions at Westmont? Are the best students, who are admissible at the nation’s finest undergraduate institutions, electing to come here? Once they come, do they want to stay? Can they study here with intellectual and personal integrity? These are the true tests of whether we are balancing “commitment” and “openness” appropriately.

The Faculty and Student Handbooks set forth policies and processes that illustrate our desire to build an institution that cultivates academic excellence, personal integrity and social responsibility — not only within the Westmont community but within the larger society as well. The structures of accountability established for both students and faculty are intended to insure openness, fairness and predictability of outcome. While legal counsel reviews these handbooks for obvious breaches in fairness, the documents are perpetually open to revision in response to assessment and the implementation of specific policies.

Translating Vision into Educational Program

Since the last WASC review, the college has pursued a major revision of our strategies for program review, our framework for general education and our efforts in the area of diversity.

The sharpening of our program review strategies began soon after our last WASC review and was greatly assisted by an Irvine grant. This “Futures Project” was designed to help us significantly upgrade our traditional program review process. The plan was to embed our institutional learning standards deeply within the fabric of our curriculum at both the general education and major level to make these standards the basis of program review throughout the institution. The process had several stages:
1. Administrative decision to focus on six institution-wide standards rather than the original 11 that included some that were more major-specific (The six program standards are: Christian Orientation, Diversity, Critical and Interdisciplinary Thinking, Written and Oral Communication, Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement, and Research and Technology);

2. Formation of six mini-task forces to develop student learning outcomes for each of the standards;

3. Provisional approval of these standards with accompanying learning outcomes by the faculty;

4. Departmental self-studies by all academic and student life departments to obtain a baseline for ongoing program review around these standards;

5. Interaction between departments and the Futures Steering Committee about their self-studies;

6. Final acceptance of the six program standards in the spring of 2002;

7. Formation of the Program Review Task Force and subsequent permanent Program Review Committee to facilitate ongoing systematic review of our progress toward educational effectiveness.

This process has presented all the predictable challenges in our kind of institution. We are a college of strong, relatively autonomous departments and equally strong and relatively autonomous individual faculty. Furthermore, like most academics, our faculty have been trained to focus on inputs rather than on outputs. Our approach has emphasized the delivery of material and the testing of students rather than what we can do to help students learn. This pedagogical turn has met with mixed reaction — and has been slow in coming. Throughout the process, which has included many open discussions at all levels (faculty-wide, intra-departmental, between departments and colleagues and administrators), the institution has sought to encourage candid dialog and to make the process real and truly applicable to the faculty goals for their students. Our intent is to make the process valuable to the institution and not just an exercise in jumping through hoops to satisfy external groups.

In 1998, shortly after the arrival of the college’s first provost, the faculty embarked on a revision of the general education program. This decision came from the provost but reflected a longstanding sense in the Academic Senate that the general education requirements needed an overhaul (they had not been systematically reviewed since their creation in the early 1970s). This process also involved several stages:

1. Faculty-wide discussions and “free-writes” about what was needed in general education;

2. A faculty-wide vote to determine the nature of the mandate for general education revision;
3. Formation of the General Education Task Force by vote of the faculty with nominations coming from division caucuses;

4. Three-years of deliberation by the task force that involved studying general education trends in the world of higher education and forming a proposed purpose statement and general structure for general education (During this time, there was periodic dialog between the task force and departments and the task force and the faculty as a whole);

5. Final acceptance of the structure of the new program;

6. Mini-committees formed by self-selection among all faculty to arrive at criteria for each of the structural components;

7. Creation of a standing General Education Committee;

8. The process of implementing new general education curriculum, beginning with first-year students in fall 2004.

The issues that primarily preoccupied faculty during this long process did not lie at the theoretical level. The purpose statement for general education was passed fairly easily. Issues that became complicated included: determining which courses were considered so foundational to the Christian liberal arts that they should be taken at Westmont; balancing the “privilege” versus the “burden” of departmental responsibility for delivering certain parts of general education; obtaining widespread ownership for a General Education Committee with oversight of the courses that receive approval for general education; and negotiating between the optimal, theoretical place of a department in the curriculum and practical considerations such as faculty loads (e.g., the role of a laboratory science). As is always the case, not everyone got what they desired from the general education outcome. While a majority of the faculty wanted revision, they didn’t all want the same revisions.

In the end, the faculty concluded (by a majority of 13) that this new structure, while not perfect, provided a better framework for general education than the previous one. Strengths of the new structure include: providing a more educative framework for students (and parents) about the nature of Christian liberal arts; allowing for more interdisciplinary work within the framework of general education; providing for a core of “common context” classes that all students will take at Westmont — including courses both within and outside of the religious studies department; supporting diversity more fully; and providing ongoing faculty-wide ownership of general education through the work of the General Education Committee.

Finally, we have worked to align educational structures to our vision in the area of diversity. While the Long Range Plan called for efforts related to both gender and ethnicity, we have spent most of the past 10 years continuing to work on the area of ethnicity. While our commitment to ethnic diversity is longstanding (the college established early in the 1940s that it would be racially integrated), it has remained an uphill struggle to create a campus that truly reflects the ethnic diversity of our culture and the worldwide church. Serious attention to ethnic diversity began under the leadership of
President David Winter, whose presidential task force report became the basis of the recommendations on diversity coming out of the Long Range Planning Committee.

Since 1995, when the Long Range Planning Committee completed its work, several simultaneous developments have served to intensify our efforts — and to enable us to make progress — in creating a college that benefits from the richness of a range of cultural perspectives and that prepares our students for the increasingly intercultural context they will enter when they take their place in the larger culture.

First, diversity became one of the six program standards adopted by the faculty in spring 2002. Second, we have developed more intentional strategies for recruiting both faculty and staff of color. Third, the Diversity Task Force became a standing committee of the faculty, indicating their ongoing concern for these issues. Fourth, the Intercultural Programs office has continually modified its strategies in response to student reaction to seek the best possible way to draw student energy into the concerns of diversity. Fifth, and perhaps most significant, is the Irvine Foundation’s Campus Diversity Initiative. (We are currently in the second of our three-year grant.) While the funding has focused on providing resources in the area of admissions and curricular development, the foundation’s vision for accountability has fostered a holistic and evidence-based approach to our institutional progress in diversity. The periodic reports call for us to document how the institutional is being transformed in the area of diversity, rather than simply for a statement of the particular projects on which funds were spent. As is evident from the Irvine interim reports, our most recent efforts, especially in the area of recruitment and retention of students, have paid off in the dramatic increase in students of color in the class of 2008.

All three of these efforts to align educational program to institutional vision have required extensive institutional energy over the past 10 years. At the same time, they have generated in many quarters a certain self-renewing energy for the overall vision of Christian liberal arts at Westmont.

Sharpening the College’s Niche within Higher Education

While Westmont has focused internally on the curriculum, program review and diversity, it has also been working to clarify its position in the world of higher education. The college’s self-perception as an institution at the crossroads between Christian undergraduate education and liberal arts education is illustrated by its membership and regular participation in such organizations as the American Council on Education, the Annapolis Group, the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities, the Independent Colleges of Southern California, the Christian College Consortium and the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities.

During the past four years, this self-styled niche is most embodied in the establishment of the Institute for Liberal Arts. Through its annual “conversations,” the institute seeks to
provide hospitable space for dialog about the liberal arts philosophy of education among institutions from a wide range of religious and non-religious backgrounds. The topics have included the nature and history of the liberal arts curriculum, the role of the liberal arts in seeking to educate for justice, vocation and the liberal arts, and, in February 2005, the sciences in the liberal arts context.

**Governance and Resources to Support the Education Program of the College**

Westmont prides itself on its successful practice of shared governance among the Board of Trustees, the administration and the faculty. This process is described in the early pages of the faculty handbook. While it is very clear in everyone’s mind that the Board of Trustees has the final say in all that goes on in the college, the board is strongly committed in both theory and practice to trusting the administration and the faculty with delivering the program of the college. This model of sharing also characterizes the dealings between the administration and the faculty. Our intent is to have seamless connections across all parts of this shared structure. For example, the president’s staff are actively involved with the board through its committee structure. The provost, who is the second in command at the college directly under the president, is also the chair of the faculty. The close working relationship between administration and faculty is reflected in the fact that the provost works with all departments in the faculty hiring process and sits on the Personnel Committee (which deals with tenure and promotion) and the Faculty Council. To ensure that faculty also have time to speak freely among themselves, they are required to meet in executive session at least once a semester without administrators present.

This governance extends to budget and development matters as well. While the board gives final approval to the budget in the end, the President’s Advisory Council, which includes administrators, faculty and students, reviews budget requests and makes recommendations about expenditures, funding priorities and college policies to the president. The budget process also relies on annual input from all college departments when they make budget requests in accordance with their overall departmental goals. During both the recent and upcoming capital campaigns, faculty have played a significant role in arriving at funding priorities. Further word about the acquisition and allocation of resources for carrying out the college mission will appear in later essays.

**Continuing to Mediate Westmont’s Vision in Changing Times**

The energy that has characterized the college since our last WASC review in both program and financial development has also served to clarify the challenges that lie ahead. These include the pursuit of excellence in our mission as a Christian liberal arts college in the current culture of higher education, the church and society at large. The trend toward academic specialization at the graduate level, political polarization in both the nation and the church, the cultural impatience with complexity and ambiguity, and the economics of higher education all pose challenges for finding faculty, students and donors who will continue to commit themselves to an institution that seeks to build bridges within the church, the culture and higher education.
STANDARD 2

ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES THROUGH CORE FUNCTIONS

Planning, Building, and Integrating to Achieve the Vision

The institution achieves its institutional purposes and attains its educational objectives through the core functions of teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, and support for student learning. It demonstrates that these core functions are performed effectively and that they support one another in the institution’s efforts to attain educational effectiveness.

As described in the previous essay, Westmont has spent considerable time in the past 10 years sharpening its vision as a Christian liberal arts college and considering the implications of that vision for its educational programming and its niche in higher education. Specifically, the college has implemented its vision by revising general education, developing more systematic program review and identifying more deliberate strategies in the area of diversity.

We believe we have the structures in place to support progress toward becoming an institution of the highest quality. We have continued to develop strategies for recruitment and development of faculty as well as resources for professional development, the curriculum and support for student learning. Noticeable changes in the past 10 years include built-in mechanisms within the educational program for dialog and feedback, thus increasing the likelihood that improvement will be continuous and pervasive within the institution rather than spotty and dependent on individual intuition.

Teaching and Learning

Westmont offers a traditional liberal arts education that emphasizes depth in the major, breadth in the general education requirements, the educational value of co-curricular involvements such as athletics, student organizations, chapel and community service, and intentional cultivation of the implications of learning for living that the residential nature of the campus makes possible. Our commitment to provide a coherent educational philosophy that pervades every area of the campus is evident in our move to the provost structure, which gathers the faculty, student life staff, library faculty, athletic program and chapel all under the umbrella of the educational program. While we recognize the different ways in which each part of the college contributes to the educational program, we seek to cultivate in each area a sense of what it means to contribute to the overall educational goals of the college and to seek strategies for learning and accountability appropriate to that area.
The opening section of the college catalog describes our desire to “launch our students into a lifetime of flourishing” (Catalog, p. 12). In the tradition of the liberal arts, this means providing an education that prepares students in the essential human capacities of character, communication, creativity, critical thinking and citizenship. In doing so, we believe we are preparing students to be effective and substantive beings in the full range of their activities over the course of their lifetime.

Much of our energy over the past 10 years has been devoted to deepening our dialog on campus about student learning and growth across departments and across the divide that has traditionally existed in the academy between the academic and co-curricular parts of a student’s education. Several structures have been key to deepening this dialog.

**First**, the six program standards have become talking points throughout the college as each academic department, each area of student life, the campus pastor’s office, the library and athletics have sought to relate their individual programs to the overall educational vision of the college. Each of these areas is included in the ongoing schedule of program review under the leadership of the Program Review Committee.

**Second**, the Ethos Task Force, which has subsequently become the Ethos Committee, provides a context in which personnel in academics, student life, chapel, athletics, admissions and alumni relations gather regularly to communicate matters of relevance to the entire educational program, to plan for integrated programming and to talk about potential disconnects between our educational vision and student experience.

**Third**, the **Faculty Forum** has opened up in recent years to non-teaching educators on campus (e.g., student life and campus pastor). Over time, we realized we are all committed to the same thing: preparing students to be effective and competent learners for a lifetime.

**Fourth**, the Institute for Liberal Arts has facilitated dialog throughout campus about the translation of our philosophy of education into practice for the current generation. This effort was most obvious in the 2002 summer workshop that brought together 15-20 faculty and student life staff in a week of discussion about how they work both individually and corporately to carry out the mission of the college. The fruits of their labor are evident in the collection of essays entitled *Christian Reflections on Liberal Arts Education*.

**Fifth**, the Office of Institutional Research has been more pro-active in encouraging discussion of such institution-wide measures of student learning as the Senior Survey, the recently compiled *Alumni Survey*, the HERI report and the NSSE report. These are regularly discussed in the Academic Senate, Faculty Forum, in president’s staff and at the meetings of the Board of Trustees. Changes are taking place in response to these discussions. The college’s recent renewed attention to the experience of our women students and women faculty has grown out of these discussions, as have our ongoing efforts to make advising more effective. Student concern expressed in these surveys has
also been instrumental in shaping strategies for improvement in various academic departments. For instance, in response to student concern about availability of upper-division major classes, we have added full-time faculty in the Religious Studies and Communication Studies Departments.

Given the history of antagonism within higher education between academics and student life and the historic academic preference for evaluation by intuition, it is amazing that these integrative and evaluative developments have occurred fairly smoothly and without inordinate fanfare. Despite this move toward integration and dialog, there remains a strong sense among the faculty about their special role in protecting the educational integrity of the college — and a fairly traditional understanding of that integrity — and their own individual and departmental autonomy relative to matters of curriculum and student learning. The majority of faculty prefer (at least in practice) disciplinary rather than inter-disciplinary courses. They express reluctance at: involving student life and library faculty in delivering credit-bearing courses (despite the fact that these educators all have advanced degrees in their fields); having the newly-formed General Education Committee discuss syllabi; and linking student learning too tightly to specific measurable student learning outcomes. Faculty take pride (quite appropriately, perhaps) in the rigors of the tenure and promotion process that mark the teaching faculty’s special relationship to the institution.

**Student evaluation** forms need to be integrated into our current strategies for program review. At present, the questions students answer in the evaluations were developed in the early 1980s. Clearly, these queries need to be modified and related more intentionally to our current student learning outcomes. The Personnel Committee of the faculty (i.e., tenure and promotion committee) has this item on their agenda this year. Perhaps more sensitive is the fact that it has been traditional for student evaluations to be optional once faculty become full professors. While some full professors choose to use student evaluation forms, most do not. This concern has been addressed to some extent in the program of **mutual mentoring** that the faculty adopted for the ongoing accountability of full professors. These professors now conduct evaluations in their classes during the year they participate in a mutual mentoring accountability group. Based on anecdotal testimony of some full professors who conducted reviews for the first time in several years, the forms proved to be eye-opening and provided a healthy check on self-perception. The Professional Development Committee and Personnel Committee are both involved in monitoring the effectiveness of our recently-implemented mutual mentoring program for senior faculty.

In discussing the development of our educational program over the past 10 years, we should also mention our enhanced and more systematic approach to off-campus programs, including both international programs and local internships and practica. **Off-campus programs** no longer operate as a subcommittee of the Academic Senate but have become a separate area of the curriculum. Along with the **Off-Campus Programs Committee**, the director and coordinator of off-campus programs gives leadership to a wide range of opportunities for students to enhance their on-campus learning with
experience in the “real world.” These programs vary from local internships carried in the context of their major to Mayterm programs to semester-long programs away from campus. The opportunities include Westmont-led programs as well as a wide range of programs sponsored by other institutions.

One of the most salient features of recent history in the off-campus programs area is the effort to bring greater quality control to the off-campus programs that students are allowed to apply to their Westmont requirements. This process has not been perfect, but it has included efforts on the part of professors to visit programs that will be used in their major programs (e.g. modern languages). The Off-Campus Programs Committee and the Senate Review Committee have monitored syllabi more carefully and conducted more consistent follow-up on student evaluations. The college has also developed systematic, institution-wide standards for internships and service-learning projects.

The newly implemented general education program is also a crucial feature of our ongoing commitment to the improvement of our educational program (see Essay 1). The provost initiated the review in the late 1990s, and the faculty widely supported it. There was a general recognition of the need for more emphasis on diversity, more room for interdisciplinary efforts, more rationale for the structure, more room for skills and methodology as well as content, and more room for application.

While the process was long and sometimes wearisome, the new structure for general education does address the concerns that led to the revision in the first place. It does not do so perfectly, nor does it meet anyone’s approval 100 percent, but it reflects the collective wisdom of the faculty and a sense that, all told, it offers a greater possibility than the old framework for creating a vision for general education consistent with our overall goals for student learning.

**General education** courses fall into four categories: Common Contexts, Common Inquiries, Common Skills and Competent and Compassionate Action. Each Common Contexts class grounds students in a body of material and explicitly invites them into an understanding of the Christian liberal arts tradition. Each Common Inquiries class empowers students to explore the knowledge, methodologies and modes of inquiry of a given discipline. Each Common Skills class encourages students to develop their verbal, quantitative or physical dexterity. Through requirements under Competent and Compassionate Action, students will learn how to live out what they have learned. The report of the General Education Committee appears in the portfolio because it represents the culmination of a planning process that intentionally incorporated the college’s mission and outcomes for student learning and modified the curriculum to better accomplish these outcomes.

The new general education requirements took effect in fall 2004. Now that implementation has begun, the college is working to develop effective and appropriate tools for assessing the effectiveness of the new program. Since our previous program review process focused on departments and disciplines, we have had to invent a new
approach to the evaluation of the general education program. The Program Review Committee and the General Education Committee are working together to develop this process. The review process will focus on a cohort of students who will commit to serve as part of the review team for the duration of their four-year program at the college. Both written and oral input will be part of the review, and the process will repeat with every-other entering first-year class. The first cohort group has been identified and will begin their work at the end of the fall 2004 semester. The responses of the cohort will be supplemented by a written survey of all students in the second semester of their first year and at the end of their fourth year.

In addition to the formal structure of the curriculum, Westmont offers students many elective opportunities for enhancing their education. These include participating in major honors projects, conducting scholarly research with faculty mentors, completing senior projects (art shows, theatrical productions, concerts, papers, research projects, etc.), participating in business plan competitions, competing in Westmont’s annual debate and speech tournaments and entering academic problem-solving contests in mathematics and computer science. Students may attend a variety of campus events, such as special lectures, art exhibits, concerts, town hall meetings on national issues, the campus film series and discussion forums. Faculty and staff provide opportunities for students to attend events off campus, such as the Westmont Foundation Downtown Lecture Series and concerts sponsored by the Community Arts Music Association. The chapel/convocation program allows the college to engage students in thoughtful discussions of contemporary issues.

One of the consistent features of Westmont’s ethos is the energy that students invest in initiating their own learning and service opportunities. Student life staff refer to a “culture of involvement” at Westmont, where a majority of students get involved in volunteer and outreach activities at some time during their college career. Whether they are working with the homeless, the elderly, at-risk students and other vulnerable populations in the local community — or traveling to Mexico or the inner-city to help those in need — they are seeking to apply their learning to make a difference in the world. While students in the past have often resisted more faculty involvement in these projects — fearing they will become too much like a classroom — in recent years, student leaders have been much more likely to seek guidance from faculty and student life staff. The faculty are currently considering how to incorporate this lively dimension of student-initiated service into the general education curricular framework under “Competent and Compassionate Action.” At a recent forum, the faculty learned about the wide range of current student projects that might become the basis of connection with material in their classes. The associate dean for curriculum and the General Education Committee are following up to help faculty make these connections happen. Several pilot efforts are in progress, including classes in sociology, history and computer science.
Scholarship and Creative Activity

Since the early 1980s the faculty have moved toward making scholarship and professional development a more deliberate and increasingly requisite aspect of their life at Westmont. While we remain primarily a teaching institution focused on undergraduates rather than a research university, we see the essential role of active scholarship in modeling ongoing curiosity and learning in the classroom, in keeping faculty fresh and enthused about their own calling, in providing opportunities for students to engage in research while they are undergraduates and, indirectly, in enhancing the reputation of the college for the sake of the opportunities it creates for our graduates.

Faculty are required to demonstrate that they carry on an active program of professional involvement as part of their tenure and promotion reviews. The college supports their efforts with resources for attending conferences, a well-established sabbatical program and competitive summer professional development grants for summer research and curriculum development. Faculty may also apply for funds to support summer student research partners.

The college seeks to recognize scholarship and performance on campus through the annual Faculty Research Award, through announcements at faculty meetings, through various faculty lectures, (i.e., Phi Kappa Phi Faculty Lectureship), through numerous concerts and art exhibits involving both students and faculty, through the annual spring Celebration of Student Research and through the annual fall Celebration of Summer Student Research.

The college also supports several lecture series that bring scholars from off campus to interact with our faculty and students. These include the Erasmus Society Lecture Series (humanities), the Pascal Society (the natural and behavioral sciences) and the World Christianity and Global Encounters of the 21st Century lecture series. In addition, many departments sponsor department or interdepartmental speakers and colloquia. During this past year, we have made a special effort to bring to campus more speakers of color within the context of these lecture series, for the inherent value of doing so but also to extend our network of connections among academics of color. We are hoping this will help us to enlarge our pool of candidates of color in any upcoming searches.

We have sought to provide opportunities for the distinctive kind of interdisciplinary scholarship that happens more easily at a liberal arts college than at a university. The Interdisciplinary Studies Grant has been the context for such weekend seminars as “Evolution and the Problem of Evil” (faculty from history, biology and philosophy) and “The Mind-body Problem” (faculty from psychology and philosophy). Typically, the seminars involve both off-campus speakers and our own faculty. Students also receive curricular incentives to participate in the seminars as co-learners with the faculty.

While the increased emphasis on scholarship and professional development over the past 25 years has greatly enriched the intellectual life of the college, it has also created its own challenges. One difficulty is translating highly discipline-centric graduate school
preparation into the context of undergraduate teaching where much of the instruction is more general; another is maintaining the level of specialization to contribute to the guild while developing the skills necessary to engage helpfully with the more interdisciplinary context of a liberal arts college. Faculty experience increased pressure on their personal lives when they try to be active scholars in their field, active mentors and teachers of their students, active members of a Christian liberal arts learning community and healthy members of families, churches, and community organizations.

In recent years, the Faculty Council and the Professional Development Committee have sought to be more intentional about addressing some of these issues. While there are no easy answers, some of the efforts being made include: making the faculty committee structure more efficient to cut down on the number of faculty who have major committee assignments year after year; targeting mid-career faculty when awarding summer professional grants; and entering more fully into dialog with faculty coming up for sabbaticals to focus their time on projects that will prepare them for the next stage of their professional journey.

Support for Student Learning

Providing academic and personal support for student learning is a high priority at Westmont as indicated by the growth of our academic support services, our student life staff and the services of our Counseling Center. Throughout the college, we seek to call students to excellence and to clearly state what we expect from them. At the same time, we support them so they can reach their potential as learners and as healthy human beings. The Academic Senate and the General Education Committee work to ensure that class syllabi tell students what they need to know and do as well as how each class fits within their overall education. The Student Handbook, which students receive each year, explains academic policies and procedures such as plagiarism, grading and the process of appealing decisions and submitting petitions to the review subcommittee of the Academic Senate. Changes to the 2004 student handbook were made in response to certain misunderstandings that had resulted in an unusual number of petitions to the review committee. To encourage students to keep and use the handbook, it includes a 12-month planner with key Westmont dates. Academic policies also appear on the college’s Web site.

The Academic Policies and Procedures Handbook and the Student Handbook have undergone recent revisions to reflect current practices and to ensure that they reflect trends in the larger world of higher education regarding student rights, student privacy, etc.

Effective advising is essential in helping students get the classes they need. Information about requirements for admission and graduation appear in the catalog and on the Web site, and each student works closely with a faculty adviser to choose courses and fulfill requirements for graduation. Members of the registrar’s professional staff meet individually with all graduating seniors to review progress on degree requirements.
Students evaluate faculty advisers to assess the quality of advising on campus so the college can improve in this area. Advising remains an area of ongoing concern in the Senior Survey. While we are not convinced that we have addressed all the concerns, we have made a number of changes in response to student concerns and patterns of student petition as they near graduation. In the past several years, we have strengthened significantly the services available to students with disabilities and the means of tracking those students within the system while remaining sensitive to issues related to confidentiality. Much more coordination occurs between the registrar’s office and the director of advising. Furthermore, the summer orientation programs, which include advising, are increasingly more integrated with admissions efforts and the registrar’s office.

We are in the process of converting to a new administrative software system, Datatel, which we hope will dramatically increase the availability and the immediacy of material for advising, both for the students and for their advisers. The conversion is in its early stages but promises to be helpful in the near future.

While the grade point averages and test scores of new students continue to rise, the college still offers special support to students who struggle with the transition from high school to college. The Writer’s Corner provides assistance for students who wish to improve their writing skills, and the Successful Scholars program works with basic study skills and time management. Student tutors in some classes also provide academic support for students.

One of the by-products of our increasingly academically qualified student body is the marked increase in anxiety, perfectionism, and depression among students. While this is a national trend and not a distinctively Westmont concern, we have sought to make faculty and student life staff more aware of how to recognize such disorders and determine the kind of help students need. The services in the Counseling Center have been increased, and Student Life staff make periodic presentations to the faculty about these issues.

Most students bring their own computers to campus, but the college still maintains a campus computer lab and provides basic technical support to students as they become increasingly dependent on their computers. Most recently, the college has worked to develop better virus protection and better filters against spam.

Over the course of the past several years, the Office of Life Planning (formerly Career and Life Planning) has worked to make their services more readily available to students early on in their education, so students think of their vocations as growing naturally out of who they are. The office is seeking to develop a four-year curriculum for student development in vocational planning. They have found this approach to be much more effective than a focus on “career” planning — a term that is often offensive to our students because it suggests a focus on work as separate from individual fundamental commitments or identity. Their efforts to integrate with other areas of student life and with the faculty are apparent in such things as the Focus Week last spring that involved
faculty, alumni, chapel speakers, etc.; their coordinated efforts with divisions and departments to plan events for current students that feature alumni from those areas of study; and their year-long transition plan for seniors to help them prepare for graduation.

The *residence halls* also play a key role in providing a healthy learning environment for students. Our resident directors all have advanced degrees and are chosen for their commitment to a residence program that supports a Christian liberal arts philosophy of education. The resident directors have been active, along with others from Student Life, in exploring the implications of the student learning standards for their area. The vice president for student life has organized several retreats where student life staff have sharpened their sense of a philosophy of student life for the liberal arts context. This intentionality to support the educational environment shows up in the programs student life staff provide for students, including activities in the residence halls as well as support and challenge for individual students.

In addition to the resources available for all students, particular populations within the community with a certain range of concerns receive additional support. Two of the most obvious populations are student athletes and students of color.

Our *athletic program* has long been incorporated into education at the college. For example, our coaches are most often teacher-coaches with appointments in both athletics and kinesiology. Coaches hold up the model of the student-athlete as the ideal for our athletes. Our Golden Eagle Banquet at the end of each year honors the athlete with the highest grade point average in each sport.

The *Intercultural Programs* office assists students from ethnic backgrounds, supports three ethnic clubs and offers programs for all students. It also administers Intercultural Leadership awards to provide financial assistance to students who seek to address diversity-related issues. Intercultural Programs staff members advise three student-run outreach programs: Potter's Clay (which takes students to Ensenada, Baja Mexico, during spring break); Spring Break in the City (which takes students to urban communities in Los Angeles and San Francisco); and Emmaus Road (which takes students outside the United States).

As a college, we have a long way to go before we achieve the integrated ethos that models in our institutional life the kind of seamless life we wish for our students. But we do believe that over the past 10 years we have made progress in this direction by creating structures that make the emergence of this ethos more likely.
STANDARD 3
DEVELOPING AND APPLYING RESOURCES AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY

Aligning Resources to Support and Sustain the Vision

The institution sustains its operations and supports the achievement of its educational objectives through its investment in human, physical, fiscal and information resources, and through an appropriate and effective set of organizational and decision-making structures. These key resources and organizational structures promote the achievement of institutional purposes and educational objectives and create a high quality environment for learning.

Faculty and Staff

Westmont has always invested heavily in personnel, recognizing that people are at the heart of the college’s distinctiveness. Faculty have long had their own handbook, their own representative bodies in the governance process and their own procedures for evaluation and accountability. In the past several years, the faculty and administration have worked to bring greater clarity to the policies and procedures related to contracts for faculty not on tenure track, such as teacher-coaches, instructors who lack appropriate terminal degrees in their fields and adjunct professors. The provost and the Personnel Committee have established review processes for these faculty appointments, including clarified schedules for review and expectations. In addition, the faculty and administration have worked through revised standards for tenure and promotion of all faculty, reducing the previous eight categories for review to three more comprehensive categories.

The faculty, working with the provost, have also established a stronger program of mentoring and accountability, beginning with the new faculty retreat and new faculty mentors and concluding with the process of mutual mentoring for senior faculty. The college clearly recognizes the importance of caring for faculty during the various stages of their professional and personal development.

During these past several years, the college has given special attention to the non-faculty area of the college and to bringing greater systematization to hiring and evaluation. Under the leadership of the Office of Human Resources and the vice president for administration, the college has committed itself to a formal structure of assigning pay grades and to regular performance evaluation.

In addition, the college has established the Leadership Roundtable where all non-faculty supervisors meet to discuss matters of mutual concern in their leadership roles at the college. At least once a semester, the staff meet as a whole to interact with the president’s
staff. While these forums are primarily intended to communicate general updates on life at the college, there is also a time for questions and responses.

The most pressing concerns related to the faculty and staff at this point include strategies for increasing ethnic diversity commensurate with the growing diversity among our students, establishing procedures for determining the appropriate levels of staffing in various departments and determining procedures for adding positions or shifting staffing within the college.

For a long time, the college has been painfully aware of the lack of diversity among our faculty and staff. In the late 1990s several policies were adopted to try to guarantee a pool of candidates that increases the likelihood of hiring faculty and staff of color. These efforts included an early start to anticipated faculty searches to provide more time for finding faculty of color for a given position and mandatory supervisory oversight when hiring staff to ensure that extra measures are taken to identify candidates of color in every hiring pool. Within the past two years, we have asked each academic department to designate a diversity hiring specialist to focus on recruiting candidates of color in each field. These specialists meet each semester to talk about strategies for extending our network among prospective faculty of color and for making the campus more attractive for candidates of color once they come to campus for interviews.

As our statistics on diversity reveal, we have not achieved the desired results, especially on the faculty side. For staff, the most challenging feature is the uneven distribution of staff of color among the various areas of the college. Over the past several years, the place of our current faculty of color and our women faculty has become more central to the governance of the institution, mostly because of the personalities and abilities of these individuals. But the overall numbers have not changed. Because of the good experiences of departments that have hired women and faculty of color, faculty are much more aware of the need to increase diversity and, for the most part, more sympathetic to this effort than 10 years ago. For the past two years, we have been very pro-active in bringing at least one faculty of color as part of each campus interview pool. Last year, we made three offers to candidates of color out of a total of nine offers. One of the three accepted. The others took appointments that were more research-oriented, but they indicated that Westmont was a serious contender in their final decision. This year, in an effort to increase our pool, we have designated extra funds to bring in speakers of color. By becoming more familiar with Westmont, these speakers might be in a position to recommend candidates to us when positions are open.

In the area of identifying appropriate levels of staffing and allocating resources, the college is continuing along the trajectory of shared governance. Each year, each faculty department and each staff supervisor submit budget requests with rationales that tie their requests to departmental objectives and the overall college mission. The vice presidents review these requests and the Academic Senate reviews faculty requests as well. The President’s Advisory Council then considers them. The job of the President’s Advisory Council is to give advice on relating the various budget requests to the overall mission of
the college and to recommend priorities to the president. The president, of course, makes the final recommendations to the Board of Trustees.

While the faculty and employee handbooks both have processes in place for financial retrenchment, there is little said about how a position might be shifted from one department to another on the occasion of a retirement. Given our student enrollment cap, as the faculty-student ratio approaches its desired 1:12, the college needs more explicit procedures for determining when personnel resources should be shifted within the college. This concern applies both across academic departments and vice-presidential areas. The Academic Senate Executive Committee is working on developing principles that could help make these decisions for faculty. So far, at the level of vice-presidents, resources are shifted on a case-by-case basis by the vice-presidents in question and the president.

The enrollment cap (we are committed in our Conditional Use Permit to having no more than an average of 1,200 students on campus) provides some benefit as it forces us to clarify priorities in the light of limited resources. But it leaves us without the option of solving budget shortfalls or program enhancement by increasing enrollment. As a result, the gift of limitation is one that we are still learning to appreciate. On the faculty side, this issue shows itself in the persistent concern that the staff is growing faster than the faculty. On the staff side, this stress of limitation is apparent in a sense that faculty have first priority in getting their needs met.

**Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources**

Westmont has a history of financial stability and has finished the fiscal year in the black for the last 20 years. This record is, in large part, due to the excellent work of the vice president for finance, along with his staff and the finance committee of the board.

While our record of financial stability has remained constant, the process by which we make budget decisions has changed significantly in the past six to seven years. A complex budget model, which utilizes a variety of assumptions to illustrate results for the following fiscal year, informs the annual process of developing the budget. In addition, a budget forecast model shows the results of broad assumptions on the budgets over the next four years. The President’s Advisory Council (PAC) considers these assumptions and reviews the results. The provost solicits budget requests, along with program rationales, from all academic department chairs, and the Academic Senate ranks the priorities of these requests. Other vice presidents receive budget requests from their staffs, which they evaluate. The provost and the vice presidents then present potential budget requests to the PAC, which includes representatives from the faculty, staff and student body. The council discusses budget requests, assigns priorities to capital improvement projects on campus and makes recommendations to the president for the college budget. The president formulates a budget for the next year considering these recommendations and reviews it with the PAC before presenting it to the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees. The Finance Committee considers the president’s
proposed budget and then recommends it to the Board of Trustees. The president, in consultation with the president’s staff, the PAC, and the trustee Finance Committee, strives to align budget decisions with institutional priorities and to review institutional research when making decisions.

The budget cycle last year illustrates the nature and effectiveness of this process. Because of the heavy increase in insurance costs (which the PAC accepted as a given priority), the PAC had to choose between an ongoing institutional commitment to faculty salary targets and money for new programs. They chose the former. There is an increasing sense that the college needs to do a better job of supporting existing programs rather than continuing to expand programs. This trend is reflected in greater attention in the past several years to developing systematic and funded repair and replacement cycles for all capital equipment and in the current discussion of the need to include a line item in the new capital campaign for major renovations.

According to a 2003 survey of faculty and staff, most employees feel adequately informed about budget priorities and the procedure for making requests, but there is still some uncertainty about the process, especially in areas of the college where the staff are less directly involved in budgeting. The college continues to explore ways to involve faculty and staff in the budgetary process and to keep them informed of budget decisions. The President’s memo this fall reminding the entire community of faculty and staff how decisions of any kind are made within the college was an effort in this direction of better communication.

The 1995 Long Range Plan addressed resource development and became the basis for funding priorities set during the five-year capital campaign that ended in 2002. A committee that included broad representation from the campus and college constituencies (such as alumni and local residents) examined possible priorities and made recommendations about which projects to highlight during the campaign, such as the new building for the sciences and support for the endowment. While these priorities guided the fund-raising drive, the interest of major donors in supporting a facility for the visual arts led to the addition of this building.

The overwhelming success of the capital campaign, which raised $57 million for two buildings, endowment, essential college programs and the Westmont Annual Fund, has created a stronger financial base for the institution. Growth in annual giving (which reached a record $2.4 million in the 2004 fiscal year) and graduate participation (which has doubled to 34 percent in the last few years) are encouraging signs. The College Advancement office has hired additional staff to reach out to major donors and better support annual giving. The quiet phase of the next capital campaign begins in July 2005, and the college has hired consultant Bentz, Whaley, Flessner to conduct a campaign audit and make recommendations about the goal. President Stan Gaede has developed a vision statement that includes raising $400 million over the next decade. Although College Advancement has grown, it still faces limited personnel and financial resources as it enters a new and much more ambitious campaign. The consultant will work with College
Advancement and the president’s staff to determine sufficient staffing and funding levels for the next campaign.

Following the campaign, the trustees decided to add most of the undesignated campaign funds to the endowment. As a result, Westmont’s endowment rose significantly, from $9.5 million in 1997 to $48 million in 2004. The vice president for finance worked with the Board of Trustees to fund the two new buildings identified in the campaign: the Adams Center for the Visual Arts and the David K. Winter Hall for the Sciences. The trustees elected to supplement the campaign gifts designated for this purpose with unrestricted campaign funds and a new bond issue to fund their construction.

Westmont continues to face significant financial issues. Although the endowment has experienced growth, it remains relatively modest, and its revenue provides only a small percent of the annual operating budget. Fund raising has also increased but still makes a limited contribution to revenue. As a result, the college depends heavily on tuition for revenue. With the 1,200-student cap on campus enrollment (which the college accepts and supports), Westmont cannot increase its income by enrolling more students on campus. Additional revenue must come from increased tuition costs, a growing endowment and increased fund raising.

The limited endowment and the enrollment cap complicate the college’s goal of attracting a student body that is highly qualified academically, features increasing ethnic and economic diversity and represents reasonable gender balance (as close as possible to the 60:40 female to male ratio that is becoming normal in baccalaureate institutions nationwide) with a discount rate in the range of 25 percent. Although Westmont charges less per student than most of its peer national liberal art colleges in California, it is the most expensive Christian college in the country.

The college has explored in depth various options for enhancing revenue while honoring the enrollment caps on campus (e.g., Dartmouth Plan Task Force), but the current strategy for enhancing revenue is focused primarily on building the endowment. Completing the campus and increasing the endowment are the two primary goals of the current president’s tenure in office. (The May 2002 A Vision for College Advancement spells out these goals more fully.)

Westmont has long been recognized as “people rich” and “building poor.” It is utterly amazing that the college has been able to recruit and retain an increasingly higher quality of student with our current physical plant.

When Westmont received permission to increase enrollment to 1,200 students in 1976, it also gained approval for a campus Master Plan that included the additional buildings needed to serve the student body. In the past 30 years, the college has worked to reach an enrollment of 1,200. In the 1980s, Westmont expanded the dining commons, built a science building, constructed a new residence hall and renovated the art center. Apart from the construction of 41 faculty homes adjacent to campus, there has been no new
building activity in nearly 20 years, and college facilities have become overcrowded, with less-than-ideal space for all college programs: classrooms, laboratories, residence halls, faculty offices, athletic programs, information resources, etc. In response to the 1995 Long Range Plan, administrators undertook a comprehensive process to update the campus Master Plan, gathering comments from all college constituencies, neighbors and local residents. After much thought and study, officials submitted the updated campus Master Plan to Santa Barbara County, where it is slowly making its way through a cumbersome regulatory process. At the same time, Westmont began the first of a series of capital campaigns to finance the completion of the campus.

Obtaining approval for the updated Master Plan and the new facilities it includes represents one of the greatest challenges facing the college. While the approval process is generally difficult for all applicants, the active and vocal opposition of a small group of people makes Westmont’s task even harder. There is a general sense that the revisions resulting from the college’s ongoing negotiations will create a better campus in the long run. Nevertheless, the cost of this process in time and energy weighs heavily on the administration, the faculty and the Office of College Advancement, which is in the unfortunate place of facing a new campaign without breaking ground on the buildings funded in the previous campaign.

In the meantime, while waiting for the new science building, students and faculty in the science departments at Westmont have benefited from a number of grants from such foundations as the Fletcher Jones Foundation, Stauffer Trust and the Ahmanson Foundation that have funded new equipment in anticipation of the new facilities in the sciences.

While Westmont negotiates issues related to the Master Plan, it is working to enhance its informational and technological resources in support of student learning. The college continues to develop its library resources through the ongoing work of the library subcommittee of the Academic Senate, the Conspectus Project (which developed a collection strategy), the growth of library holdings, additional expenditures on library resources, and strategic use of online resources to promote the most effective selection of journals. The library staff is also exploring options for partnership with other Southern California institutions.

Library staff provide training to students in using the facility, including online resources, and assist students doing research. The catalog is entirely online, and students have access to numerous reference resources on the Internet. The library is investing in online access to key journals. Librarians maintain an active Web presence at http://library.westmont.edu/.

WASC has noted the limitations of the library collection in past reports, and the college continues to respond to these concerns. Westmont faces ongoing issues, such as the lack of space. The need to maintain classrooms and computer laboratories in the library building means that space for books and other resources is limited. The updated campus
Master Plan includes an expansion of the library as well as the construction of academic buildings that will eliminate the need for classrooms in the library. How quickly the expansion is completed depends on the priorities set for future fund raising and the success of that activity.

Appointing the current director of informational technology (in response to the recommendations of a task force) has greatly enhanced our planning and assessment of overall institutional needs in the area of technology. Since the director’s arrival, Westmont has expanded and reorganized the IT department, upgraded the campus network and e-mail server and developed new computer labs on campus. College Advancement has worked with the faculty and the IT department to obtain grant funding for network and computer equipment. At present, the college is following the direction of a five-year strategic plan developed by the director in response to his own analysis of the situation and to regular surveys of both staff and faculty.

Faculty are involved in the philosophy and implementation of information resources through their participation in the Faculty Instructional Technology Committee and the Computer Technology Advisory Committee. To date, the college has developed 14 “smart” classrooms equipped with multi-media and computer equipment so faculty can use PowerPoint presentations and project information from the Internet in their classes.

Currently, the Faculty Council is looking again at the structure of the instructional technology committee to better ensure the appropriate development of our pedagogical use of technology and our resources. At present, the faculty is at something of an impasse as they seek to find an appropriate level of institutional enthusiasm for technology, one that both addresses the true needs of students and is consistent with the philosophy of a liberal arts education and the college’s financial resources.

The IT department provides a wide range of services to the campus, including technical support for hardware and software, training for a range of computer programs, assistance with e-mail and departmental Web pages, and service for telephones and fax machines. Individuals in need of IT assistance may submit a request for help through a Web site or by calling a report line. To make sure that faculty and staff have up-to-date computers, the college replaces all machines every four years, with faculty in selected departments receiving new computers every three years.

The college made a significant investment in 2004 to replace its outdated admissions and administrative computing system with new software from Datatel. College Advancement has completed the conversion process. Other offices are scheduled to follow in the next year. A campus-wide committee spent two years studying the need for an updated administrative computing system and choosing a vendor. This process, under the skillful and patient leadership of the vice president for administration, is another example of the college’s emphasis on shared governance — this time among the administration, the faculty and all relevant areas of college staff.
Organizational Structure and Decision-Making Process

These essays have already addressed the shared governance model espoused by the college. While it is clearly recognized that the president is finally responsible for decisions under the authority of the Board of Trustees, there is an effort in many particular cases to involve all relevant bodies in the process. The goal in all cases is to foster widespread ownership of the mission of the institution through adequate dissemination of information in the context of mutual trust and accountability. (A recent survey suggests that this level of trust is not as evenly distributed in the institution as we might have hoped. The president’s staff have discussed the results of the survey, as has the Leadership Roundtable. At present, the vice presidents have been charged to look into the results for their area and to make recommendations accordingly.)

The particular groups involved in sharing vary depending upon the issue. For example, different groups would be involved in decisions about the new college information system than would be consulted in the revision of the general education curriculum. In each case, the intention is that all parties significantly affected are represented in the deliberations. The membership of two current operating task forces — the Athletic Task Force and the Hiring for Mission — illustrate this practice. The first looks at the current level of funding for athletics within the college and our organizational strategy for obtaining that funding. The second considers how to sharpen our strategies for faculty recruitment and retention. The first task force includes representatives from the Board of Trustees, the administration and the athletic and kinesiology departments. Members of the second task force include trustees, administrators and divisional representatives from the faculty.

The provost model, with the provost overseeing both academics and student life (along with the vice president for student life) and reporting to the president, helps integrate these programs. The executive vice president oversees all non-educational programs and staff and also reports to the president. The vice presidents for administration, finance and college advancement report both to the executive vice president and the president. The president meets weekly with the president’s staff, which includes the provost, the executive vice president and the four vice presidents.

The college’s independent Board of Trustees approves all major decisions, such as the decision to undertake a capital campaign and the revision of the statement of faith. Trustees work closely with the president and vice president of finance to oversee financial matters. Through a committee structure (including committees on academics, student life, finance, diversity, planning, membership, development, personnel and buildings and grounds and a sub-committee on investments), trustees become involved in important projects such as strategic and long-term planning, setting priorities for capital campaigns and renovation projects, building and investing the endowment, how to fund the construction of new facilities and ways to increase diversity on campus.
Conclusion

At this juncture, we believe we have in place the personnel and the institutional structures and processes needed to support our educational vision. We also believe we have a clear sense of the challenges that face us as we seek to finish the campus physical plant, develop the necessary resource base and continually clarify our budget priorities and align resources to program priorities. The work of two of our current task forces focus on areas relevant to this clarification and alignment process. These are the Athletic Task Force and the Housing Issues Study Group. Both bodies are working to review the kind of athletic and housing programs that are consistent with our overall institutional mission to recommend strategies for obtaining resources to support these programs.
STANDARD 4  
CREATING AN ORGANIZATION COMMITTED TO LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

Learning and Improving to Further the Vision

The institution conducts sustained, evidence-based, and participatory discussions about how effectively it is accomplishing its purposes and achieving its educational objectives. These activities inform both institutional planning and systematic evaluations of educational effectiveness. The results of institutional inquiry, research, and data collection are used to establish priorities at different levels of the institution, and to revise institutional purposes, structures, and approaches to teaching, learning, and scholarly work.

Strategic Thinking and Planning

Westmont is learning to be a “learning organization.” Over the past 10 years, we have experienced what it is like to develop and to follow a long range plan — each year assessing where we have made progress, where we need to be working harder and where we have modified the original plan in accordance with new evidence. This plan has guided both our program and our development efforts throughout the past decade in very concrete ways. For example, several specific initiatives guiding particular areas of the college have grown out of the Long Range Plan, including the Ethos Task Force, the General Education Task Force, the Strategic Planning for Advancement Task Force, the Diversity Task Force, the Faith Statement Task Force, and the Hiring for Mission Task Force. Each of these groups has made recommendations back to the regular governance structure of the college, sometimes modifying the structure in the process. At present, the president has announced to the Planning Committee of the Board of Trustees that he will convene another long range planning group in fall 2005.

The college is especially aware of two particular challenges: the need to build up our resource base given the cap on enrollment, the limited endowment and a dependence on tuition income; and the need to plan for the complexity of being both a rigorous liberal arts college and a deeply Christian institution. While this calling has always posed challenges, the current specialization in the academy, the polarization of our culture about matters of religion and the changing epistemological frameworks in both the culture and the church intensify this challenge at the present time.

At the institutional level, the new long range plan will no doubt be constructed in much the same way as the previous plan. It will include representatives from the Board of Trustees, alumni, faculty, administration, staff and students. As with the previous plan, the administration will be charged with reporting back to the Board of Trustees annually about progress on the plan. Clearly, in order for long-range planning to be effective, there must be ways to modify the original recommendations in accordance with new evidence.
One example from the last process illustrates our confidence that we are learning how to find a balance between rigidity and flexibility in approaching long-range plans. The last plan had envisioned the development of several satellite programs where Westmont students might study during one of their eight semesters. This vision was intended to provide a required off-campus program for students (a curricular goal) and to allow the college to increase its overall tuition revenue base without increasing its on-campus enrollment. After sustained discussion and research by a task force that included administrators, faculty, staff and students, the college decided that this plan was too financially risky given the relatively narrow margin for error existing at that particular juncture. Off-campus programs already figure to some extent in our enrollment management strategy. For example, returning students from fall off-campus programs help to offset the loss of December graduates so that overall enrollment remains close to the desired 1,200. At present, we have abandoned the satellite program approach to revenue enhancement and have shifted our attention to building the endowment.

In addition to the long-range planning process, several ongoing contexts provide for institutional learning and planning. These include the president’s staff, the President’s Advisory Council, the Academic Senate and program review. Each of these contexts has responsibility for particular areas of planning and functions somewhat differently. For example, last spring the faculty and staff participated in a national survey of workplaces identifying themselves as linked to the Christian tradition. The survey asked questions about workplace satisfaction, trust, the level of ownership for the college mission, etc. Survey results were discussed with the president’s staff and in a Leadership Roundtable. Each vice president was then asked to discuss the survey in their respective areas. One concern related to awareness of the budgeting process, although this did not extend evenly throughout the college. Since we want to be a place where all faculty and staff have confidence in the results of the budgeting process, the vice presidents were asked to focus on this issue.

The program review process engages the academic, student life and campus pastor’s departments. While our commitment as an institution to program review is not new, the recent effort to tie this process to the six program standards and to establish a committee to facilitate this process throughout the institution is new. Based on the Faculty Forums that have discussed review-related issues, our enhanced venture in program review promises to be both fruitful and fraught with ongoing philosophical and practical challenges. Philosophically, the concerns are linked to worries about narrowing our goals for education to those that offer easy and quantitatively accessible measurements of progress. Awareness that an education is not entirely measured by what happens in the short term leads to other concerns (these can be addressed by more use of alumni data). Faculty also fear that education might turn into manipulation as professors seek to ensure they don’t look bad if students haven’t learned. Practically, the concerns focus on the time taken from actual teaching-related activities to spend on assessment. The concern is that assessment will be too self-conscious and intrusive on the process of education rather than something that relates naturally to it.
Events over the last two years illustrate how we are addressing some of these concerns about enhanced assessment. First, we invited a group of faculty to identify what we had learned from the process of generating baseline information about the role of the standards in various departments (the Futures Project). This included identifying what had gone wrong or generated significant ill feeling between particular departments and the Assessment Advisory Group (no longer in existence; replaced by the Program Review Committee). Second, the group developed a strategy for moving forward that took into account problematic issues. Third, the Program Review Committee, which the faculty approved as a standing committee, came out of this process.

The program review process has been one avenue for identifying departments that might benefit by a formal external consultation. Over the past two years, we have brought in consultants in music and education and anticipate having them in several other departments in the near future. These focused visits by faculty from other institutions can emerge either from faculty or administrative initiative.

Another example of planning and implementation is the development of an updated campus Master Plan. As described in Essay 3, Westmont has not yet built all the facilities included in its original Master Plan. The county approved a Master Plan in 1976 that features a conceptual layout of the campus and includes a specific inventory of beds, classroom and assembly seats and parking spaces in keeping with the approved enrollment of 1,200 students. When administrators began a campaign in the 1990s to raise funds for new facilities, the county planning staff asked the college to update this plan. Not only did the Master Plan need to reflect current environmental standards, but it had to provide the facilities considered most important for faculty and students in the 21st century. To make this determination and identify needed facilities, a Master Plan Committee collected data from students, faculty and college programs and invited comments from the entire community. The committee considered both faculty and student concerns, working to design a campus that aligns with the college’s mission and provides an environment conducive to learning. The group made provision for new academic buildings and an expansion of the library as well as a new residence hall, a student center, a practice gym and a chapel/auditorium in addition to new recreational field space and expanded parking.

After deciding what facilities would best complete the campus, college officials then determined which ones to build first. The process of setting priorities for the recent capital campaign also involved a broad-based committee that gathered information and comments from the college community. In response to overwhelming comments and evidence about overcrowded classrooms, laboratories and faculty offices, a new building for the sciences emerged as a top priority. A second essential component of the campaign focused on building endowment to provide greater support for faculty and resources for student scholarships, also considered essential. Committee members made their recommendations to the president and the Board of Trustees, who set the final priorities.
With another capital campaign starting soon, the college is in the midst of a similar process to determine priorities for the new fund-raising drive. Committee members making these decisions will rely on college data and comments from the college community as they choose between more student rooms on campus, greater space in the library, expanded facilities for laboratories and additional classrooms and faculty offices. They face a significant challenge in setting priorities when so many needs are apparent. In addition to meeting campus needs, they must also consider which projects will most appeal to the college’s prospective donors.

This kind of assessment occurs in non-academic areas as well. Members of Westmont’s Board of Advisors recently focused one of their sessions on the Department of Summer Conferences. This area of the college had grown without much intentionality other than the goal of enhancing college revenue through hosting groups on campus during the summer. The Board of Advisors drew attention to the possibilities of using the campus in the summer for revenue but in a manner that more strategically fits the larger goals of the college in recruiting students, increasing diversity, building academic reputation and supporting College Advancement. The recommendations of the Board of Advisors served as a catalyst for encouraging the administration to make major changes in the vision of the conference services program and in its personnel. The admissions office and College Advancement have employed external consultants in recent years to examine their operations in the light of college goals. In both cases, the reports resulted in recommendations that shaped personnel decisions and strategies in such areas as marketing, admissions and financial aid.

While we have not yet achieved the goal of pervasive, evidence-based planning for every college decision, we believe we have made significant progress since the last WASC review in cultivating openness in our decision-making processes and in strengthening the structures that invite regular, ongoing planning based on data from our own self-reporting, from surveys, from consultants and from our various boards.

**Commitment to Learning and Improvement**

While the future will be the best test of our commitment to learning and improvement, the structural changes we have made in the past 10 years and the new habits we are consciously cultivating illustrate our efforts in this area.

One of the most important structural changes was the move to the provost model. This decision was a deliberate effort to ensure that all areas of the college engaged in frequent dialog with each other and that the program area was connected at a high level with the institution’s operational concerns. Second, the faculty have created three standing committees: the Diversity Committee, the General Education Committee and the Program Review Committee, all of which are focused on monitoring our learning as an institution in key program areas. Prior to the creation of these committees, general education and program review were left to individual departments to monitor with occasional interruption by the administration or the Academic Senate. Diversity was a
matter for a task force; while this approach signaled something important, it lacked the institutional weight of a regular standing committee. Third, strengthening the President’s Advisory Council (formerly the College Budget Committee) enables this group to advise the president on a variety of college-wide issues of importance, including budget matters. Fourth, the incorporation of the Academic Senate into the budget process on the academic side of the college has increased faculty involvement. Previously, budget recommendations did not come to the faculty for discussion.

Our new habits include the strengthening of our institution-wide program review process. We are also seeking to be more intentional at the level of the board, the administration and the faculty in discussing together the results of the various research materials from the Office of Institutional Research. Reviewing the Senior Survey, the HERI and the NSSE material is now a regular practice of the college. After initial processing, the leadership decide which committee or group should assume responsibility for specific issues so they don’t simply die.

The recent Irvine Foundation Cultural Diversity Initiative Grant has helped us significantly with the regular practice of gathering data, assessing progress and taking action. Part of fulfilling the terms of this grant is documenting institutional change in the area of diversity, not simply reporting that certain things have been done. As part of our work in this area, we have started sending out an annual report on diversity so this issue isn’t limited to the Diversity Committee.

**Conclusion**

Westmont has not yet fully digested what it means to be a learning and evidence-based organization. But in the past 10 years, we have gone from scratching our heads about the concept to trying at every level to sort out what it means for the institution to be learning at each level. Furthermore, we have sought to do this in a way that is tied to things we normally do at a college for ourselves and our students and not simply for the purpose of external examination. This commitment has meant that our efforts have sometimes been slow and halting because we want everyone to see and own what needs to be done — not simply a few administrators and faculty. That takes time. Perhaps Winston Churchill’s quote about the state of the war effort after El Alamein would be appropriate. “Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”
CONCLUSION

At this point, we are prepared to look ahead toward the second stage in the WASC review process. As we indicated in the Institutional Proposal, we plan to use the six institutional standards as the framework for evaluating the effectiveness of a Westmont education. The standards continue to provide the structure of our program review process.

Second, as we indicated in the proposal, we plan to engage the educational effectiveness assessment at three levels: review general education; review individual departmental/major programs; and review the overall Westmont education.

We have prepared the structural context for the Educational Effectiveness Review as follows:

1. The program review schedule has already begun.
2. We have gathered the first four-year cohort of students who will assist in reviewing the new general education program.
3. We have developed strategies for collecting and reviewing a wide range of evidence for student learning — both at the departmental and institutional levels. Our initial year of interviewing seniors (one faculty interviewing one senior) proceeded as planned. This data will accumulate year after year and will become more meaningful with time both as evidence for learning in a major and for the impact of a Westmont education as a whole.
4. We are learning to make effective use of institutional and national surveys as a means of measuring educational effectiveness. Through these instruments we became aware of concerns about academic advising. We have also become more systematic about directing department-specific feedback and following up with departments about the ways they have addressed concerns.

We are also making good progress in learning the habits and disciplines of systematic program review at all levels: individual, departmental and institutional. Examples of systematic review include:

1. Increasing follow-up by faculty, department chairs and administrators to the results of institutional and nationally-normed surveys. We have moved beyond thinking the results are interesting to inviting questions such as “What does this mean?” and “What do we want to do about this?” The recent results of the NSSE survey serve as an example. For the second time in a row, we have not done as well as we expected in certain aspects of our institution in which we take the most pride, such as faculty-student interaction, a hallmark of how we understand ourselves. These results caught
the attention of our faculty and we are discussing them campus-wide as well as within departments to understand what they mean, rather than just explaining them away as we might have done in the past.

2. The recent Irvine Campus Diversity Initiative grant has provided a framework for us to practice assessment as a natural part of every learning opportunity we provide for students. Furthermore, the critical mass of activities centering on diversity has continually reinforced our attention to our progress in this one area.

While we are encouraged by our progress in becoming an institution that expresses concerns about student learning as naturally as we raise issues about faculty workloads, we recognize we have not accomplished all our goals. We still have a tendency to think we can know intuitively when students are learning and when they are not. Too often we equate efforts to teach with student learning. A lingering concern persists that an emphasis on assessment, which draws attention to measurable outcomes, may shrink our vision for graduates of a Christian liberal arts college. On the one hand, we recognize that the test of an education occurs throughout a lifetime and not just at the end of the senior year. On the other hand, we cannot be reluctant to evaluate our entire program just because the habit of assessment is not yet familiar. We are trying to sort out the difference between these two positions.

Final Word

While we carry on the work of education in our current context, we hope that by the time of the Educational Effectiveness visit we will have received final approval from the county for the Master Plan. This will not only enable us to build new art and science facilities, but will also release significant energy in many areas of the college from working on the Master Plan to carrying out more directly the educational mission of Westmont College.