I. Overview and Context for the Annual Report

This annual report is the first done by this office on the new six year reporting cycle. The last six year reporting cycle focused heavily on the Disability Services area of the department. This six year cycle will focus more heavily on the Academic Advising side. Previous Program Review committees have approved this segregation of focus for our area.

This report will detail our progress on our goals thus far. These goals have been slightly modified after consultation with our Assessment Coordinator.

II. Mission Statement, Student Learning Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

A. Mission of the Program

The role of the Academic Advising and Disability Services (AA/DS) office within the college is to provide guidance to students and faculty in the overall advising process and to support the academic life of all Westmont students, including those with disabilities. Though there is some natural overlap between the conversations and functions within these roles, they do have distinct differences. In recognition of this, they will each have a separate mission statement.

The mission of the disability services area is: To support, encourage and sustain the academic and personal development of students with disabilities and work towards greater recognition of differently-abled minds and bodies as aspects of the diversity in God’s kingdom.

The mission for the academic advising area is one of the goals to be pursued in the next 6 year assessment cycle.

B. Student Learning Goals and Outcomes

These goals and outcomes have changed slightly since they were proposed in the 07-08 six year report for our area. This was done with our Assessment Coordinator to bring clarity and distinction between those goals that were program improvements and those goals that were student centered. The revised versions can be found in Appendix A.

III. Data and Interpretation

A. Program Improvement Goal #2: Develop a robust Academic Advising webpage that students can use as a 24/7 resource.

Student Learning Outcome – Students will use the Academic Advising webpage as a key resource in their academic planning.

Summary of Progress: During this last year we have been working on developing the AA website from a simple question and answer page to a more
robust website including many additional features. Our revised AA website can be found at www.westmont.edu/_offices/academic_advising/index.html. So that the differences can be appreciated, the original AA website has now become our Frequently Asked Questions link on the left hand side. During this last year we have met with students and faculty members to determine what informational needs are present, and have either created or modified web pages to address those concerns. We have also referred students and faculty on an ad hoc basis to the website throughout the year, but have not put any strong effort into publicity, as it was still in development.

**Assessment Methods:** We want to have both quantity and quality measures of the websites effectiveness. In terms of quantity of users, a listing of each webpage and the number of times it was accessed from September 1, 2008-September 1, 2009 can be found in Table 3. This will serve as our baseline number. We hope to have viewership increase with each year as the site is publicized and becomes a more integral resource in the student’s academic experience.

In addition to the number of people accessing the site, it was also learned that faculty in the Computer Science department have been referring students in conversations and via e-mail to the AA website during the last year. It was encouraging to see the organic use of the site by this department and their students.

In terms of quality of the site, we will be adding a link to each page asking viewers to respond to questions about the effectiveness of that site, and suggestion additional topics to be covered. The Director of Academic Advising will also be keeping a list of questions that her advisees ask during the 2009-2010 school year, and comparing that list to the resources available on the site. At the end of the year, the department will evaluate whether additional content changes are needed.

**Data Storage:** The data storage for the number of times the webpages were accessed is within the context of this report and in e-mail form from Greg Smith to Michelle Hardley. The data storage for the kinds of advising questions students will be asking will be kept in a folder marked “Advising Questions” on the directors desk for the 2009-2010 school year, and will be added into the WASC 09-10 folder once the year is completed.

**Interpretation of the Results:** As this was the developmental year for the AA website, the results will serve as a benchmark to compare against subsequent years. It was interesting to see that the site had a fair number of views, even without publicity on a larger scale.

By far the largest usage was to the main site for the department (the index site) and to the advising appointments site. It makes sense for these two sites to receive the highest volume, given their more global focus. Students would need to enter the main site if they were navigating from the Current Students webpage, which is
the most logical way to find our department online. Students have often been referred to the advising appointments site directly by their advisors. This tends to happen when students need to schedule advising appointments just prior to registration each semester.

B. **Program Improvement Goal #5:** Examine the effectiveness of our advisor assignment methods.

**Student Learning Outcome** – Students will be able to use information given to them about the available majors to make informed choices about their potential major options.

**Summary of Progress:** Since our advisor assignment methods are based off of a student’s academic areas of interest, we spent time this year gathering initial data from two different groups of students. For the first group, which consisted of all the incoming first year and transfer students, we recorded their academic interests at two different times. The first assessment was within their application to the college (between November and February of their senior year in High School). The second assessment of academic interests was done only for those students who called into the toll free advising hotline over the summer. Comparing the data from these two time periods provided initial data on the stability of students academic interests from the time of their application to the summer prior to attending Westmont.

There were 53 students (8 transfers and 45 first year students) who called into the toll free advising hotline over the summer and were able to give us information about their major interests. Of these students, 36 students (68%, 5 transfers, 31 first years) had the same major interests as before (where at least one of the interests over the phone matched their previous interest on their application). Three students (6%, 1 transfer and 2 first years) had similar interests (where their interest over the phone was slightly different than their application interest, e.g. pre-law on the application but Political Science over the phone). There were 14 students (26%, 3 transfers, 11 first years) who had different major interests from their initial application to the phone conversation.

The second group of students was comprised of the Director of Academic Advising’s advisees. A comparison was made between the students academic interests when they applied to the college, and their current interests as of the day before school. In this group there were 39 students. Of these students, 22 had the same major interests as before (56%, all first years), 5 had similar academic interests (13%, all first years) and 10 had different academic interests (26%, 1 transfer, 9 first years). Two students (5%) failed to show for the first advising appointment, and were excluded from analysis.

**Assessment Methods:** The assessment methods for this goal have changed slightly over the last year, due in large part to discussions with our assessment coordinator and an examination of the data. Initially we focused on a definition of “effectiveness” that relied on examining student persistence in a major interest
area from their initial application to their declaration of a major. In later conversation, it was thought that this might not be an appropriate developmental benchmark for us to set. There are a number of reasons, good reasons, why a student’s intended major area may switch over the course of their first two years. Students goals and dreams may change in light of their college courses and life experiences. Changing major interests is not something we would want to discourage, since it often takes real experience with a major and the prerequisite classes for a student to determine if they have found their academic home. In light of this, we have had to rethink what “effectiveness” means when applied to our advisor assignment methods, and develop other benchmarks to measure success.

Since the program goal was intended to focus on the process of assigning advisors, not the long term outcome of those advisor assignments, it would be interesting to see how close a student’s initial major thoughts are (those indicated on their application) to their thoughts just prior to attending Westmont. It may be that there is a key time in which we can tap into their major interests which will be both valid for the students and practical given the time constraints of those making the advisor assignments.

Overlapping with goal #4, we can also look at the communication we have with our prospective students as they are applying and preparing for Westmont, to determine ways of communicating the features of each major more effectively. This information will be one piece to help us determine if our current methods of information dissemination are allowing students to make informed major decisions (which is part of goal #4).

To further this goal, we will work with the Admissions office to determine how the “academic interests” portion of the application is formatted, and see if there are ways of improving those designations. We will then take a look at data from the students entering into Westmont in the fall of 2010 to determine if our additional efforts at disseminating information have improved their ability to select longer standing areas of interest.

**Data Storage:** The data for the initial major interests is saved on Michelle Hardley’s P drive under Program Review/2008-2009. The files needed are F09 Advisor Assignment for WASC and F09 Michelle's Advisees.

**Interpretation of the Results:** For both groups of students there was relatively high congruence between their intended majors when they applied and their persistence with those major interests during the subsequent telephone calls or meetings with their advisor just prior to school. It will be interesting to see if we can improve upon the data that comes from these groups next year.

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**IV. Using the Results and Next Steps**

For goal #2 we were able to see some good initial work done on the development of the site, and some spontaneous use by various students and departments. We will continue to
keep track of the number of times this data is accessed over the next year. We will also be keeping track of the kinds of questions that students are asking, and at the end of the year, spend time evaluating whether those answers are reflected in the website content.

For goal #5 we spent a bit of time collecting initial data, and then rethinking the focus of this goal. Our current thoughts are to move away from a benchmark which calls for a certain percentage of students to persist with their original interests all the way to major declaration, and focus more on how we present the academic life of the college and when the optimal time is to ask them their intended major areas. The next steps for this area will be focused more on making sure students have a consistent message about their major opportunities from the Admissions office, and determining the most energy and cost efficient ways to poll them on their major interests. We will also spend time exploring the idea of having more generalist advisors, ones who are familiar with the first two years of all of the majors on campus, to work with those students who are truly undecided.

V. Data for Program Review

For a breakdown in the fiscal resources of the department, please refer to Appendix B (Academic Advising) and Appendix C (Disability Services).

For a breakdown of advisor assignment load across faculty, please refer to Appendix D.

VI. Timeline for Completion of the 6 Year Report

The goals for the next 5 years are below. To see our focus for progress on these goals, refer to Chart 1.

1. Program Improvement Goal: Develop a mission statement for the Academic Advising program. This statement will give a focus to the department and help guide our vision through the assessment process.
2. Program Improvement Goal: Develop a robust Academic Advising webpage that students can use as a 24/7 resource.
3. Program Improvement Goal: Develop a robust Academic Advising webpage that faculty can use as a 24/7 resource for some of the common issues they will come across in advising students.
4. Program Improvement Goal: Evaluate the process by which we inform students about our educational program.
5. Program Improvement Goal: Examine the effectiveness of our advisor assignment methods.
1. Program Improvement Goal: Develop a mission statement for the Academic Advising program. This statement will give a focus to the department and help guide our vision through the assessment process.
   - Individual Contributions – The Provost and our college catalogue will be important pieces here.
   - Methods of assessment – Discussions with faculty members after the development to see if the mission statement is compatible with their vision of academic advising. Discussions with small groups of students to assess their knowledge of the mission statement and the perceived differences within the advising relationship from high school to college.

2. Program Improvement Goal: Develop a robust Academic Advising webpage that students can use as a 24/7 resource. This website will include some of the common academic advising questions, as developed through discussions with current students across the educational levels at Westmont.
   - Student Learning Outcome – Students will access the Academic Advising webpage and use it as a resource in their academic planning.
   - Student Learning Standard – This goal is designed to target the Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement learning standard, with the sub areas of Interpersonal Competence and Responsibility
   - Individual Contributions – Involvement with students to assess their needs for information and working with the IT department on the development of the key pages.
   - Methods of assessment – Small group discussions with students at the end of the web page development and throughout the year to see if the topics cover the present concerns of our students. Also keeping track of the number of times each web page is accessed in a given academic year.

3. Program Improvement Goal: Develop a robust Academic Advising webpage that faculty can use as a 24/7 resource for some of the common issues they will come across in advising students. This website will also include information on how to advise undecided students, as well as the development of an Academic Advising syllabus for all 4 years of a students education. The topics chosen to be covered will be ones generated through discussion with our new and returning academic advisors.
   - Individual Contributions – Involvement with faculty to assess their needs for information and working with the IT department on the development of the key pages.
   - Methods of assessment – Small group discussions with faculty at the end of the web page development and throughout the year to see if the topics cover the present concerns of our faculty. Also keeping track of the number of times each web page is accessed in a given academic year.

4. Program Improvement Goal: Evaluate the process by which we inform students about our educational program. This goal will be to look at the way that we present academic life at Westmont to prospective students, and to plan
redundancies into the progression so that students have multiple points of contact with consistent messages about our academic program.

- Student Learning Outcome – Students will have an understanding of the academic policies, procedures and components of the college appropriate to their class rank. Students will be able to use information given to them about the available majors to make informed choices about their potential major options.

- Student Learning Standard – This goal will target the Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement learning standard, with the sub areas of Interpersonal Competence and Responsibility.

- Individual Contributions – The directors of Admissions and AA/DS will be necessary, as well as the individual academic counselors in the delivery and data collection for this area.

- Methods of assessment – With members of the admissions office, evaluating the written materials that are sent to prospective and confirmed students for consistency and areas where we can build in redundancies. Also evaluate the typical questions that are received from the admissions staff to see what their oral communication is regarding our academic programs and whether formal advising training is needed.

5. Program Improvement Goal: Examine the effectiveness of our advisor assignment methods. Is this the most accurate way to assign advisees, or are there better methods?

- Student Learning Outcome – Students will be able to use information given to them about the available majors to make informed choices about their potential major options.

- Student Learning Standard – This goal will influence the Christian Orientation standard, with the subarea of practices, the Critical-Interdisciplinary Thinking standard, with the sub area of collaborating, and the Diversity standard, with the subarea of process of making choices.

- Individual Contributions – This goal will require contributions from other colleges to determine alternate advisor assignment methods, the Admissions Office for data gathering on academic interests.

- Methods of assessment – Looking at the ways other schools assign incoming advisees (especially undecided’s), examining student interest designations and if there is persistence from their admissions application to their first semester. One-on-one conversations with our undecided’s to see if there are improvements that need to be made/additional training for the faculty that needs to occur.

6. Program Improvement Goal: Revision of the tool for the assessment of advisor effectiveness. Because it is used within promotion and tenure review, and has alternative uses within the assessment process for departments, it is essential that our assessment method for advisor effectiveness yield accurate, valid information on the students perceptions of our advisors.

- Individual Contributions – This goal will require contributions from other colleges for samples of their advisor assessment instruments, as well as potential involvement from the Campus Life office to help in the coordination
of small focus groups of students. It will also require the participation of students at all class ranks to determine the effectiveness of the assessment tool at summarizing their perceptions on the assessment process.

- Methods of assessment – Small group work with students to determine if the new form allows them the freedom to express the information they want to share on their advising session. Examining how many students complete the revised form versus how many completed the original one. Analyzing if the revised form yields additional details or richness from the students.