Assessment Plan
Athletics Department
January 16, 2004

The following information represents my initial efforts in crafting an assessment plan for the athletics department at Westmont College. Due to the timeline concerning the submission of reports, the focus of our office this fall has been on the Kinesiology Department. Recognizing that our staff contributes in both areas, this endeavor has received the priority in terms of conversation and process. This has been a very challenging and interesting plan to construct on behalf of athletics. We have not commonly asked ourselves the kinds of questions that we’ve been invited to through this assignment. It has generated some very poignant dialogue and my hope is to continue in this regard.

I would like to begin with the mission statement for the athletic department at Westmont:

1) To honor God in our efforts and interactions, both in and out of the athletic arena.
2) To provide our student athletes with the opportunity for a life changing and life shaping experience.
3) To compete at the highest level of our capability.

This seems to be the starting place as we ask ourselves the fundamental question: “You say you want to do A, B, C (or, as it were, 1, 2, 3), then what are the evidences that you are in fact doing A, B, C?” Our Mission Statement represents what we desire for our athletic program. The “knowing and identifying” of whether we are accomplishing these objectives is an entirely different matter altogether. How have we known in the past whether or not we have been successful in this quest? Mostly, I suppose, from the testimonies of our athletes, especially as they become alumni and distance themselves a bit from their time at Westmont and from those who watch our athletes compete. Although there is great value in these reflections, this assessment plan calls us too much more.

Before attempting to answer that fundamental question, it is important to consider the mission statement of Westmont College and the points of connection that are strongly supported by our department. As you consider our mission statement above, I believe it aligns very solidly with three components of our institutional vision. Our desire to foster growth related to…

1) **Christian Commitments** (#1 of our statement).
   - We will call this **Christian character**.
2) **Healthy personal development** (#2 of our statement).
   - We will call this **Self-understanding**.
3) **A high quality liberal arts program** (#3 of our statement).
   - We will call this **Gifts and abilities**.
In this way, I believe our mission statement and that of the college meshes nicely and encourages me concerning our role in supporting the academic program of which we are a vital and complimentary component. In addition, when you consider the Student Learning Standards, the athletic department can and does make contributions in each area, with research and technology standard being the possible exception.

We have not, however, taken our departmental objectives any further than this. Hence, the need to develop a goal statement that is consistent with our mission statement and the specific and desired learning outcomes becomes the challenge of this invitation. Our goal statement would be as follows:

"Within the athletic department of Westmont College, it is our desire to partner with our coaches and student athletes in the following three areas, prompted by the following questions:

1) Christian character: "What did you learn about God?"
2) Self-understanding: "What did you come to know about yourself?"
3) Gifts and abilities: "Were you able to maximize your talents?"

For each of these categories/questions, we would identify the following as desired learning outcomes for our students:

1) Christian character:
   - Define what it means to be a Christian competitor, through team dialogue and coach directed conversation.
   - Develop mature role models through our student leadership program.
2) Self-understanding:
   - Deepen self-understanding through both written and verbal reflections.
   - Identify ways that lives have been changed and shaped through peer evaluation.
3) Gifts and abilities:
   - Recognize one’s strengths and through personal inventories.
   - Construct avenues through which talents can be fully maximized, both on and off the field."
In order to gather information that would support or refute whether these desired outcomes are being achieved, I would suggest that the following three measures be adopted:

1) Pre and post essays and interviews with each athlete in our program.
2) Video documentation of the Golden Eagle Award Banquet (this banquet honors the top student athlete in each of our intercollegiate programs).
3) Alumni Surveys (as stated at the beginning of this document, much of our current feedback regarding the effectiveness if our program comes from former student/athletes who share their journey reflections with us).

I respectively submit this report with a good dose of apprehension. While I do believe that much of what I have described above happens on a regular basis in our department, I do hesitate to require our coaches to in fact prove this is all taking place. It is not because we have something to hide or that I privately question the validity of our departmental claims. Nor do I wish to convey that I view this expanded programming as burdensome. I do, however, recognize the considerable challenge that intercollegiate coaching is. At this juncture I would humbly ask for the committees help. Is it reasonable or even productive to set our sails in this direction? Would there be a more effective way, a cleaner or simpler way of both assessing and collecting information? Fundamentally, am I even on the right track? I am completely open to your feedback and will anxiously communicate with our department concerning your findings.