Introduction:

This process of program review has been challenging to say the least. With each assignment, my thoughts are sifted through this grid of self-assessment yet again and I find myself re-thinking, re-crafting, and re-directing the path of our department in order to fully satisfy the demands required. At times this process has brought greater clarity and, at times, deep confusion and great frustration. At the beginning of the process it was like trying to build a model car without any instructions (my own fault, by the way). In addition, I have done a poor job of drawing other people into this process. I think this revision is a move in the right direction, but I still feel as if there is a long way to go. I’m hopeful that the ultimate outcomes will serve both the college as a whole and, more specifically, the athletic department.

Looking back on my initial efforts to author this assessment plan, I naturally started with the mission statement that we had developed for our department. However, I have found that, prior to that mission statement, there are two fundamental questions that must be asked. The first is, “What are the goals for the athletic department at Westmont College?” In light of this question, I have been really wrestling with our mission statement. Does our mission statement really communicate the goals we have for our department? I have concluded that it does, but only partially. This incompleteness has hindered my ability to fully grasp the objectives of this project. As a result, much of what I have offered has been totally inadequate and poorly constructed. The language I have used has been that of cliché rather than substantive goals and data.

Although this has been a source of discouragement, I think some light is beginning to emerge. It has caused me to return to the mission statement time and time again and ask; “Do these accurately represent our intents for student athletes at Westmont College? Is there a better way of describing these intents? What are we actually trying to assess and what methodology is most appropriate/realistic in accomplishing this?” These have all been good questions to consider and, if nothing else, I feel sharper as I honestly search for answers.

As a result, our mission statement has been re-shaped as follows:

1) To grow deeper in our relationship with God, and our understanding of how to honor him through athletic competition.
2) To provide student athletes the opportunity for a life shaping experience.
3) To encourage student athletes to fully immerse themselves in the life of the college.
4) To consistently compete at the highest level sponsored by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA).
While these thoughts might look nice mounted on a wall, for our purposes, there is a second fundamental question that must be examined; “What exactly should I be assessing?” The challenge here seems to be getting from your broad, brush stroke goals to the specifics of assessment. While the mission statement helps set the context, it does not, in every case, provide enough detail to also function as a program goal.

**Describe Program Goal:**

1) To grow deeper in our relationship with God, and our understanding of how to honor him through athletic competition.

2) To provide student athletes the opportunity for a life shaping experience.

It goes without saying that some goals will be more difficult to assess than others due to their subjective nature. However, I don’t think subjectivity makes it an inappropriate goal. I have chosen to couple our first two program goals due to the natural crossover between them.

**Summarize Assessment Methods and Collected Data:**

As a department, we have identified the Golden Eagle Scholar Athlete Award Banquet as our method for assessing this program goal. The Golden Eagle is an event held annually each spring and honors the top scholar athlete in each of our twelve intercollegiate programs. Each recipient is asked to prepare some brief remarks, which speak to their experience as student athletes at Westmont College. I have chosen three vignettes, which speak specifically to the aforementioned program goals. I believe this particular venue works well in assessment because these particular student athletes have been challenged to prepare thoughts that accurately articulate their athletic and academic journeys and the learning that has taken place.

The Golden Eagle DVD is housed in the “Program Review” file in the athletic director’s office.

**Interpret the Results:**

I believe that the Golden Eagle Student Athlete DVD communicates what the successful attainment of our first two program goals. The following are excerpts from the spring, 2005, Golden Eagle Student Athlete award banquet:

“In my past, there have been people who have inspired me to learn and develop my mind, but Russell (Coach Smelley, Cross Country/Track and Field Coach) has been the first person to show me the value of developing and living with character. The way he lives and the tings he stands for have been truly valuable.
Lastly, I want to share a reflection with you on the last four years. I’ve been looking back on this time, and a theme that seems to underlie all its various aspects, including class work and running and, strangely, this theme is not something I would have immediately suspected. This theme over the past four years has been the exercise of learning what faith is. By faith I do not just mean an intellectual acceptance of certain ideas. I can’t completely describe it, but I mean faith as a way of living. I think it is the substance Jesus would refer to when he told people, ‘Your faith has made you well.’ My time at Westmont has been a time of learning the meaning of faith through the small matters involved with various things as homework, interactions with professors and coaches, training and racing. I realize I still have much to learn about faith and it has been a challenging journey. But I’m also beginning to learn that it is an undertaking that need not be done alone. I’m grateful for all of you I’ve been able to work alongside with these last four years. In closing, thank you for this award and I’d like to end with the words of the Psalmist:

‘Praise the Lord, all ye nations.
Extol him, all ye peoples, for great is his steadfast love towards us.
The faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.’

What does this data mean in light of our program goals? I think it means that this young man has grown deeper in his relationship with God and has, at least minimally, considered what it means to honor his creator through athletic competition. In addition, there is good evidence that his coach (in this case, Russell Smelley) has contributed to this deepened understanding through life modeling (“Russell has been the first person to show me the value of developing and living with character). I think this first excerpt serves as concrete data for the first program goal.

The following excerpt, I believe, speaks to the second program goal for our department.

“I wanted to talk about how I’ve been growing, especially in the past year. College is a really strange time, so much self-discovery and growth occurs here. By the time we leave, we are not the same people we came in as. I’ve been noting during my time here that there are basically two roads we can take in education. One road appears to be the easier road. This road is less focused on the classroom and more focused on relationships and the other road is the road of the professional student. The first road usually seems to be chosen by freshmen and seems to be a popular choice. There are a lot of benefits to this road as well. People on this road of education realize no one is going to care what your GPA was after you leave college, so they focus their lives not solely on the classroom but the time and the people that they can enjoy outside of classes. Unfortunately, I think this path is hard to follow because of today’s culture. Culture tells us that busyness is a sign of prosperity as a reflection of one’s character and self and I think that is a shame. I think that making your classes a priority but not your life can have great benefits.

The second road is the road of the professional student. This embodies many of the students at Westmont. Most of the students here are committed to the classroom, excel,
and love to learn. But it is a lot of commitment and it would be hard to balance school and other things when you are on this road.

That is why I think the third road, the middle road, is the hardest to follow, and it has taken me two years to learn to travel on this road. It is a road of balance, a balance of faith, family, athletics and friends. Robert Frost wrote:

“Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper and self-confidence.”

I think the trick to traveling on this road is learning to be satisfied with myself, realizing that God is in control and I am his beloved and he cannot be any more pleased with me than he already is. Athletics here played a major role in traveling this path. I don’t know where I would be without the friends I have made on the team. Athletics taught me to keep going and keep showing up even when it was the last thing I wanted to do. Practices forced me to take time off from studying and enjoy the health and the gift God has given me.”

This young lady is having the kind of “experience” that we are aiming for. Athletics has been a contributor to shaping who she is. Her experience has, at times, been very difficult. This fact is important to note when considering the experiential opportunities offered by athletics. They can be very hard, often times exposing us for who we really are. This is good learning. Personal, hard to quantify, but very good.

Allow me to offer one last excerpt.

“I realized recently that the past four years I’ve been unwrapping this huge gift. And it has not been from my parents; it’s not from Dr. Gaede (Westmont President), it’s not from my coaches, it’s not from my friends, though each of these people have contributed to making this gift so special. The gift I’m referring to is my experience at Westmont College, and I believe it has come from God. And though this gift is not tangible, I can’t necessarily point a finger to it or see it, I have a good idea of what it looks like. It’s a tennis racquet, worn and scratched from years of use and abuse! It’s also a road trip, sitting next to coach and learning life lessons and, at times, laughing so hard we’re in tears. It’s a conversation over lunch with a professor, one of those moments where I stop and say ‘Oh,’ and things make a little more sense. It’s cookies and half a gallon of milk shared with close friends at 2:00 am, the night before an Old Testament exam. It is a three-hour tennis march in the heat of the day, coming up just short of a win. It’s a battle with depression. It’s a new set of eyes through which to see the world and see the maker of the world. It’s the times of joy and sorrow, both of which are times of growth. And all of these encompass the gift and now, looking back, I can see it for what it is.”

In addition to providing data relative to the goals of our department, this event also speaks directly to the **Christian Orientation Standard**, one of the benchmark targets for a Westmont College graduate. These excerpts provide substantive evidence, especially related to the desired outcomes of **affections** and **virtues**.
This data indicates that these student athletes are connecting God to their athletic experience, first and foremost as the “giver of all good gifts.” They recognize that their talent comes from him and that, through the cauldron of athletic competition, there is an opportunity for growth and development. They are also able to identify the usefulness of these character qualities as they evaluate other areas of life.

There are also components of the Diversity Standard evidenced here. When considering the desired outcome of self-reflection, these students demonstrate an ability to process a variety of moments. In this case, the influencer is athletics (as opposed to social class, gender, ethnicity, culture, or historical moment) but, nevertheless, it provides a lens through which deep self-reflection can take place. In addition, the athletic team becomes one of the more likely places (certainly not the only place) on campus where a student athlete might develop the “understanding and skills to engage people unlike themselves.”

If the goal of the Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement Standard is developing Westmont graduates who possess the “skills, attitudes and commitments that enable them to be effective in both their personal and vocational lives throughout all stages of their lives,” then I think Westmont Athletics can play an important role. I know of three prominent employers in Santa Barbara who are all currently employing former Westmont College athletes, primarily due to their interpersonal competence their sense of responsibility, and their well-developed skill set for lifelong learning. In fact, I would venture to guess that there are many employers who will not even consider hiring you unless you have had some semblance of athletic experience (ok, I’m a bit tired and probably over stating things).

This data also supports the overall mission of Westmont College in addressing the areas of healthy personal development and strong Christian commitments.

Using the Results:

Although I believe the Golden Eagle testimonials provide substantive evidence that our first two program goals are being reached, it also represents a limited sampling of our student athlete population. As we are encouraged by the words and insights of these bright students, we ought to be considering other ways that these opportunities might be made available to a larger cross section of our athlete population. I will be encouraging our staff (head coaches) to consider offering these types of speaking opportunities at their individual year-end sport banquets (each of our intercollegiate teams would typically end their year with a culminating banquet).

Describe Program Goal:

1) That athletes receiving athletically related financial aid would graduate at or above the graduation rate for the general student population.
2) That the cumulative grade point average for all student athletes would be 3.0 or above
The third prong of the mission statement (To encourage student athletes to fully immerse themselves in the life of the college) needs to be more narrowly focused. There are many ways this might take place. However, I have chosen to focus on two specific components within the academic life of the student; graduation rates for those receiving athletically related financial aid Vs the general student body and cumulative grade point average for all Westmont College athletes. As with the first program goal(s), I have chosen to list these together due to the natural overlap.

**Summarize Assessment Methods and Collected Data:**

The data that I have compiled has been provided by William A. Wright (Associate Provost, Director, Off-Campus Programs) and comes to me in the form of the Congress mandated Student Right-to-Know Act (SRTKA), “which requires colleges and universities to disclose to perspective students information pertaining to financial aid and graduation rates of all students and student athletes.”

According to the data provided by Mr. Wright and assessing the four year average (cohort years: 1995-1998), Westmont College student athletes who receive athletically related aid currently graduate at a higher rate than the general student population (Athletic average-76%, all students-69%) for full-time, first-time, degree-seeking students.

According to this data, we are successfully accomplishing our goals related to prong three of our mission statement. We are also supporting the objective of **rigorous intellectual competence**, as identified by our institutional mission statement. This data indicates that student athletes are immersing themselves in their academic pursuits in a way that is equally if not more competitive than the members of our general student population.

Westmont College Registrar Bob Kuntz has provided information regarding student athlete grade point average. In all sports, the data provided indicates that the cumulative grade point average in 2003-2004 was 3.12, with the GPA in 2004-2005 at 3.16.

In order to retain athletic eligibility, a Westmont College student athlete must maintain a GPA of 2.0 or above (along with some other unit completion criteria). Setting our benchmark at 3.0 seemed an appropriate way of challenging both our athletes and coaches to strive for marks well beyond minimal standards. The data supplied by Mr. Kuntz indicates that Westmont athletes are achieving at a respectable level in the classroom and are taking their roles as students seriously.

As an aside, I did follow through on the PRC’s recommendation to analyze in season Vs out of season academic performance. I analyzed the transcripts of the three “pure” fall sports (men’s and women’s soccer, women’s volleyball) and the three “pure” spring sports (men’s and women’s tennis, men’s baseball). I chose not to evaluate men’s and
women’s basketball (due to the fact that their season crosses the semester break) or cross country/track and field (due to the fact that so many cross country athletes who run in the fall also compete for the track and field team in the spring). The data indicated that, in most cases, athletes at Westmont performed better during their out of season semester.

**Interpret the Results:**

According to the data provided by Mr. Wright, we are successfully accomplishing our program goal of graduating our student athletes (who receive athletically related financial aid) at an equal or higher rate than the all student population. We are also supporting the objective of **rigorous intellectual competence**, as identified by our institutional mission statement. This data indicates that student athletes are immersing themselves in their academic pursuits in a way that is equally if not more competitive than the members of our general student population.

According to the data provided by Mr. Kuntz, our student athletes are successful reaching our program goal of a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above. In order to retain athletic eligibility, a Westmont College student athlete must maintain a GPA of 2.0 or above (along with some other unit completion criteria). Setting our benchmark at 3.0 seemed an appropriate way of challenging both our athletes and coaches to strive for marks well beyond minimal standards. The data supplied by Mr. Kuntz indicates that Westmont athletes are achieving at a respectable level in the classroom and are taking their roles as students seriously.

Granted, there are many other ways we might measure “full immersion” in the life of the college. The highly residential nature of Westmont reinforces the optimal target that all students to be fully integrated into campus life. Over time, perhaps other measures will emerge that enhance our ability to evaluate this objective.

**Using the Results:**

Certainly one use of the results would be to affirm our coaches and athletes in their academic endeavors. Their marks do reflect well on the athlete population. The larger question is “What would we do if our athletes were not achieving at the levels we have identified in our program goals?” Frankly, I don’t know the answer to that question. Our coaches each do a good job of providing academic accountability for their teams. However, these program goals need to be made more public in nature.

**Describe Program Goal:**

1) Each intercollegiate head coach will choose one of the following projects, whichever would work most effectively in his or her sport:

a) Player Portfolio project:

b) Video analysis project:
The primary goal of this project will be for each head coach to document what he or she is learning about his or her athlete’s development.

The final prong of the mission statement (To consistently compete at the highest level sponsored by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics) is, on the one hand, quite simple to assess and, on the other hand, quite difficult. Simply put, to achieve this objective an intercollegiate team must qualify for its sports national competition (which vary in structure from sport to sport). On a national scale, the Director’s Cup ranking allocates points to any team that competes on this level. Historically, out of roughly three hundred NAIA schools, Westmont has competed very well. The following table reflects recent finishes for Westmont in the Director’s Cup standings:

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>96-97</td>
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Obviously, the trend has taken a downward turn and we have struggled to achieve the same kind of success that we have come to expect. Starting in 03-04, we identified that we were not reaching this particular component of our mission statement. Part of the reason (but certainly not the only reason) was that, institutionally, our athletic scholarship money was not keeping pace with the rapidly increasing costs of tuition. As a result, on March 5, 2004, a significant scholarship proposal was submitted to the college administration (more detailed comments regarding this proposal and the ensuing process are noted in the September 23, 2005 Assessment Plan Update). Realistically, we would like to consistently place in the top 15 every year.

Beyond the Director’s Cup standings, there are other ways to evaluate our ability to achieve the results we desire. We could take a look at the number of teams that qualify each year for national level competition. During the 04-05 academic year _ teams advanced to this level. While as many as 9 teams (out of 12) have reached the national level in a single year, is there a target number (or % of teams) that might be more reasonable to aim for?

Similar to the third mission statement objective, it seems we need a narrowing of focus here, something more specific to the day-to-day relationship between our coaches and athletes. In order for our teams to reach the levels we aspire to, their needs to be a foundational component that can be really picked apart, analyzed, digested, and tested. In
other words, simply asking for more money as a way to address our competitive deficiencies is not enough. We need to do a better job of coaching the athletes that we already have at Westmont.

**Summarize Assessment Methods and Collected Data:**

Towards that end, Kathy LeSage (women’s tennis coach) will be initiating a **player portfolio project** during the 06 women’s tennis season. The purpose of maintaining this portfolio is as follows:

“To assess the growth and development (spiritual, skill and knowledge of the sport, relational, academic, etc) of the player on and off the court/field.”

The portfolio will have the following inclusions:

- Westmont Athletics Mission Statement
- Player Portfolio Project Description
- General Questionnaire
- Match Analysis Chart
- End of Season Overview
- Media Related Reports (media guides, newspaper articles, internet stories)

The **video analysis project** will be comprised of an athlete-maintained training and game log, providing the coach with the opportunity to add comments of feedback based on video analysis. This project will be launched in the fall, 06.

Where I am unclear here is what volume ought to be required. My sense is that this project should encompass one athlete per season. To maintain a portfolio or training log for every player on the team would be, in my opinion, extremely difficult to do.

Lastly, I do think it is important to make a good faith effort in capturing the thoughts of our athletic alumni. I’m so convinced that some separation from the college experience can be exceedingly helpful in helping discern whether our goals were effectively reached.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, I would re emphasize the goals that we have for the athletic department, communicated within the framework of our mission statement:

1) To grow deeper in our relationship with God, and our understanding of how to honor him through athletic competition.

2) To provide student athletes the opportunity for a life shaping experience.
3) To encourage student athletes to fully immerse themselves in the life of the college.
   - That athletes receiving athletically related financial aid would graduate at or above the graduation rate of the general student population.
   - That the cumulative grade point average for all student athletes would be 3.0 or above.

4) To consistently compete at the highest level sponsored by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA).
   - That each coach would choose either the portfolio project or the video analysis project as a way documenting what he or she is learning about his or her athlete’s development.

My hope is that this revision is a better equips the athletic department to move forward in a positive, focused, and constructive way.

Respectfully Submitted,

David G. Wolf
Athletic Director
Head Men’s Soccer Coach
Westmont College