Introduction
As noted in reports filed over the past couple of years, we have undergone significant change in the department. As an outcome of this change, we have re-drafted our mission statement, we have created a new website, and we are currently engaged in big-picture program review – which means we are examining our curriculum, our goals for our students, and what is realistically possible and sustainable given our resources in the foreseeable future. We also spent this year gearing up for our six-year program review.

Mission Statement
*Sapientia et Eloquencia*. In this timeless phrase promoted by Cicero, St. Augustine and others, the Department of Communication Studies finds its mission, to educate students toward the union of wisdom and eloquence, recognizing the limited impact of wisdom without eloquence and the social harm that comes from eloquence without wisdom.

We are committed to helping students become wise analysts regarding the techniques and structures of human influence in a globally-oriented, media-saturated culture. We intend for our students to be informed by Scripture and able to draw upon resources in the historic discipline of Communication Studies.

We are committed to helping students become eloquent in mind and heart and speech, articulate and compassionate implementers of their wisdom. We intend for our students to be able to present ideas well and to imitate Christ by practicing reconciliation.

Program Review
We hired Dr. Em Griffin, Professor Emeritus at Wheaton College, to serve as a consultant for our department. We chose him because he is a good scholar at a sister institution, an expert in group process, the author of an important, well regarded, and top-selling textbook in communication that introduces communication theories to undergraduate students (a textbook we use in our introductory course at Westmont), and familiar to our faculty. We asked him to help us come together as a department; we recognized that we are all very different kinds of people and scholars, but we want to forge a unified vision for the department. We want to work well together and provide our students with the best possible education. He took his task very seriously and gave us some good advice, as well as helped us to work out our agreements with and among
each other. He also helped us begin the journey toward curriculum review and revision. His report is attached.

We believe this is a good start toward formulating goals, outcomes, and curricula that we will all have a “stake” in and be excited about pursuing.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

We continued the conversation regarding student learning outcomes, attempting to state goals, outcomes, and assessment indicators for each. We attempted to come up with goals that came directly from our mission statement. We soon discovered, however, that we had other goals that were not necessarily part of our mission, and this conversation became a bit unwieldy. Given that we were still envisioning the entire major, and that our incoming chair was on sabbatical in the spring, we therefore decided to take up the specific outcomes question in the first month of the Fall 2008 semester.

Nevertheless, as of the end of Summer 2008, we were in the midst of revising our goals and outcomes. This is where we were as of the start of Fall 2008:

*The Communication Studies Department wants its graduates to be able to:*

1. **Analyze human symbolic action wisely:** Students will attain undergraduate-level knowledge in Communication Studies, including material in the following areas:

   *History*
   *General approaches and major theories*
   *Research findings*
   *Ethical and theological foundations*

2. **Practice eloquent communication:** Students will come to communication situations with greater competence in the following areas:

   *Theological principles*
   *Other-centered attentiveness*
   *Discernment for wise effectiveness*
   *Skills for wise effectiveness*

3. **Live in community compassionately:** Students will enter post-Westmont culture with greater commitments in the following areas:
**Biblical and disciplinary values that build community**

* A thorough-going love as God’s commissioned citizens
* Being agents of reconciliation
* Projecting a prophetic voice when necessary

**Data and Interpretation**

We decided to focus on two areas for assessment in 2008-2009: skills for wise effectiveness and research findings.

We collected (Spring 2008) research papers from seniors in mass communication. These papers will be analyzed in 2008-2009, using the rubric developed in 2006 (see attached).

We plan to use the National Communication Association’s assessment tool for students in the public speaking course.

**Next Steps**

Based upon our departmental and individual goals, our agreements with one another, and our 2008-2009 Program Review Timeline, we plan to continue to do the following:

- Continue to draft and revise our student learning outcomes, obtaining feedback from the Program Review Committee and other interested stakeholders, such as alumni
- Continue to use, validate, and revise, if necessary, our rubric for papers
- Continue work on revising the major curriculum with a goal to complete changes before 2009-2010 catalog copy is due
Consultant’s Report on April 4-5 Consultation

Communication Studies Department, Westmont College

Submitted by Em Griffin

In anticipation of the upcoming 2008-2009 departmental review, the four faculty members of the Communication Studies Dept. requested that I meet with them to facilitate a discussion identifying the strengths, weaknesses, and character of the Department and to initiate a decision-making process as to who they wanted to be. In discussion with the Chair, I set up a multiphase process:

1. I received copies of the Department’s recently crafted mission statement, catalogue copy that included course descriptions and requirements to major or minor in Communication the curriculum vitae for each faculty member, the Department of Communication Studies 2005 Program Review and Assessment Plan, and the subsequent actions taken in response to that plan.

2. After studying this material, I conducted 30-60 minute telephone interviews with the Department’s four full-time faculty, Deborah Dunn (Chair), Greg Spencer, Omedi Ochieng, and Lisa Stern. These discussions took place the week before I came to the campus. In response to my question concerning what they would like to see come out of the face-to-face discussion, all members expressed a desire to achieve an open and honest dialogue that would go beyond what they had experienced together up to this point. For most of them, a transparent discussion among each other seemed to be more important than the end work-product achieved. Each expressed concern that others might remain silent and/or that someone would be hurt if others spoke their minds. The image that came to mind was of four faculty members working hard in their own silos, sometimes discussing matters with their Chair, but not with each other.

3. I came to campus at 1:00pm on Friday, April 4th. I met Lisa Sterns for lunch and then conducted her Messages, Meaning and Culture class (COM 6) in order to get an initial impression of Westmont students in general, and communication students in particular. Following the class, the four department faculty members and I went to an off-campus site to meet together from 3:15-5:45. After a brief introduction to the process, I asked each member to respond to the following question: “Without talking about the feasibility of getting what you wish for or dream of, what would you like the Communication Studies Department to look like two years from now?” Faculty members were encouraged to think about the question in terms of their dream for students, faculty, curriculum, and other features of department life. Although faculty members used a variety of terms to describe their hopes for the department, four goals were voiced, discussed, and endorsed by all four participants:

A. Faculty member comfort with curricular offerings and course requirements for students to major or minor in communication studies; faculty personally satisfied with the courses they are teaching and with their role in the department.
B. Close relationships within a community that knows and appreciates the work, life stories, and commitments of each faculty member.

C. An intellectual culture that fosters a community of scholarship, where rigorous academic work is pursued and valued.

D. Students with a global awareness who apply what they learn in cross-cultural settings off-campus in Santa Barbara, in minority group settings, or internationally.

In the time remaining time, department members offered their initial suggestions as to how to achieve the first three goals.

4. At 5:45 we left to have a leisurely dinner at an upscale restaurant. We agreed not to talk about classes, students, or college matters. After we ordered I asked department members to recount a specific event in his or her life that others needed to know in order to more fully understand and appreciate who they are. I further suggested that after telling their story, they also interpret the event—explain the meaning it had for them. I first modeled the process by discussing an event from my life. Although I first suggested that each of us take five minutes for the process, the stories and the questions and comments they stimulated extended well into the main course. I regard the personal transparency and support expressed during the two and half hour meal as a vital part of furthering Goal B listed above.

5. On Saturday morning we met at the same off-campus site from 8:00-12:15.

At the start of the session, I asked each faculty member to “check in”—express his or her reactions to the Friday session and dinner. They were encouraged by their agreement on goals and expressed appreciation for what they had learned about each other at the dinner table. I then laid out the agenda centering on determining ways to meet the four goals they had set on Friday afternoon. In order that they would enter into the subsequent discussion with a sense of personal responsibility and focus, I asked them to prioritize the time we spent on each segment. They scheduled the largest portion of time to discuss how to achieve Goal A—the structure of the curriculum, requirements for students to major in Communication Studies, and course assignments so that all members were satisfied with the excellence of the program and comfortable with their role in it.

During their discussion the faculty members reached the following agreements:

- Greg, Omedi, Lisa, and Deborah agree that Messages, Meaning and Culture (06), Public Speaking (15), Introduction to Communication Research (98), and Theories of Rhetoric I (101) will be the courses required for all Communication Studies majors.

- Omedi, Lisa, Deborah, and Greg agree that Theories of Rhetoric II (102) will be an elective course.

- Lisa, Deborah, Greg and Omedi agree that as much as possible, required courses should be taught by different faculty, a practice that will make it likely that most students
majoring in Communication Studies will take a course from each of the four fulltime faculty members.

- Deborah, Greg, Omedi, and Lisa agree that Rhetoric is, and should be, a concentration within the department. They also agree that the department should seriously explore offering another concentration.

- Greg, Omedi, Lisa, and Deborah agree that for the immediate future, the credit hours required for the a student to graduate as a Communication Studies major will not exceed 44 hours. They also agree to revisit this question in future discussions.

- Omedi, Lisa, Deborah, and Greg agree there will be four faculty sessions during the academic year where each department member will in turn present a substantive academic paper to the other three for their consideration, comment, and critique.

At the end of the Saturday morning session, I gave department members the chance to publicly say something specific to each of their colleagues. The messages revealed an increased appreciation of each other, as well as recognition of each scholar’s value and centrality in achieving the goals that they mutually hold for the Communication Studies program at Westmont.

7. Based on the department materials I read, my preconsultation phone conversations, and the 12 hours of face-to-face contact I had with faculty members of the Westmont Communication Studies Department at Westmont College, I offer the following observations and recommendations.

**a. Diversity:** The diversity among the four full-time faculty of the Communication Studies Department is wide-ranging and commendable. The two men, two women composition offers an optimum gender mix. In a college where the racial make-up of the student body is overwhelmingly Caucasian, the presence of a black African scholar brings an intercultural perspective to the campus, and the department’s courses. There is also an intellectual diversity among the four faculty members. Each received a Ph. D. from different, highly respected institutions. Greg Spenser is a rhetorician who has also published well-regarded fiction. Omedi Ochieng is also a rhetorician, but with an emphasis different from Greg’s and a publishing record of a different nature. Lisa Stern trained under Judee Burgoon in a rigorous interpersonal communication research program, whereas Deborah Dunn is equally comfortable undertaking social scientific or interpretive research. When fully utilized, this diversity will serve students well by modeling multiple ways to be a Christian scholar and communication practitioner rather than giving the impression that there is only one way for Christians to think and practice communication.

**b. Course Offerings:** With a few exceptions, I believe the department is offering the right courses to achieve its mission at a Christian liberal arts college. The offerings in rhetorical studies are rich. The two upper-division rhetoric courses, argumentation and advocacy,
communication criticism, and studies in public discourse are over and above what one might reasonably be expected in a small department. Within the field of what is often labeled interpersonal or face-to-face communication, the courses offered in interpersonal communication, small group communication, persuasion (to the extent that it is taught from an “effects” perspective), and reconciliation and conflict are essential. In actual terms of course offerings, the area of media studies is relatively absent. Other than the course in mass communication, there is no other single course dedicated to this area. According to the course description, the communication ethics course focuses mainly on mediated communication and the rhetoric courses include some discussion of television and film, but the overall course work doesn’t focus on this important area within the field of communication. I offer these additional observations and suggestions:

- When faculty are involved in six different course preparations during the school year—which most of them are—their load is much heavier than if they were teaching repeat offerings.

- The faculty need to analyze the goal and content of the senior seminar. If it doesn’t fulfill a necessary and unique role in the department’s mission, it shouldn’t be offered.

- The number of discrete course offerings is high for a department of four fulltime faculty. If a course is not offered at least every other year, it shouldn’t be listed.

- It is currently unrealistic to assume that a stand-alone elective course in African rhetoric will appeal to Westmont students. However, a course in cross-cultural communication would fill a gap in the curriculum, and a continual comparison between African and Western thought and practice could be an important feature of that course.

- Faculty desire for students to have off-campus and/or cross-cultural experience (Goal D) could be met with increased encouragement and emphasis on internships. At other Christian liberal arts colleges, full-time department faculty members are the internship advisors. This promotes an integration of faith, learning, and practice, as well as stronger faculty student relationships.

- The syllabus for each course should be specific about day-to-day assignments and activities to the extent that students know the instructor’s plans and expectations right from the start.

c. Faculty Interaction: Based on faculty members’ descriptions of their working relationships and their knowledge of each others’ specific scholarship and activities apart from teaching, I recommend that they take a variety of steps to be more interactive with each other. Their agreement to have four sessions during the year where each presents a scholarly paper is a good start. Deborah and Omedi cooperation on the off-campus summer program is another big plus. I believe, however, that there needs to be more discussion and coordination than can be achieved in a once-a-month faculty meeting. With their department review agenda in the 2008-2009 academic year, a weekly department meeting would be wise. In a normal year, every other week meetings would be appropriate. Given the department’s strong emphasis on rhetoric, students
would benefit if Greg and Omedi systematically conferred on course content, pedagogy, and offered mutual encouragement to each other. I would also encourage faculty members to take advantage of an open-door policy by occasionally “popping in” to each others’ office for a few minutes to strengthen academic and interpersonal ties. A once or twice-a-year social function with no academic agenda could also increase department cohesiveness.

**A concluding note:** Prior to this consultation, I had scant knowledge of Westmont’s Communication Studies program and faculty. The written documentation sent to me was thorough and informative. Faculty members were both transparent and optimistic in our phone conversations prior to my coming to campus. When we met together each member took the process seriously and each was open to changes suggested by others. Deborah, Greg, Omedi, and Lisa demonstrated that they are sincere Christians who are knowledgeable in their discipline and care deeply about their students.

Many students at Wheaton college consider taking a semester at Westmont. Based upon my experience with the faculty and the Communication Studies program at Westmont, I will heartily recommend that they do so. The program is good and the faculty are committed to making it better. Interaction with one or more of these Christian scholars will help them become more sophisticated and enthusiastic in their communication study and practice.