COMMUNICATION STUDIES DEPARTMENT ASSESSMENT PLAN

BACKGROUND

After reviewing our earlier self-study, we recognized current strengths in “Christian Orientation” and “Written and Oral Communication” and decided that we most wanted to make improvements in the areas of “Interdisciplinary Thinking,” “Active Societal Engagement,” and “Diversity.”

GOALS

I. CRITICAL AND INTERDISCIPLINARY THINKING: Improve our students’ understanding and ability to articulate the importance of the discipline of communication studies, especially in relationship to the other disciplines on campus. Just as Westmont students are not always able to explain the value of a liberal arts education (though they have clearly benefited from it), students in Communication Studies sometimes struggle to articulate the contribution of the discipline in a Christian liberal arts context.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

A. Write a mission statement for the department.

B. Create assignments in COM 006 (Messages, Meaning and Culture) and COM 98 (Communication Research) that require students to articulate the role of the discipline [006] and research specific to the discipline [098] in the academic and wider worlds.

C. Provide readings that assist students in the above assignments.

D. Create an assignment for COM 190 (Practicum) that requires students to prepare for explaining their major and their liberal arts education to prospective employers.

II. ACTIVE SOCIETAL AND INTELLECTUAL ENGAGEMENT: Involve our students more consistently in research that takes them off-campus. Over the years, we have become increasingly motivated to help students get experiences beyond those available to them on the Westmont campus. We want our students to learn better how to adjust to a more varied world (our concern here overlaps with the diversity standard), to see communication theory at work, and to serve the local community in their research.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

A. Insure that at least one course in every category on the list of requirements for the major (Core courses, Relational Communication, Mass Communication, etc.) requires off-campus activity.
B. Create a variety of assignments that dovetail with course content. For example, some assignments might include specific service activities for local organizations, while others may involve interviewing members of local populations unlike themselves, including people from different socio-economic categories, or different religious or moral orientations.

III. DIVERSITY: Enrich our students’ exposure to literature that addresses topics of difference. Although we believe that we have provided a good number of readings in this area, we would like to more systematically review our offerings, checking for readings that speak from a variety of non-traditional voices as well as readings that raise issues of diversity directly.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

A. Meet on a semi-regular basis as a department to make goals and share resources and insights.

B. Require instructors for all courses to review current readings and make adjustments when necessary.

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

I. Survey students in introductory courses (COM 006, 15, 98) and again as graduating seniors. The survey will assess disciplinary articulation as well as intercultural and rhetorical sensitivities.

II. Compare reading lists from 2001 to reading lists that will exist 2 years from now (2006-2007). This gives us a window of change over a 5-year period.

III. Develop a proficiency exam for seniors that will test basic elements of style, disciplinary literacy, and research fundamentals, beginning as pilot program in Fall 2004, and to start as required element in Fall 2005