Background:

1. As noted in the original departmental plan there are two overlapping, but bureaucratically distinct, programs run out of the Department of Education:

   (a) the Liberal Studies major (pre-elementary education); and

   (b) the Teacher Preparation [AKA: Credential] Program

(The latter includes elementary and secondary students; also includes students who have not attended Westmont previously).

A majority of the students who end up in the Credential program are also completing the Liberal Studies major, and certain pieces of evidence (e.g., Senior Interview) speak to both programs. But we have separated out the two programs in the original assessment program, and do so below, as well.

2. The departmental assessment plan submitted in January 2004 and approved by Program Review Committee later that spring was substantially revised and resubmitted in July 2005, as a result of departmental discussions in June 2005. In particular, we decided to place less emphasis on the Credential Program portfolio, which department felt was too difficult to extract meaningful generalizations from. (We will, in fact, continue to use the Credential portfolio as one source of evidence, and will continue to explore ways to make our reviews of portfolios, or selections portions thereof, as useful as possible for purposes of program review.)

3. The Liberal Studies major was substantially revised during the 2002-03 school year, in response to new state mandates and Westmont’s new program of General Education. Changes were effective for students entering Fall 2003. The first cohort in the revised major is now in their Junior year, and most will be preparing their Liberal Studies portfolio during the spring of 2006. So while we are mindful of the WASC team’s concern to report what we have done by way of assessment, and not simply what we are planning to do, the Liberal Studies portion of our work is heavy on what WILL be done in the future.

4. Both the Liberal Studies major and Teacher Preparation program were evaluated by teams of state reviewers during 2003-04. This process involved detailed scrutiny of
syllabi and much back-and-forth discussion (also much back-and-forth discussion with academic departments on Westmont’s campus) to ensure that Westmont’s programs were aligned with the standards of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. While this process focused more on “inputs” and infrastructure than on achieved results with students, it is an example of one place where outside agencies are validating what goes on here at Westmont—a topic of concern to the WASC team at the time of the Institutional Capacity review.

**Liberal Studies program:**

**A. What part of your plan will you be seeking to implement this year?**

*With respect to assessing students’ content knowledge (Departmental Goal A from Assessment Plan):*

1. Department will attempt during October to gather individual score reports from as many of this year’s LS majors who took the CSET (subject-matter exam) as possible. (“This year’s” LS majors, in this case, being those graduating in December 05 or May 06.) We will tabulate scores in each of the seven subject-area domains, and see if there are areas that appear to be weaker than others. This instrument does not offer a great deal of detail on content, but may flag broad domains of content courses (e.g., “math;” “science”) where we want to do further investigation.

2. Liberal Studies survey will be administered to the coming year’s graduates (primarily, those graduating in December 06) during ED 109, to be offered for the first time during the spring semester of 06.

3. Liberal Studies majors enrolled in ED 109 during the spring of 06 will complete the new portfolio assignment. Portfolios will be assessed informally in May, as described in Department Assessment plan.

4. We will continue to administer the Senior Interview to selected LS majors, and discuss our findings as a department.

5. [not listed in departmental plan]. We may attempt to tabulate CBEST scores as one additional bit of evidence of mastery of skills in literacy and numeracy.

*With respect to assessing institutional outcomes of particular concern to department (Departmental Goal B from Assessment Plan):*

1. We will collectively examine relevant sections of selected students’ portfolios during the month of May, as explained in departmental assessment plan.
2. We will continue to participate in Senior Interview and discuss our findings collectively. Unlike the past two years, we will work harder this year to select students who are broadly representative of the department’s graduates, and not simply those we anticipate might reflect most articulately or insightfully on the program.

*With respect to assessing graduates’ ability to reflect insightfully on their own education (Departmental Goal C from Assessment Plan):*

1. One or more designated meetings of ED 109 will be conducted as a de facto focus group where students are asked to reflect on the structure, intended purposes, and their own experience of the Liberal Studies major. Clearly we need to flesh out the mechanics of such reflection, and may need to re-examine the goal itself, which is currently somewhat intangible.

**B. As you review your plan, what seem to be the “places of need?”** (Are goals clear? Is there a clear sense of what signs (i.e., evidence) might suggest progress toward these goals? Is there a clear sense of how to find out where students are relative to these signs?)

**C. What uncertainties do you have as you think about implementing this plan?**

The major place of need with respect to the LS major is developing a processing strategy for overall assessment of the portfolio—a strategy, that is, that synthesizes the portfolios as a whole (or representative portfolios) and allows us to make meaningful generalizations useful for purposes of program review. A rubric for scoring individual portfolios has already been developed, and compiling these rubrics will be one step toward the goal identified above. But among other steps, we still need to determine how we will select representative portfolios, and how many constitutes a meaningful sample.

With respect to clarity of goals, the more we examine and reflect on the data we will soon have, the more specific goals we may be able to articulate for inquiry in the future.

Up to this point, we have not done a great deal with respect to defining Benchmarks. For starters, we want one hundred per cent of our students to be successful on the CSET and CBEST. But for other goals, we have not yet clearly established a standard of success.

We are currently working to establish dates for each of the processes identified above, and to build these dates and attendant responsibilities into the rhythm of the year.
D. **What plans does the department have for discussing what your gathered evidence means for the department?** (That is, what do you do with results of Senior Surveys, NSSE, or whatever evidence you are gathering?)

E. **How do you plan to function differently as a result of this evidence?** Do you have examples of having made changes in your programs in response to evidence? (What did that process look like?)

Department will devote at least one substantial meeting each semester to reflecting on data collected on the Liberal Studies program. Currently we are compiling the results of two surveys that have been administered since at least the mid 1990s, focusing on results from the last four years. We intend to discuss this compiled evidence during October this year (in the future, we may be able to do this each September, for data collected over the summer). Material gathered during ED 109 (offered Spring semester only) and during the Senior Interview will be discussed during May.

The current processes we’ve established are still too new to be able to point to specific programmatic changes. With respect to the past, we can point to some instructional staffing changes made in response to our survey of first-year graduates and to regular course evaluations.

**Summary of where we’re at with respect to assessment of the Liberal Studies program:**

While we feel we have always been attuned in the department to what was “working” and what was not, we are moving now toward formalizing more of that on-going assessment.

We feel we have some processes in place that will gather appropriate evidence, including samples of actual student work. We are working to establish routines where we engage in group reflection. Out of that reflection we expect to identify further specific goals to direct our inquiry in the future.
Teacher Preparation [AKA: Credential] Program:

A. What part of your plan will you be seeking to implement this year?

With respect to assessing both students’ professional competencies (Departmental Goal A from Assessment Plan) and the three institutional outcomes identified as being of particular concern to the department (Departmental Goals B of Assessment plan), we will:

1. Continue this year to administer our annual survey of principals employing our first-year graduates.

2. Continue to administer our annual survey of first-year graduates on the effectiveness of different components of the program.

3. Continue to participate in the college’s Senior Interview project, discussing in this case both the Liberal Studies major and the Credential program.

4. Continue to assign the professional portfolio, aligned to the six strands of the California Standards for the Teaching Profession. While we have struggled as a department as to how to use the portfolio most effectively in the process of program review, we are at the very least continuing the conversation this year. Among other possibilities, we may attempt to read collectively (for purposes of review) only one of candidates’ six reflective essays, perhaps focusing initially on the essay on teaching diverse learners.

5. Continue to administer one or more portions of the Teaching Performance Assessment.

6. Continue to canvas members of the Teacher Preparation Advisory Board (local principals and teachers) as to the effectiveness of our graduates and our program.

7. Continue to survey Master Teachers each spring, but beginning Spring 2006, carry this out more systematically, using a newly developed written survey.

B. As you review your plan, what seem to be the “places of need?” (Are goals clear? Is there a clear sense of what signs (i.e., evidence) might suggest progress toward these goals? Is there a clear sense of how to find out where students are relative to these signs?)

C. What uncertainties do you have as you think about implementing this plan?
We have in this case a number of established and newly-established mechanisms for gathering evidence of students’ learning and achievement. As noted elsewhere in this progress report, the most significant perceived need at this point is to establish concomitant mechanisms for deep and sustained group reflection—reflection that leads to measurable program changes.

F. What plans does the department have for discussing what your gathered evidence means for the department? (That is, what do you do with results of Senior Surveys, NSSE, or whatever evidence you are gathering?)

G. How do you plan to function differently as a result of this evidence? Do you have examples of having made changes in your programs in response to evidence? (What did that process look like?)

We will Department will devote at least one substantial meeting each semester to reflecting on data collected on the Credential program. Currently we are compiling the results of two surveys that have been administered since at least the mid 1990s, focusing on results from the last four years. We intend to discuss this compiled evidence during October this year (in the future, we may be able to do this each September, for data collected over the summer).

Material gathered during and at the end of the Student Teaching (offered Spring semester only) and during the Senior Interview will be discussed at meetings during the month of May.