Westmont College
Santa Barbara, CA

Institutional Report
Submitted August 20, 2015

Prepared for the Accreditation Visit for Reaffirmation by the WASC Senior College and University Commission
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PREFACE

Addressing Report Component 8

Westmont College is an undergraduate, residential, Christian, liberal arts community serving God’s kingdom by cultivating thoughtful scholars, grateful servants and faithful leaders for global engagement with the academy, church, and world.

The summer of 2015 finds Westmont in a season of stability as well as expectation. The previous comprehensive review by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) in 2007 took place just as President Gayle Beebe was assuming office; the ensuing years have seen not only the resolution of several challenges but also an expanding vision for intellectual endeavor and global study. At the same time, the college remains loyal to its historic purpose, as expressed in a mission statement widely embraced by the faculty, staff, and constituency. The process of preparing this review has allowed us to reflect on the progress of the last eight years and to articulate the obligations and opportunities looming before us. We look forward to interacting with the WASC Senior College & University Commission (WSCUC) and review team about this intersection of past and future.

A word about the structure and themes of this report: in general design, the report proceeds according to WSCUC’s standards for accreditation. An initial chapter covers preliminaries (e.g., institutional context, responses to previous reviews, the self-study process, etc.), and then the subsequent chapters narrate how Westmont strives to embody the four standards:

- Chapter 2: Institutional Purposes and Educational Objectives (Standard 1)
- Chapter 3: Infrastructure in Place to Ensure Quality and Improvement (Standard 4)
- Chapter 4: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions (Standard 2)
- Chapter 5: Sustaining Quality into the Future (Standard 3)

Throughout each chapter, subheadings identify the components to be addressed in each section, and parenthetical notations draw connections to the “Criteria for Review” (CFRs).

Component 8: Report Themes

As the report addresses the required components and tells the Westmont story, there are three themes woven into the narrative. The first theme is the mission statement itself—or what we could call the richness of the mission. While relatively compact, the mission statement is not reduced to a simple tagline or axiom. Nuances in the language of Westmont’s mission are regularly mined by the college community to express and amplify the values, vision, and culture of the institution. Five terms of the mission statement—undergraduate, residential, Christian, liberal arts, and global—have become widely cited as Westmont’s “five planks.” They serve as the banner terms on our website, the reference points for curricular proposals, and the refrains in many college speeches (CFR 1.1). In this report, they serve as framing motifs in the essay on the “meaning, quality and integrity of our degree.” Another strain of words from the mission
encapsulates our vision for student outcomes: we endeavor to prepare graduates to be “thoughtful scholars, grateful servants, and faithful leaders.” Accordingly, that imagery is used substantially in Chapter 4 when we discuss student success.

A second theme in the report is the refinement of our planning and review. Westmont’s faculty members have long been passionate about learning and the liberal arts, and they have long had high aspirations for their students. The college has also engaged with many long-term planning processes over its history. Nonetheless, as the 2007 WASC visit underscored, there was still work to be done to strengthen our protocols for planning, assessment, and program review. A special site visit by WASC in 2011 affirmed the significant progress that the college had made in that regard; and in this report we have sought to describe the continuing advances made since then. During the last eight years, President Beebe introduced a strategic planning process with three-year horizons, aided by the steady collaboration with a consultant. These refinements have brought greater focus and coherence to our planning efforts. This report describes these gains while acknowledging the challenges in planning that Westmont faces, along with all small liberal arts colleges, while navigating the shifting terrain of higher education (CFR 4.7).

The third theme is the resilience of the community. That resilience was epitomized by the college’s recovery from a devastating wildfire in November of 2008. The Tea Fire spread across 40% of the campus: it destroyed numerous buildings, charred vegetation, and ruined many residences, including 15 homes in the adjacent faculty housing neighborhood. The college closed for two weeks, and a recovery team led by the President and the Executive Team met daily to coordinate communication, tend to the community’s needs, and start to rebuild. Not only was there a strong “we will recover” attitude during that crucible, but the college also relied on established protocols to chart a course through the crisis. A similar mindset of resilience was evident when the economic recession hit the nation that same year. Holding tuition stable, making prudent cuts, and delaying certain expenditures, Westmont was able to navigate through that recession with a balanced budget and without painful layoffs (CFR 3.6, 3.7). Such resilience is a sign of our community’s deep commitment to Westmont’s ethos and mission.

These three themes—richness, refinement, and resilience—emerged from the processes of self-study and report drafting. The self-study engaged various sectors of our campus community in a vigorous appraisal of our strengths and weaknesses. It helped us document progress made since the last accreditation review and clarify future steps for continued advancement. Charting recent improvements in assessment and program review has illuminated some of the aspects of our protocols that need further construction—or merely touch-up and paint. Still, the self-appraisal of the past year and a half has been a source of encouragement. It has revealed widespread support for the college’s mission and a conviction that there is distinctive meaning in the Westmont degree. It has generated evidence that college programs are valued for having quality and integrity—that they are both effective and improving (CFR 4.3). And it has reinforced our appreciation for working alongside colleagues who desire that all of our graduates become “thoughtful scholars, grateful servants, and faithful leaders.” These ideals encourage us to continually reach higher, even beyond our grasp, in the best tradition of the liberal arts and our faith.
CHAPTER ONE: PRELIMINARIES

Addressing Report Components 1 and 2

Component 1: Institutional Context

History

Westmont College began in Los Angeles in 1937 with the founding of the Bible Missionary Institute. It started as the vision of Ruth Kerr, president of the Kerr Glass Manufacturing Company and one of the few women chief executives of a large American firm in her day. The institution opened its doors to 72 students, added a junior college curriculum in 1939, and changed its name briefly to Western Bible College. Ruth Kerr then recruited Wallace Emerson, a dean at Wheaton College in Illinois, to become its first president. Emerson—who chose the name Westmont College—led the drive to build a liberal arts curriculum, pursue accreditation, and survive the school’s early, vulnerable years. According to its founders, the college was envisioned as an “interdenominational and evangelical” institution, eager to promote “careful scholarship” and “consistent Christian living.”

By 1944, Westmont had outgrown its facilities in Los Angeles. The search for a new campus led to the former Dwight Murphy estate in Montecito, a wealthy suburb of Santa Barbara. Westmont purchased this property—125 acres with a stately Mediterranean house—and moved to its new location in 1945. Set in the foothills of the Santa Ynez Mountains, Westmont has wooded slopes and coastal views that make for an attractive residential campus. Today’s campus includes buildings and land from two former estates and the historic Deane School for Boys. The grounds still feature the pathways, stone bridges, and gardens typical of the Montecito environs.

In 1958, Westmont achieved accreditation for the first time in the middle of the eighteen-year presidency of Roger Voskuyl. These were years of growth in terms of both enrollment and facilities. While Westmont preserved many of the historic structures on the old estates, another dozen buildings were added, including residence halls, an observatory, and a library. In the late 1960s and 1970s, several of the college’s most enduring traditions began: the first study-abroad program in Europe; an urban study center in San Francisco; and Potter’s Clay, a spring break program of service in Ensenada, Mexico.

During the 25-year presidency of David Winter the academic credentials of the faculty, the college’s national rankings, and connections with the Santa Barbara community improved. To bolster the recruitment of faculty, Westmont secured permission to build 41 faculty homes next to the campus, a neighborhood now known as Las Barrancas. The long-pursued master plan was approved just as Gayle Beebe came into office in 2007, and he oversaw the completion of new facilities for science, art, and athletics. President Beebe has also established new institutes in spiritual formation and in moral and ethical leadership and has worked to bolster fundraising, planning, and community relations.

For all of its beauty, the Montecito setting carries some constraints, most notably a cap on the college’s enrollment. To preserve the character of Montecito and to limit growth, the County of Santa Barbara has issued Westmont several Conditional Use Permits. The latest one, adopted
in 1989, requires that the historical average for on-campus enrollment not exceed 1200 students. No single semester can exceed 1235. Since Westmont has usually operated at full capacity in the fall, with many semesters edging close to 1235, the college has always had to offset those fall semesters with spring terms under the 1200 ceiling. At present, the historical average is 1199—a sign of just how tightly the institution has managed its enrollment. The county also has extremely strict regulations regarding construction. Any proposed campus projects are vigorously reviewed by the Montecito Planning Commission for design and environmental impact. New building must be done only after five-year intervals without construction, and there is a stringent threshold regarding the total square feet that can be added to the campus in each building phase.

Understanding Westmont does require understanding these limits. Compared to most institutions of higher education, Westmont has less capacity to pursue innovation through growth. New curricular options and recruitment initiatives cannot be funded by increasing the enrollment on the Montecito site. Nor can Westmont respond to new operational pressures—such as regulatory mandates and rising health care premiums—by simply admitting more tuition-paying students on its campus. Though a constraint, the enrollment cap has prompted the college to develop a wide array of study-abroad programs. In recent decades, this cap has promoted greater selectivity as well: our application pool grew, even as enrollment targets did not. The cap has also forced the college to clarify priorities in light of its limits, and to live judiciously within its means.

**Contributions to the Public Good**

Westmont’s setting in the elite community of Montecito has made the college conscious of its need to be a good neighbor—and to reach beyond its immediate surroundings to engage the broader, more diverse Santa Barbara region. In recent years, the college has certainly endeavored to enhance its contributions to the public good and its participation in the public square. Here is a sampling of those efforts (CFR 1.1):

1. **Service.** Westmont’s vision to develop “grateful servants” and “faithful leaders” has accented the importance of both experiential learning and public service. Curricular and co-curricular Westmont programs place students in volunteer and internship opportunities connecting them to needs in the Santa Barbara community and beyond. Participation in internships at Westmont is well above national and regional norms (see Chapter 2). As part of a service-learning requirement in the core curriculum, students undertake numerous volunteer activities, such as working in hospitals, schools, homeless shelters, and senior centers. During spring and summer breaks, students spend one-to-six weeks serving in urban centers in the United States or other nations, partnering with local organizations such as medical units, churches, and community development agencies. All told, Westmont students volunteer more than 35,000 hours each year.

   Several of these volunteer programs focus on serving underrepresented local communities. For instance, Westmont’s music students intern with the Incredible Children’s Art Network (iCan), a non-profit organization that brings high quality arts programs to first- through sixth-graders at local Title I schools. The Liberal Arts Ambassadors program, run by Westmont’s Gaede Institute for the Liberal Arts, serves as many as 400 high school students. Working primarily with students whose parents have not attended college, Westmont’s student “ambassadors” become tutors, classroom assistants, and college guidance interns, and they help run college readiness workshops. In the fall of 2015, the college is launching a Center for Social Entrepreneurship in downtown Santa Barbara, a semester-long study program for college
students, with opportunities for living and working with immigrant and underprivileged communities in Santa Barbara’s Westside neighborhood.

After they graduate, Westmont’s alums continue to engage in meaningful ways in their communities, giving time and resources to organizations that serve the community welfare. In Santa Barbara, Westmont graduates started the organization “Kids Helping Kids” (KHK). Since its founding in 2002, it has raised over $1.4 million; the funds have helped local families by providing a wheelchair for a child, financial support for a family with a child dying of cancer, and SAT/AP testing fees for those unable to pay. KHK’s projects abroad include the construction of a preschool in Rwanda and the installation of water purification systems in Honduras. Teresa Goines (class of 1997) founded the Old Skool Café, which offers sustainable employment to at-risk youth in the San Francisco area. Josh Daneshforooz (class of 2008) is president of All Nations Education, an organization providing college scholarships to young adults in developing nations. Rachel Goble (class of 2005) is president of the SOLD Project, an organization that fights child trafficking. SOLD also provides financial support to at-risk youth in Thailand, helping them stay in school.

Westmont’s presence is certainly felt in the public schools. Several administrators and scores of teachers have graduated from the college’s education program. An annual Celebration of Teaching, hosted by the Education Department, highlights the work of our student teachers in local schools. For 28 years, the college has sponsored an annual mathematics contest for top high school students; schools spend months priming their teams for the event.

Westmont also promotes service through special events, awards, and gifts. The college hosted many of the athletes coming to Southern California for the 2015 Special Olympics World Games. The campus is also a regular site for several sports camps, a music academy, and philanthropic events such as the Save the Mothers Run/Walk held in 2015 to benefit Ugandan mothers and children. Each year at Commencement, the college recognizes transformative community leaders with the Westmont Medal; the most recent recipient, Rolf Geyling, directs the Santa Barbara Rescue Mission. An annual fundraising effort among faculty and staff each year helps support the local United Way.

2. Ideas and the Arts. As an educational institution, Westmont contributes extensively to the intellectual life of Southern California and beyond. Numerous lectures and symposia are open to the public, including an annual Conversation on the Liberal Arts hosted by the college’s Gaede Institute for the Liberal Arts that draws scholars from around the world into close dialogue. In 2015, this innovative conference focused on the Liberal Arts and the Social Good and featured speakers from Harvard, UC Berkeley, and the leader of the Council of Independent College’s initiative on the future of the liberal arts (Gaede Institute). In addition, the Martin Institute for Christianity and Culture holds workshops and conferences with a broad ecumenical array of church leaders (Martin Institute). The college’s powerful telescope is the primary viewing site of the Santa Barbara Astronomical Unit. The annual President’s Breakfast—which attracts nearly a thousand people—is one of the largest public events on the Santa Barbara calendar. The college sponsors the Westmont Downtown lecture series, which introduces the community to the scholarly and professional work of Westmont faculty. The college’s new Mosher Center for Moral and Ethical Leadership has drawn large crowds with Pulitzer-Prize winning historians as speakers (Mosher Center).

The last decade has been an especially rich era for Westmont’s contributions to the artistic life of the region. Many of the college’s foremost music events—including its major works
concerts—have been scheduled in downtown settings to increase access for the general public. Westmont’s music faculty members frequently conduct local chorales, orchestras and chamber groups. The three-day annual Christmas Festival is now the best-attended fine arts event in Santa Barbara. In one of its many favorable reviews of Westmont’s theatrical productions, the Santa Barbara Independent called Westmont “one of the country’s most progressive places to study movement-based theater.” The Westmont Ridley-Tree Museum of Art sponsors exhibits of Santa Barbara artists, and offers contests, family events, instructional workshops, and special sales to aid local painters and sculptors.

In their roles as scholars and community members, our faculty members also contribute substantially to the academy and to the public, both locally and throughout the world. The list of scholarly accomplishments is indeed long, but a few examples provide a glimpse of quality and range. A textbook written by Niva Tro (Chemistry) is the second-most widely used book in college and university general chemistry courses. Beth Horvath (Biology) has become a key consultant on local ocean life to the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. Susan Penksa (Political Science) consults for the European Union and NATO on security issues. Paul Willis (English) was Santa Barbara’s Poet Laureate from 2011 to 2013. John Blondell (Theater Arts) not only founded the local Lit Moon Theatre Company but also organized the World Shakespeare Festival in Santa Barbara, the first of its kind in the United States and one of only five in the world. Carmel Saad (Psychology) advises the Santa Barbara Police Department on recognizing their implicit biases. Tremper Longman is one of the nation’s most prolific Old Testament scholars. Russell Howell (Mathematics) is leading a National Science Foundation initiative to revise the approach to teaching complex analysis. A fuller sampling of recent scholarly and professional accomplishments by Westmont’s faculty can be found in the archives of the Provost’s Reports, produced about eight times a year (CFR 2.8).

3. Local Business and Stewardship. In addition to educating students and supporting faculty scholars, Westmont recognizes its responsibilities in the larger fabric of businesses and organizations that make up our civic community. We take our responsibilities as a member of that community seriously, seeking to build strong relationships with neighbors and to promote the vibrancy of the Santa Barbara region. Westmont alums have started more than 60 companies in the last 18 years. They work for nearly 600 local companies, organizations, and educational enterprises. In 2013, Westmont was one of five organizations to receive the South Coast Business and Technology Award for local organizations and individuals demonstrating “extraordinary commitment to the economic vitality of the south coast.”

Located on the edge of Los Padres National Forest, Westmont has worked carefully to preserve the semi-rural character of its neighborhood and to promote stewardship of the environment among students and the larger community. The college’s two most recently built academic buildings, Winter Hall for Science and Mathematics and the Adams Center for the Visual Arts, are certified as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold because of their sustainable construction and energy-saving systems. In its decision to award Gold certification, the U.S. Green Building Council cited Westmont’s use of natural ventilation and lighting in the buildings as well as the landscaping plan that restores habitats, captures storm water, and makes use of native plants. With the onset of the recent drought conditions in Santa Barbara, Westmont has enhanced its water-saving measures, reducing its consumption beyond the requirements of the local water district. The college has cut back on landscape watering and uses non-potable water when it does irrigate. Recently, a contest in the residence halls resulted in
a 30-percent reduction in water use by students. Westmont students take environmental care seriously in other arenas as well. They volunteer in the organic garden that supplies produce to the campus dining service. A new beehive on campus also provides an opportunity for students to educate the community about the role of bees in the ecosystem.

4. Risk Management. Our home in the foothills of Santa Barbara makes the college vulnerable to wildfires and other natural disasters. For the benefit of our students and staff as well as the larger community, Westmont has taken the lead in developing emergency readiness plans that have proven effective in both protecting lives and enabling efficient recovery from disasters. Westmont officials regularly convene meetings of regional higher education emergency managers, including all the institutions of higher education in the county and some from neighboring counties. The effectiveness of our emergency plans and our history of resilience have made our strategies models for other organizations. Westmont employees have served in leadership roles and on governing boards of local and national agencies that support emergency responders. As a site for annual emergency response exercises and drills, Westmont has provided local and regional emergency responders with opportunities to gain experience and enhance training. Partners include city, county, and state law enforcement agencies and fire departments, the American Red Cross, and the Los Padres National Forest Service.

Current Priorities

Westmont’s priorities are defined largely by its strategic map, the outgrowth of a more robust planning process that has been in place since the arrival of President Beebe. The present map, covering the years from 2014–2017 (Appendix B01), sets the primary aspiration in broad terms—to “deepen and advance” the “distinctiveness” of Westmont and its “transformational impact.” Under that overarching goal, the map sets out multiple cells and “tracks of work” that shape our foremost objectives (Appendix B02).

In crafting those objectives, the college has been mindful of the intense scrutiny on higher education, due in part to legislators and editorialists forecasting dark skies for colleges and universities, especially those with traditional, liberal arts curricula. Predictions of disruptive innovation and calls for greater regulation are now prominent motifs in the public discourse about American postsecondary education. Conscious not only of these challenges but also the unusual constraints of Westmont’s setting, the college is committed to securing resources that will make for a strong and viable future for the college. Ensuring the affordability and competitiveness of a Westmont degree is among the vital goals embedded in the new strategic map. Here are a few of the principal objectives:

1. Capital Campaign. Westmont completed its most successful capital campaign in history in 2012. The Bright Hope for Tomorrow campaign raised over $82,000,000, primarily devoted to new campus facilities. The current Campaign for Westmont has already raised an additional $110,000,000, including cash donations, estate pledges, numerous gifts of art for the permanent collection, and contributions toward the new Westmont Institute for Global Learning and Leadership. Securing the final resources for the completion of this institute remains the highest fundraising priority over the next 12 months. Following the completion of that task, the next Westmont campaign will concentrate largely on building the endowment and the scholarship resources necessary to keep Westmont affordable for a wide range of students. (Fundraising is discussed more fully in Chapter 5.)
2. Global and Off-Campus Programs. Westmont students who study off campus are not considered in the enrollment cap; therefore, the development of international and domestic off-campus programs is one of the possible means of expansion. Growth in this area is not unlimited: Westmont students returning from abroad must still cycle back into the cap-controlled campus enrollment. There is room for growth in global programming, however, and recent years have borne new off-campus ventures. Alternating spring semester programs were launched in Istanbul and Israel/Palestine in 2012 and 2013, respectively. A new program in Northern Europe, focused on peacemaking and reconciliation, began in the fall of 2014. A downtown Santa Barbara program (Center for Social Entrepreneurship) will begin in the fall of 2015, and a new East Asia program is scheduled to start operation in the fall of 2016.

3. New Leadership Center and Residence Hall. Westmont is in the final phase of fundraising for a new Institute for Global Learning and Leadership, a centerpiece of the current capital campaign. In one respect, the building is designed to bolster income for the college, as it will generate revenue by creating residential spaces for an additional 140 students to live on campus. It will also provide enhanced facilities for summer conferences, another current goal for cultivating revenue for the college. In another respect, the building will enhance the college’s emphasis on global study, providing a living and learning community for seniors and juniors who return from study abroad. Special programming will help returning students augment and synthesize their learning from global study, contribute in new ways to the campus culture, and widen their vision for their own careers and callings. Groundbreaking is scheduled for 2016.

4. Integrated Marketing Plan. The college has long had energetic admissions and public relations offices but never invested substantially in an integrated marketing plan. Marketing is a focal point in the current strategic map; the design and implementation of a new marketing plan seeks to widen the admissions funnel and strengthen Westmont’s brand in “the academy, church, and world.”

5. Career and Calling. Westmont is in the process of revising its Career Development and Calling Office to help graduates move forward with greater confidence into places of employment, internship, or graduate study. The new, multi-departmental venture will enhance collaboration between the academic, student life, internship, alumni, and advancement offices. Even though current research underscores the value of liberal arts education and skills in the workplace, we recognize that some students need more assistance getting launched beyond college. This revised, integrated enterprise will help students prepare earlier in their college years for post-baccalaureate opportunities (CFR 2.11, 2.13).

Response to Prior WASC Reviews
Westmont received its initial accreditation in 1958; accreditation was renewed in 1961, 1964, 1967, 1974, 1983 and 1995. Following completion of the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) in 2005 and the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) in 2007, accreditation was renewed in June of 2007. In addition to setting the schedule for the next accreditation cycle, the Commission requested a special visit in 2011 for the purpose of evaluating the College's progress in addressing four selected issues: 1) strategic planning, especially regarding the library;
2) assessment and program review; 3) sustained leadership development; and 4) defining and implementing diversity, especially religious diversity.

The special visit in 2011 resulted in a favorable report. The Commission’s letter in 2012 declares that the visiting team found that Westmont had fully addressed each issue and provided appropriate evidence in its report and exhibits. In its review, the special visit team concluded that, Westmont has responded effectively to the concerns outlined in the 2007 Commission Action Letter and has made substantial progress in addressing the four areas identified for improvement . . . It is the judgment of the visiting team that the progress of the College, reported in the institutional presentation and verified during the Special Visit, positions Westmont well to enter the next comprehensive review. Although the team offered these auspicious words, a few comments here summarize how Westmont has responded to each of the four issues.

1. Strategic Planning. The 2005 Commission letter states: The team noted that the College is coming to the end of a 10-year strategic plan and will be launching a new plan. The new planning process could become a unique opportunity to engage the College community in addressing the issues raised in this letter as strategic priorities, as well as . . . an opportunity to involve new faculty and Board members. The life cycle of the last plan was considerable and, in any new plan, the Commission will expect that [there] will be regular processes for monitoring progress and making revisions to the plan as needed.

With Gayle Beebe’s 2007 appointment as president, Westmont received a new strategy for planning. Dr. Beebe implemented the strategic planning process that he had used successfully during his presidency at Spring Arbor University. That process relies on a broad-based Strategic Planning Committee that meets two or three times annually, guided by external consultant Tim Fallon. The primary objectives of the committee are to (CFR 4.6):

- Represent and interact with college constituencies to assess Westmont’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and to identify priorities for inclusion on a three-year strategic map.
- Propose a three-year strategic map and annual strategic priorities to the Board of Trustees.
- Review progress regularly on implementing strategic priorities.
- Make needed adjustments to the process of implementing strategic priorities and recommend, when appropriate, strategic map adjustments to the Board of Trustees.
- Update the Board of Trustees, faculty, and staff regularly on setting and implementing strategic priorities.

Operating within these three-year planning cycles, the college is now working with its third strategic map (2014–2017) since President Beebe took office. Previous maps were developed for 2008–2011 and 2011–2014. One strength of Westmont’s process has been the inclusion of many members of the community in discussions about strategic priorities. Not only does the committee include representatives of the trustees, faculty, staff, administration, and student body, but committee members have also hosted forums with college sectors during the development phase of each strategic map. At times, the president or committee has formed reading groups to generate ideas for specific goals. The annual planning cycle has been effective in reviewing the work on current priorities, making necessary adjustments, and forwarding appropriate recommendations to the Board of Trustees regarding major institutional documents and
objectives. This cycle also has influenced budget decisions. For example, committee decisions have led to investments in a Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness position, information technology, the renovation of the library, and the new integrated marketing effort.

In 2007, the Commission’s letter drew particular attention to the link between strategic planning and the library: *As noted in the 2005 Capacity Report, the Library and its related activities in support of student learning do not yet appear to hold the central role they warrant in institutional strategic visioning and planning processes. There is little evidence of a comprehensive rationale for the Library that reflects current national trends in library science and also responds to emerging 21st century information literacy demands. Though the Library has recently assigned liaisons to the various academic departments to ensure alignment of Library resources with department’s learning goals, this work is in its early stages. Decisions about what additional services should be based within the Library also need to be linked to a guiding vision for the Library. The Commission urges Westmont to give the Library a more permanent place within the still-evolving strategic planning processes of the College, and to develop a clear expression of the role the library will play in fulfilling the academic mission of the institution. Appropriate action plans and timelines should devolve from such planning and then be linked to decisions about academic goals, as well as to institutional budgets and development priorities.*

Significant progress has been made since 2007 to address the WASC recommendations and to revitalize the role of the library in the educational culture of the college. All six categories cited by WASC in 2007 have received considerable attention in the intervening years (CFR 2.3).

- **Facilities.** A $500,000 renovation of the library in 2010 significantly transformed the facility. The results included a new learning commons, increased spaces for group study, enhanced technology capability and usage for individuals and groups, improved workspace for library staff, improved aesthetics, and increased comfort for library users.

- **Integration with the Institution.** Librarians now serve on the Strategic Planning, General Education, and Program Review Committees, thus strengthening coordination between Westmont’s planning efforts and the library’s own planning process. Since 2007 the library’s departmental liaison program has been expanded. Liaison librarians support their academic departments by selecting materials for the collections with the advice of faculty, providing research advice to students, and partnering with faculty for instruction surrounding particular source-based or research assignments. In 2014–2015, one of the librarians led the college’s year-long focus on Information Literacy assessment as part of the review of this Institutional Learning Outcome (ILO).

- **Program Review and Student Learning.** The site visit team had recommended that the library’s program review procedure parallel the process undergone by other academic departments. Accordingly, the library is now following the Program Review Committee’s guidelines for Six-Year Reviews and Annual Reports. The library’s current Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) now reflect national standards for library instruction and information literacy and are regularly consulted and assessed when librarians collaborate with faculty and students for research consultations and instruction. For the past four years, a librarian has taught the credit-bearing class “Research Across the Disciplines” with assignments aligned with the library’s PLOs.
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- **Collection and Budget.** Upon recommendation of the Library and the Provost, a request for additional operating funding was approved in 2011, to be disbursed incrementally over the coming years. To date, $100,000 has been added to the library’s annual operating budget. With these increased funds, the library has addressed several needs, including new electronic resources and more book purchases. In addition, the library joined a California-based resource-sharing program in 2010. This service augments the existing interlibrary loan services and provides quick, seamless access to resources from participating libraries.

- **Staffing and Budget.** The library director has updated job descriptions and expanded liaison librarian duties to include information literacy instruction, research help desk hours, and collection development. There was a modest increase of 0.25 FTE in staffing along with the conversion of a non-professional position into a professional position.

- **Vision.** The library staff composed a planning document and six-year plan in 2013–2014 and wrote a vision and values document the following year.

2. **Assessment and Program Review.** In 2007, the visiting team accented several issues in assessment and program review. They called for greater consistency in review efforts and greater clarity about the role of academic departments in assessing the ILOs and general education. The 2007 Commission’s letter states: **While Westmont’s increased engagement with assessment of learning has been noted, there remains much to be done to achieve a higher level of systematic, sustained, and coordinated effort around assessment. The variability among units in the quality and depth of assessment efforts and attention to learning results needs to be markedly reduced. As identified again by the commission in 2005, Westmont must renew its efforts to achieve full and regular program review for all academic programs. In this regard, the institution should clarify the degree of ownership the departments have in assessing the six institutional learning goals, and how the results of such assessments can then be aggregated into program review for general education as a whole. The identification of assessment measures aligned with each of the six learning goals is worthy of Westmont’s creative and sustained attention.**

Since 2007, Westmont has made substantial progress on these matters, as evident in the complimentary review during the special visit in 2011. According to the team, **Westmont College has accomplished significant improvements in assessment and program review. These include systematic, sustained and coordinated efforts around assessment. They also display compelling ownership and measurement by departments. A fuller description of the college’s evaluation of students’ learning appears in Chapters 3 and 4 of this report (which address Report Components 4 and 6). These structures and practices not only reflect the commitment to meet WSCUC objectives but also describe other forms of appraisal that add value to Westmont (CFR 2.4).**

While we will cover that panorama of review efforts more fully in those later chapters, we can briefly summarize Westmont’s responses to the primary concerns identified by the 2007 review.

- **Consistency of Work.** In 2007, the visiting team found that program review reports and assessment updates were not being produced on schedule. Moreover, available reports varied in style, structure, objectives, and the use of data. Since then, Westmont has substantially improved on these issues. Missing reports have become a rare exception. When departments have difficulty preparing a report, they receive the assistance of the Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness as well as the Program Review Committee (PRC). Only in extraordinary circumstances is a department allowed to delay one year. The PRC has refined its templates for Six-Year Reviews and Annual Reports.
A wealth of templates and resources are available on the Educational Effectiveness website. The visiting team in 2011 applauded the **substantial decreases in variability among units** as well as the **full and regularized program reviews**.

- **Protocols and Infrastructure.** When the EER team visited in 2007, Westmont was active in program review and assessment, though the efforts were not well coordinated and the results were not easily accessible. Departments often lacked guidance as they wrote their reports. Actually, there were multiple guiding documents, but not all of them coordinated. Moreover, department-level assessment was not well harmonized with institution-level assessment. In general, the visiting team found the assessment and program review processes to be underdeveloped. Fortunately, since then several steps have been taken to improve the protocols and infrastructure. The new Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness position was created and filled. The PRC now works closely with academic units. Additional resources have been provided to support assessment retreats and planning by the departments. Presentations are offered in the effective use of templates and rubrics. Notable work has been done to identify the levels of student outcome assessment (institution, general education, department); new protocols clarify who is responsible for the various functions (CFR 2.4, 4.1, 4.4). An overview of these protocols is described more fully in chapter 3, especially in the section on the “Three Central Strands” of assessment.

- **Data and Storage.** In 2011 the Commission encouraged the college to “maximize the use of data” in decision-making and to develop means for the “efficient storage of data.” A campus network-based storage system has now been in place for several years to facilitate archiving reports and data. Recently, LiveText was introduced to assist in assessment and archiving. LiveText aided the new process of general education assessment in 2014–15 and will be used on a broader scale in 2015–2016.

- **Sustainability.** During its 2007 review, the visiting team expressed concern about the sustainability of our assessment and program review efforts. They worried that the size of the reports and the workload required by existing protocols could not be maintained—a verdict that the faculty heartily confirmed. In refining our protocols, the faculty has since endeavored to align, streamline and even eliminate some procedures. The PRC has crafted new expectations for Six-Year Reviews (Appendix B03) and Annual Reports (Appendix B04) that focus on essentials and eliminate redundancies and irrelevancies. As a result, reports have become shorter and require less time to produce, without loss of value to the college.

In sum, the team report of 2011 concludes that the *College has enhanced sustainability, institutionalization, and alignment in assessment and program review, as called for by the Commission*. Chapter 3 describes further refinements made since that review.

3. **Sustained Leadership Support.** Westmont was in the midst of crucial leadership transitions when the EER team came to campus in 2007. Four senior leadership positions were vacant. A new president had been selected but would not assume his responsibilities until the first of July. Interims were serving as the chief academic officer and the vice president for finance. The search for a vice president for development had been suspended until the new president was in place. The Commission, in its letter, called attention to the risks and prospects of that moment: *The
leadership transitions at the presidential and provost level, combined with subsequent management appointments and realignments, present both great opportunity and some uncertainty. While the Commission encourages the new leadership to be committed to the academic priorities identified above, the pacing, priorities, and impact of the new leadership is yet to be demonstrated. The Commission urges the College’s administration, faculty, and staff to seize this opportunity to work collaboratively toward sustaining the activities undertaken as part of the accrediting review. Westmont’s short-range and long-range planning efforts, critical to sustaining institutional progress in each of the identified areas of attention, will be substantially shaped by new leadership.

The uncertainty in 2007 has changed now to a season of stability. The President’s Executive Team is in place, functioning well, and committed to the standards established by WSCUC. The experience of the team is especially noteworthy (CFR 3.6, 3.8). President Beebe stepped into his role with seven years of previous service as a college president at Spring Arbor University, preceded by many years as a dean; he also has the unique combination of pastoral experience, a master’s degree in theology, an MBA, and a doctorate in philosophy. Chris Call, Vice President for Planning and Administration, assumed his post in 2001 and provides continuity to previous WASC visits; he is the only member of the current Executive Team present for the 2007 EER.

Vice President for Finance Doug Jones was hired in 2007 after seven years as a college CFO and many previous years as a college controller. Following a season in leadership at Apple Inc. and in college administrative posts, Reed Sheard joined the Executive Team in 2008 in a position overseeing information technology; in 2010, his appointment was expanded to his current role as Vice President for College Advancement and Chief Information Officer. Provost and Dean of the Faculty Mark Sargent came to Westmont in 2012, having served 19 years previously as a chief academic officer and holding leadership posts on national and international boards. The most recent addition to the leadership team, Edee Schulze, took over the chief student development officer post after working in that same role for six years at Bethel University in Minnesota and working for 20 years in student life at Wheaton College in Illinois.

Other key personnel changes in recent years have solidified the leadership of the college. Following retirements of long-term employees, a new director of the library, Debra Quast, joined in 2009, and Silvio Vazquez became Dean of Admissions in 2011. The college added a new Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness in 2010, a position filled by Tatiana Nazarenko, while Patti Hunter, a 13-year veteran of the Mathematics Department, assumed the new Vice Provost role in 2011. To help guide the expanding list of off-campus programs, a Director of Global Education post was added in 2013, filled by Cynthia Toms from the Center of Social Concerns at Notre Dame. Bill Wright, the Associate Provost, has been the Accreditation Liaison Officer for eight years. The changes and continuities have strengthened the college’s commitment to the process of accreditation and program appraisal. All together, the leadership of the college now includes individuals who have served on accreditation teams for WASC, the North Central Association (now the Higher Learning Commission), the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, and several international reviews.

4. Religious Diversity. The Commission’s letter of 2007 stresses a potential point of tension between two aspects of Westmont’s identity and purpose: Two stated goals for Westmont College are affirmed by the Board and referenced in the team’s report: “Members of the Board of Trustees affirmed the Christian evangelical identity of the College and its commitment to be a
welcoming community for all students.” While the Commission upholds Westmont’s core values of staying true to its founding identity and being a welcoming community for all, a concern remains as to whether the institution has engaged in a sustaining conversation about the potential conflict implied by these two goals. The potential conflict was illustrated in the 2005 Capacity Review by the concerns of Catholic students who did not perceive themselves as being truly welcomed at Westmont. The Commission urges the College to continue to address how it can continue to be true to its evangelical belief system while creating an environment that is genuinely welcoming to those whose personal beliefs might exclude them from that system.

All our WASC reviews—the CPR in 2005, the EER in 2007, and the Commission letter of 2007—stressed that the heart of this fourth issue was religious diversity, most specifically the experience of Roman Catholic students. The college was encouraged to communicate more clearly its Protestant identity to prospective students and to ensure that it maintained a welcoming attitude to matriculants of all faith traditions. During the special team visit in 2011, the college was praised for a sincere and deliberate attempt to encompass religious diversity within its mission. The team saluted the improvements in the printed and web-based materials that explicitly describe Westmont as an evangelical Christian learning community, while noting the College conducts outreach to students who indicate faith identification other than a Protestant faith heritage. Particular commendations were given to the efforts to reach out to Catholic students and recognize Catholic thinkers and leaders in educational and spiritual programming and practices. The 2011 visit team observes: Interviews by the team with Catholic students indicate that these efforts are appreciated, and the current students do not feel isolated or marginalized. Moreover, the Commission stated that the team was particularly gratified that the College has embraced and expanded a broader view of diversity issues, including racial, ethnic, and gender-identity issues. Cultivating diversity and global engagement throughout the college is one of the current priorities of the strategic map.

The college was gratified that its efforts and results in these four areas—strategic planning, assessment and program review, leadership, and diversity—were affirmed in the 2011 team report and the 2012 letter from the Commission.

**Developments Since 2007**

The eight years since the EER visit have been a time of both steadfastness and change. The college’s longstanding commitment to the Christian liberal arts remains firm amid a notable shift in personnel, revised protocols, and alterations to the physical campus. Some significant changes have been the solidification of a new leadership team and the refinement of assessment and program review processes (both described above).

The most traumatic—yet perhaps the most unifying—event of the past few years was the Tea Fire of 2008. Although wildfires in 1964 and 1977 touched the campus, the flames brought negligible damage. Such was not the case in November of 2008. High winds fueled the blaze that started at an old structure known as the Tea Garden less than half a mile from Westmont. The wildfire swept across the campus (and through Montecito), destroying several academic buildings, offices, labs, and classrooms. Two dormitories and large portions of the landscape were burned. Fifteen faculty and several staff members lost homes in nearby neighborhoods. Even though there was minimal warning of the flames, the shelter-in-place strategy developed with Santa Barbara County fire officials functioned almost flawlessly. While the fire burned, over 800 students, faculty, staff, and college guests spent the night in the safe confines of the gymnasium, where there were emergency supplies of food, water, and blankets.
The college’s quick and effective response to the damage of the wildfire was another sign of the community’s resilience. In the immediate aftermath, all classes were cancelled; yet, thanks in part to the scheduled Thanksgiving recess, only seven days of classes were lost. Faculty quickly adapted schedules and communicated with students to determine how to complete the semester with integrity. Portable facilities were rapidly brought to campus to provide necessary office, classroom, and lab spaces. By January of 2009, modular housing units were home to several dozen students. Fire-damaged dorm rooms were rebuilt by the fall of 2009. Temporary classrooms, labs and offices were replaced with permanent facilities in the fall of 2010. And the fire had no discernible impact on student retention. In the year prior to the fire, retention from fall to spring semester was 96.7%. Following the fire, retention from fall 2008 to spring 2009 was also 96.7%.

The wildfire hit just as new construction was set to begin. For more than a decade, Westmont had been updating a master plan with the County of Santa Barbara. The college received approval for the revised master plan in 2007. In October of 2008, groundbreaking ceremonies were held for two major academic buildings which would add 77,600 square feet to the campus for faculty offices, labs, classrooms, art studios, and an art museum. Less than a month later, fire seared the campus, claiming 7,677 square feet of existing building space.

Among the buildings destroyed by the fire was an older building already scheduled for demolition. Construction permits for a new building for the Physics Department had been acquired just days before the flames began. The new science facility—Winter Hall—was finished and occupied just as the fall semester of 2010 began, less than two years after the fire. It is now home to the Departments of Psychology, Physics, Mathematics and Computer Science. The second building—the Adams Center—became the new home for the Art Department and the Westmont Ridley-Tree Museum of Art. In addition to faculty offices, science laboratories, and art studios, both buildings have general classrooms used by all academic departments.

Other major construction and renewal projects were completed between 2008 and 2010. A new observatory was constructed near Winter Hall. Relocating the observatory from its previous site was part of the master plan creating space eventually for construction of a chapel/performing arts auditorium. In addition, athletic facilities for baseball, soccer, and track-and-field competition were rebuilt and enhanced. Since 2010, there have also been several major efforts to renovate or remodel existing facilities. After the completion of the new Adams Center, the building formerly housing the Art Department was gutted, refurbished, and given to the Music Department for offices and practice rooms. The space vacated by the Music Department was remodeled and now provides the Theatre Arts Department with much-needed expanded facilities. In 2010, the college undertook a substantial renovation of the library, and during the last several years, the college initiated a phased renewing of the biology and chemistry labs in Whittier Hall. A recent $750,000 grant from the Fletcher Jones Foundation has allowed the college to renovate several additional labs in 2015. Over the past four years, the college has also invested nearly a million dollars in the renovation of residence halls.

The new construction has been financed largely from capital fundraising with some modest assistance from insurance payments following the fire. Originally, the ambitious master plan was highly influenced by a pledge of $75 million in 2006. That plan called for the construction of not only Winter Hall and the Adams Center but also a chapel/performing arts auditorium. In 2008, the Board of Trustees approved initiating construction, and the first installment of the multi-term pledge was received in 2008. However, in 2009, Westmont received word that the remainder of the 11-year, $75-million pledge would go unfulfilled. Consequently, the scope of the project was
scaled back, eliminating the chapel/auditorium from the project, which was still in the design phase. Even with the reduction in project scope, additional funds were needed to complete Adams Center and Winter Hall, buildings already under construction. Westmont eventually secured long-term debt financing in 2010, which allowed for the completion of all buildings in the revised project on time. (More information on the funding of the debt is provided in the discussion of finances and sustainability in Chapter 5.)

Westmont persisted through the national recession of 2008 with some belt-tightening but without personnel lay-offs. The subsequent years have been fruitful for the college’s students, scholars, and community life. New study-abroad programs were launched in Istanbul (2012), Jerusalem (2013), and Northern Europe (2014). The President’s Breakfast—now one of Santa Barbara’s largest community forums—has been a vibrant date on the community calendar for the past eight years. Speakers have included political figures (Vicente Fox, Robert Gates, Colin Powell, and Condoleezza Rice), popular historians (David McCullough, Doris Kearns Goodwin, and Walter Isaacson), social commentators (Thomas Friedman and Fareed Zakaria), and Nobel Laureate and microfinance pioneer Muhammad Yunus. Westmont’s athletic teams have enjoyed especially strong seasons in recent years, winning three straight All-Sports titles for the Golden State Athletic Conference (2013–2015) and sending three teams to NAIA national championship games (winning the women’s basketball title in 2013 and earning women’s soccer and men’s basketball runners-up honors in 2013 and 2015, respectively). The Westmont Ridley-Tree Museum of Art was opened in 2010 and has already become a significant local venue, with exhibits ranging from local artists to French Barbizon painters, folk innovators, African-American painters and sculptors, and Dutch masters. A Westmont production of *Pirates of Penzance* was selected by the Kennedy Center as one of the top three musicals produced by American colleges and universities in 2014. New academic emphases in Gender Studies and Music Education were initiated. In the spring of 2015, Westmont announced the launch of a downtown study center, where Westmont undergraduates will enroll in a semester program focused on social entrepreneurship. The Eaton Family Program in Entrepreneurship has expanded the curriculum and internships of the Economics and Business Department. This summer, the college also offered its first Lead Where You Stand conference, attracting hundreds of attendees, as one of many efforts to expand our programs for the broader public.

**The Steering Committee and the Self-Study**

Five years after the Tea Fire—and just 18 months after the productive special visit of 2011—Westmont once again began the process of preparing for an accreditation visit. While this review comes quickly, it arrives at a profitable season for self-reflection; the years of resilience and recovery have also been a time for new ventures. Following five years of interim chief academic officers, a new Provost came aboard in 2012, preceded just slightly by a new Vice Provost. Even as Westmont was appointing new academic leaders, WSCUC was refining its own guidelines. To get their bearings on those expectations, a team of five administrators attended the WSCUC workshop in Oakland during September of 2013. Within a couple months, the college had formed the Steering Committee that would oversee the preparation of this report. The members are:

- Mark Sargent, Provost, committee co-chair
- Chris Call, Vice President for Administration and Planning, committee co-chair
- Dinora Cardoso, Professor of Spanish, representing the Humanities Division
- Stu Cleek, Associate Dean for Residence Life
• Patti Hunter, Vice Provost, Professor of Mathematics
• Tom Knecht, Associate Professor of Political Science, representing the Social Sciences Division
• Eileen McMahon McQuade, Associate Professor of Biology, representing the Natural and Behavioral Sciences Division
• Tatiana Nazarenko, Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness
• Molly Riley, Instructional and Research Librarian
• Bill Wright, Associate Provost, Accreditation Liaison Officer

Meeting initially in December of 2013, the Steering Committee reviewed the essential documents: the 2005 Capacity and Preparatory Review Report, the 2007 Educational Effectiveness Review Report, the 2011 Special Visit Report, the various team appraisals, and the subsequent Commission letters. Members also studied accreditation standards and the Criteria for Review (CFRs), a description of the institutional review process, the Self-Review Under the Standards Worksheet, the compliance checklist, and a number of WSCUC rubrics.

The next step was to complete the Self-Review Under the Standards Worksheet. While the self-study was being completed, members of the Steering Committee were assigned one or more report components and asked to outline the themes and issues that we should cover in those sections. The entire committee read and modified the draft outlines. Individual committee members were then assigned to develop written drafts based on each outline. All of the drafts were distributed to the full Steering Committee for critique and refinement.

By the summer of 2014, the Steering Committee began identifying the report’s primary themes. At that point, the committee chose not to build chapters around each of the report components but rather to frame the chapters around the WSCUC standards. Subtitles would indicate when we were addressing required components. The proposed organization of the report was approved by WSCUC Vice President Maureen Maloney, our liaison, in November of 2014, when she visited Westmont and met with the Steering Committee.

By December of 2014, one member of the committee was tasked with synthesizing the various drafts, outlines, and evidence into an initial narrative of the report. Several drafts were reviewed by committee members. During the spring of 2015, the report was vetted with the Steering Committee, major faculty committees (including the Academic Senate, Faculty Council, General Education Committee, and Program Review Committee), the President's Council, the President's Executive Team, and finally, the Board of Trustees. There was student input as well since students are members of the Academic Senate and President's Council. Each group was invited to offer critiques and make recommendations, and those comments led to subsequent revisions. The final report benefited from the contributions of a broad college constituency.

Component 2: Compliance with Standards

The WSCUC Steering Committee also directed the completion of the Self-Review under the Standards Worksheet. Getting an early start, the committee had nearly completed the review by the fall of 2014 using the worksheet dated July 13, 2013. In November of 2014, when Maureen Maloney visited Westmont, the college learned that a new worksheet, dated August 27, 2014, had been adopted by WSCUC. Dr. Maloney stated the college could use the older format, so the worksheet in this report reflects the 2013 version (Appendix A01).
In the initial phase of the self-study, two or three members of the Steering Committee were assigned to each standard. The committee identified the college departments and constituency groups that would have an informed opinion regarding how well Westmont complies with each standard and what evidence could be gathered to show that compliance. In all, 23 different college departments, committees, and organizations were identified and participated in the study. In several cases, individuals or committees provided perspectives on more than one standard. Respondents were contacted, asked for interviews, and sent copies of the standard, CFRs, and a memo explaining the purpose of the interview. Respondents offered perceptions of institutional strengths and weaknesses for the CFRs and pointed to evidence that supported their judgments. These interviews were done in small groups, such that numerous sessions were devoted to each standard. Once interviews were completed, information for each standard and CFR was compiled and distributed to the Steering Committee.

In the second phase of our self-study, the Steering Committee reviewed and discussed all of these observations and appraisals from the community. After the committee reached consensus about what provided the best evidence of compliance, it assigned values to the "self-review rating" and the "importance to address" categories for the CFRs. Finally, the Steering Committee deliberated and agreed upon responses to questions in the standards’ synthesis and reflections sections as well as to the summative questions.

The final phase of the self-study involved vetting the steering committee’s Self-Review Worksheet with key leadership groups. This vetting process included the President's Executive Team, Academic Senate, and Faculty Council. Worksheet modifications were made as needed.

**Major Findings from the Self-Study**

The self-study process revealed that there was a high degree of consensus on Westmont’s performances under the standards. A broad array of faculty, administrators, and student leaders participated in the self-study. Individual opinions were expressed, but in general, a wide range of participants arrived at very consistent conclusions. This concurrence was apparent in judgments about institutional strengths and areas requiring improvement.

1. **Areas Identified as Institutional Strengths.** In no category of the self-study was there more unanimity of opinion than with CFR 1.1. Faculty, administrators, staff, and students know the institutional mission, support it, and point largely to the same documents as evidence. The mission informs curriculum and guides major decisions and priorities. The most significant institutional strengths set the blueprint for this report’s themes:

   - **Richness of Mission**
     - Community ownership of clear and compelling college mission
     - Quality of a Westmont degree, holistic vision for learning
     - Strong academic and co-curricular partnership

   - **Refined Planning and Review**
     - Significant progress made toward improving program review and assessment
     - Adoption and implementation of an effective strategic planning process

   - **Resilience of our Community**
     - Quick and effective responses to the Tea Fire and economic implosion
     - Ongoing emphasis on financial sustainability and nimbleness
     - Spirit of collegiality and dedication to the institution
2. Areas Requiring Improvement. The process of gauging ourselves against the standards and the CFRs drew attention to 13 areas worthy of immediate improvement. The following list summarizes those areas, identifies the person or group with primary responsibility, and notes progress to date. The timeline for completing most of these tasks was relatively short (6–12 months), and we anticipate that nearly all of them will be completed or substantially improved by the time of the visiting team’s arrival in March of 2016. A few items, such as developing the Launch program, are larger, institutional endeavors that will continue in the 2015–2016 academic year and beyond.

- Improve our programs to “Launch” students and graduates into employment, internships, graduate study, and other post-baccalaureate opportunities (CFR 2.11, 2.13). This task is a high priority in the current strategic plan, and will be guided by a strategic planning subcommittee (known as the B2/B3 committee and chaired by the Vice President for Student Life). Progress to date: Merged Office of Internships with Office of Life Planning, started search for program director, started collaboration with Alumni Office.
- Update academic department websites to establish format consistency for presenting program review work (CFR 2.1, 2.2). Overseen by the Vice Provost. Progress: Complete.
- Ask Diversity Committee to assess CFR 1.4 and improvements. Overseen by the Provost and Diversity Committee. Progress: Diversity is now one of the cross-cutting priorities in the college’s strategic plan. The Diversity Committee of the faculty and staff and the Diversity and Global Engagement Committee of the trustees have assessed the areas of diversity needing the most attention. Our progress and ongoing work are discussed in Chapter 4 of this report.
- Create an academic decision-making “map” for faculty. Overseen by the Provost and Vice Provost. Progress: Complete. (Appendix B5)
- Develop syllabus template. Overseen by Provost and Academic Senate. Progress: Complete. Posted online. (Appendix B6)
- Collect more data on alums, including graduate studies and initial employment. Overseen by the Associate Provost and Alumni Office. Progress: Multiple surveys completed for WSCUC self-study process, decision to participate in “First Destinations” survey. Progress: Ongoing. (see Appendix B7 for initial findings)
- Identify highlights of departments’ program review outcomes (CFR 4.1). Overseen by the Vice Provost and department chairs. Progress: Complete (see Chapter 4).
- Review level of academic support for students who struggle (CFR 2.11, 2.13). Overseen by many individuals, though primary innovations are led by the Vice Provost, Registrar, and Vice President for Student Life. Progress: Student success is now a vital focus of the B2/B3 subcommittee of the Strategic Planning Committee, chaired by the Vice President for Student Life.
- Continue to expand institutional research and provide appropriate data to decision-makers (CFR 4.2). The Associate Provost is the college’s institutional research officer. Progress: This task will be ongoing, and the Associate Provost now has more time devoted to this endeavor due to revision of job responsibilities (see Appendix B8 for initial task assignments).
• Improve and streamline assessment of general education courses (CFR 2.7). Overseen primarily by the Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness and the General Education Committee. Progress discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

• Continue to address strategic planning priorities. Overseen by the President with the assistance of the Vice President for Administration and Planning (CFR 4.6). Progress: We have continued the good progress made from 2007–2014. The new strategic map and various tracks of work have been developed, approved by the trustees, and are focal points for our efforts (Appendix B1). Strategic planning is discussed throughout this report.

• Engage adjunct faculty in student learning assessment. Overseen by the Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness. Progress: This area needs increased attention.

• Implement and assess appropriate technology enhancements to student learning (CFR 3.5). Overseen by the Vice Provost and the Vice President for Advancement/CIO. Progress: Several new projects and pilot programs have been launched (see Technology).

3. Conclusion. The Steering Committee found that completing the self-study worksheet was a valuable exercise. First, it brought focus to the task by identifying themes Westmont would need to study, assess, and report on to WSCUC. Since some members of the Steering Committee had not previously been involved with accreditation, the worksheet became a "syllabus" for our work. Second, because we used feedback from multiple focus groups to complete the form, the process stimulated many conversations about quality that otherwise would not have occurred. There was considerable value in getting broad input. The completed worksheet reflects campus-wide consensus, not simply the opinions of the Steering Committee, and helped us identify specific areas for refinement and ongoing attention. Finally, the completion of the worksheet took place even as the college was developing the next phase of its strategic map (for 2014–2017), and concurrent participation of several individuals in both the self-study process and the strategic planning process ensured some mutual enrichment of the two endeavors.

As an institution committed to a dual heritage of faith and the liberal arts, Westmont will always be drawn to language of wonder and idealism. In that respect, completing the self-study and the report—with their emphases on standards, empiricism, and benchmarks—has helped us test our oratory against our evidence. No college fully climbs to the pinnacle of its ambitions. Upon completion of the self-study, however, it is our opinion that Westmont is in substantial compliance with the four standards and the CFRs. We have found that the WSCUC reaccreditation process has not only been an exercise in compliance but also a prompt for reflection on the institution’s principles, priorities, and longings. The following chapter, which explores the “meaning, quality, and integrity of our degree,” will survey various measures and mandates, yet it also seeks to convey why our mission continues to inspire aspiration and loyalty.
CHAPTER TWO

INSTITUTIONAL PURPOSES AND EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES (WSCUC STANDARD 1)

Addressing Report Component 3

Just outside the library—on a ledge above the art museum—there is a large sandstone boulder, broad enough for a seminar to convene on its surface. On its underside, fossils mark its origin as ocean sediment, well before tectonic shifts formed the steep gradients of the Santa Ynez Mountains. The rock is an iconic site on campus. It is not uncommon to witness a professor with a small class gathered on the boulder. It is also a favorite setting for a lone student or a group of friends to sit, read, converse, or simply gaze north toward the foothills or south toward the Santa Barbara Channel. When the morning fog lifts, you can linger on the rock and trace the volcanic contours of Anacapa Island some thirty miles away.

This site—a place of both hospitality and vision—embodies much of the ethos of Westmont College. With its oak-covered walkways, Westmont is a bucolic venue for contemplation and discourse. The faculty gather each Thursday at lunch, when they hear lectures from visiting scholars, reports about sabbaticals in the Middle East, or presentations about the galaxies mapped with the campus telescope. Students regularly gather for public lectures in the old estate building, convene three times a week for worship services, and engage professors in extended conversations. Westmont entrusts much of the learning process to the exchange of ideas among peers as well as to the formal and serendipitous mentoring relationships between faculty and students. Such conversations are part of a culture that emphasizes critical analysis, ethical discernment, and complex questions of civic and personal responsibility. By many measures—such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)—Westmont is a place of academic rigor matched by a supportive, close-knit campus culture.

Even as the hillside setting provides larger vistas across the ocean, Westmont’s educational milieu stretches well beyond the campus. Two-thirds of the student body complete one or more semesters in international or multicultural contexts. A higher percentage of students complete internships than the norm for California’s private institutions. Lectures focused on global issues are hosted frequently. Expanded programming opportunities are on the horizon with the scheduled groundbreaking for the Westmont Institute for Global Learning and Leadership in 2016. More than half of full-time faculty were either born outside of the United States, completed degrees at non-American institutions, or have taught extensively abroad. Service programs and summer study take students to six continents; the college encourages undergraduates to explore themes of global citizenship.

For each student, the meaning of a Westmont degree will be shaped by his or her own unique trajectory; however, our desire is that a Westmont education will include a sense of community and exploration, a shared space and a range of outward journeys. To provide coherence for this blend of experiences, the college regularly refers to the five planks of its mission, planks that provide the framework below for a discussion about the meaning of our degree. To ensure quality and integrity, the college relies on a variety of barometers, both
internal and external; the second half of this chapter surveys these indices, referencing some data and protocols that convey value.

Component 3a: Meaning of a Westmont Degree

The Five Planks of the Mission

Embedded in Westmont’s mission statement are five planks frequently used to define the college’s identity and intentions: *Westmont College is an undergraduate, residential, Christian, liberal arts community serving God's kingdom by cultivating thoughtful scholars, grateful servants, and faithful leaders for global engagement with the academy, church, and world.* On its own, each plank shares attributes common to many other institutions, but the aggregate gives Westmont a distinctive character and culture. The planks are not only part of the common lexicon at Westmont but are also at the heart of the institution’s strategic planning, programming, and marketing (CFR 1.1). The meaning of a Westmont degree, in many ways, relies on nuances in the five planks.

1. Undergraduate. At a time when many small liberal arts colleges are expanding into graduate programs, Westmont remains by choice a definitively undergraduate institution. This focus provides lucidity for the academic community: conversations about curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment concentrate on themes and challenges shared by a full-time faculty committed to undergraduates. At the core of this commitment to undergraduates is the desire to give students access to our best scholars and teachers from the very outset of their college years. Most general education courses—from history to religious studies to biology and physics—are taught by tenured or tenure-track faculty. Compared to higher education in general, Westmont has a low percentage (roughly 15%) of the curriculum taught by part-time instructors. Further, the hiring of part-timers is often due either to the need to tap a professional’s unique expertise or to support a robust sabbatical program.

   The focus on undergraduates encourages faculty to help students pursue entrance to top graduate schools rather than to recruit them for in-house post-baccalaureate programs. Despite being one of the nation’s smaller colleges, Westmont has been ranked among the top 10% of liberal arts institutions in the Franklin and Marshall surveys of the baccalaureate origins of doctoral recipients. In recent decades, undergraduate research has become an increasingly significant component of the academic program, and the college hosts multiple events showcasing students’ scholarship. A wide scope of lectures and performances on campus also cultivates inquiry, discourse, and reflection among undergraduates with their faculty mentors. Such events enlarge students’ vision for prospective study and vocation. Whereas many institutions tend to locate their intellectual frontiers in their graduate programs, Westmont has created several institutes to provide some of that spark. These institutes organize forums, workshops, and lectures by scholars and public intellectuals, not only engaging the broader academy and community but also providing fruitful opportunities for undergraduate learning.

2. Residential. Westmont is a predominantly residential college, committed to dynamic social and service experiences and a strong co-curricular and academic partnership. The college emphasizes the centrality of community living as part of the educational experience. Living in close proximity encourages students to develop personal identity, to nurture empathy, to cope with stress, to learn the art of compromise, and to build and sustain interpersonal relationships. Residential life programs at Westmont draw upon Higher Education Research Institute (HERI)
studies that identify peer influence as a catalyst for students’ personal and intellectual growth. A strong investment in resident directors and resident assistants provides leaders able to help students solve problems in the context of community.

In its statement of purpose and philosophy, the Student Life Division acknowledges that students’ residential experience needs to be tailored to their maturation and growth over the multi-year college journey. At present, first-year students are assigned to their own residence halls, where programming helps them with the transition to college. The new Westmont Institute for Global Learning and Leadership will provide living space and intentional programming for juniors and seniors. With the addition of this center, the college’s residence halls will allow over 95% of students to live in college housing.

There has long been healthy collaboration between Student Life and academics, and many of the college’s residential programs draw on the talents and service of professors. That connection is reinforced by the presence of faculty housing nearby. The 41 houses adjacent to the college in the Las Barrancas neighborhood enable students to enjoy meals and meetings in faculty homes.

3. Christian. Westmont is a Christian college in the evangelical Protestant tradition. Cultivating the habits and disciplines of spiritual inquiry and practice is a priority for the educational and co-curricular programs. One of the two Institutional Learning Outcomes that Westmont has added to the five core competencies required by WSCUC is “Christian Understanding, Practices, and Affections.” In many respects, the college is a laboratory for the next generation of leadership and service in the church; students are challenged to consider how they might live and serve within communities of faith.

Though Westmont shares many characteristics of other church-affiliated institutions, the college is independent of any denomination, and its faculty and student body come from a range of different churches and affiliations. Theologically, the college is defined by a faith statement reflecting the broad stream of evangelical Protestantism rather than a single ecclesiastical alliance. Westmont endeavors to build on the primary features of this evangelical heritage—encouragement of biblical study and contemplation, regular participation in communities of worship, emphasis on integrity and accountability in personal behavior, and the habits of philanthropy, outreach, and service. Those commitments are evident in the college’s programming: a common Chapel program, the new Dallas Willard Center for Spiritual Formation, the high participation in internships and local ministries, and numerous service opportunities in local and international settings. Without a sponsoring denomination, the college allows for a wide range of discourse about ideas in order to educate, inspire, and challenge rather than indoctrinate. Westmont welcomes students from diverse religious traditions who wish to engage in a context where issues of faith are vigorously explored. With or without religious convictions, students are allowed to develop their own perspectives and goals.

4. Liberal Arts. Westmont is committed to a broad, interdisciplinary vision of the liberal arts. In that spirit, the college fosters student engagement with questions of truth, beauty, and justice. Most major challenges facing graduates in their lives and careers will require multi-disciplinary remedies. To cite Harvard’s Derek Bok, we trust that a liberal education will “illumine problems and enlighten judgment on innumerable occasions in later life.”

Accordingly, the general education program is defined not only by a mix of different subjects but also by a blend of common “contexts,” “inquiries,” and “skills” as well as preparation for “compassionate action.” To foster this blend of intellectual curiosity and social responsibility, the
college draws students to a variety of forums and discussions beyond the classroom. The most recent NSSE results, for instance, reveal that Westmont seniors are more inclined than students from all NSSE institutions to “attend events that address important social, economic, or political issues” (71% vs. 46%).

The ideal of the liberal arts at Westmont encourages creativity, exploration, and innovation in teaching. While the college sets discernable goals for its courses, the institution respects the tradition of liberal learning that values improvisational pedagogies as well as curiosity and creativity in the pursuit of knowledge. We embrace the principle that the liberal arts help students develop a vision for a meaningful life, appreciate democratic community, and aspire to serve the public good.

As an embodiment of this vision, Westmont founded the Gaede Institute for the Liberal Arts, which hosts local and national conversations about the future of the liberal arts. The Institute also provides learning opportunities for communities outside the academy, promotes educational access for first-generation and underserved populations, and fosters interdisciplinary contact between faculty and students through extracurricular events on campus.

5. Global Engagement. Even as Westmont tries to build community on campus, the college encourages students and its faculty to participate in international and off-campus programs. More than two-thirds of Westmont students spend at least one semester studying off-campus, typically in international contexts. Westmont faculty now lead semester programs centered in England, continental Europe, Istanbul, Jerusalem, and Mexico. A new program for Asia (in Korea, China, and Singapore) is set for 2016 and a global health program for Uganda is under development. Numerous summer study trips have had international settings, such as a peacemaking seminar in Northern Ireland, theatre tours in England, economic seminars in China, and kinesiology practicums in Costa Rica.

The emphasis on enriching global perspectives is enhanced by faculty participation. Nearly 40% of Westmont’s full-time faculty have led Westmont-sponsored trips, allowing for a vigorous discourse about global learning continuing after a return to campus. As the college’s global programs have grown, the faculty and Global Education Office have endeavored to enrich the programs by emphasizing key features—greater reliance on pre-trip orientation courses and post-trip reflection and re-entry seminars, more immersion in local cultures, and a stronger focus on language learning. The new Westmont Institute for Global Learning and Leadership will provide a living and learning context for students returning from semesters overseas. Students will explore how international learning experiences have shaped their vision for graduate study, service, and vocation.

Westmont recognizes that a critical aspect of global engagement is the cultivation of diversity (CFR 1.4). Diversifying the community reflects the goals of a liberal arts education, including creativity, empathy, appreciation for multiple perspectives, and understanding of a global society. As the philosophical groundwork for such efforts, the faculty, staff, and trustees recently crafted and refined two documents: “What Does Westmont Mean by Diversity?” (Appendix B9) and “Biblical and Theological Foundations of Diversity” (Appendix B10). The latter, adopted by the trustees in 2012, calls for the community to dedicate itself to “the investigation and embodiment of diversity. Such dedication expresses our Christian identity and rightly stewards God’s gifts to us [and] provides a basis for excellence in scholarship and community life . . .” In addition to these two foundational documents, the college has also developed a statement, “Diversity Matters,” that includes long-range goals and aspirational
language about our ideals (Appendix B11). It urges students and employees to “approach others respectfully—avoiding the natural tendency to deal with differences by vilifying, romanticizing, or victimizing.” The college’s two most recent strategic plans established priorities to “increase diversity and global awareness in all college sectors” (2011–2014) and “cultivate diversity and global engagement across the college” (2014–2017). (Some of our diversity initiatives are recapped in Chapter 4.)

Component 3b: Quality and Integrity of a Westmont Degree

Quality and Integrity: Protocols and Benchmarks

Westmont has long sustained a vibrant conversation about accountability and quality. Self-reflection and a desire to serve others have strong roots in the evangelical Christian perspective. As a small liberal arts college, Westmont can gather its faculty, staff, and students frequently for sessions in which we exchange ideas and explore improvements. Such sessions include Faculty Forums (weekly lunches for the full faculty), Provost’s Forums (for co-curricular staff), monthly Staff Forums, monthly faculty meetings, regular Gaede Institute lectures, and a semester-long seminar for new staff. A survey of recent event topics reveals the pervasiveness of the five planks in our discourse; it also reveals interest in a steady dialogue about pedagogy and learning (Appendix B12). For instance, within the last academic year, the weekly Faculty Forums have not only covered large scholarly themes (e.g., new research on oxytocin, religion in Africa, and the economy of Asia) but also teaching and learning practices (e.g., NSSE results, effective grading strategies, critical thinking prompts, educational technologies, new global perspectives in the curriculum, and innovative syllabi). Along with these explorations of pedagogy, Westmont is increasingly attentive to internal review procedures and external benchmarks. The balance of this chapter will survey several of the indices that we use to measure quality, ensure integrity, and gauge the need for improvement.

1. Learning Outcomes (CFR 2.2a, 2.3, 2.4, 2.7, 2.11). The ongoing discussion of Westmont’s curriculum and value has been enriched in the last eight years by a more vigorous commitment to systematic assessment and program review. In the academic program, these protocols are defined by three central strands. The first strand concentrates on the Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) that epitomize the broad goals for student learning, including the five ILOs delineated by WSCUC (*):

- **Christian Understanding, Practices and Affections**: Graduates of Westmont will demonstrate literacy in biblical and orthodox Christian faith. Graduates of Westmont will demonstrate faithfulness in Christian service.
  
- **Global Awareness and Diversity**: Graduates of Westmont will be able to analyze global patterns from at least two different perspectives (social, cultural, economic, political, religious, technological, or educational). Graduates will be able to analyze topics and human experiences using categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, social status, and disability.

- **Critical Thinking**: Graduates of Westmont College will be able to accurately evaluate the strength of evidence in support of a claim and exercise discernment and creativity in solving problems.

- **Written Communication**: Graduates of Westmont will write effectively in various contexts.

- **Oral Communication**: Graduates of Westmont will effectively communicate orally in various contexts.
• **Information Literacy** (*): Graduates of Westmont will be able to identify, evaluate, and integrate sources effectively and ethically in various contexts.

• **Quantitative Literacy** (*): Graduates of Westmont will apply relevant scientific, mathematical, and logical methods to analyze and solve problems effectively and be able to utilize the results appropriately when making decisions.

The second strand examines learning in the general education program while the third consists of departmental reviews. Co-curricular programs also perform annual and biennial assessments and reviews. Within these formal mechanisms for review, there are distinct connections to the college’s five planks. The five ILOs mandated byWSCUC and the scope of our general education program reflect the broad aims of *undergraduate* learning in a *liberal arts* context, while two Westmont-specific ILOs articulate the *Christian* and *global* dimensions of our mission. Reviews within the Student Life Division explore multiple aspects of the *residential* experience, including emotional health, personal responsibility, interpersonal relations, and appreciation for diversity. All these formal mechanisms are discussed at length in Chapter 3, while Chapter 4 recounts what we have learned from these assessments and reviews.

**2. Faculty and Co-Curricular Staff.** As a residential liberal arts college, Westmont recognizes that the quality of its programs relies predominantly on the excellence of the faculty and the co-curricular staff. By traditional measures of educational quality, the academic program is well resourced (CFR 3.1). With 96 full-time faculty positions and a cadre of part-time adjunct faculty, the student-to-faculty ratio is 11:1. In the 2015-2016 academic year, 98.7% of tenure-track and tenured faculty had completed a doctorate or another terminal degree. Each year, about 85% of all instruction is provided by full-time faculty. Average class size in non-tutorial classes is 18.9 students. In the Student Life Division, Westmont has highly qualified resident directors, all of whom have earned a master’s degree, and a low ratio of students to resident assistants (27:1). Westmont has made deliberate decisions to establish a supportive learning environment for undergraduate students.

Accordingly, then, recruiting teachers and scholars—as well as counselors, coaches, and resident directors—who are committed to mentoring undergraduates in a Christian, liberal arts setting remains a major priority. The hiring process is rigorous and selective. Candidates for full-time faculty posts are carefully vetted by search committees (which include external faculty members from other disciplines) before they are invited for campus interviews. A typical two-day campus interview includes a public colloquium and interactions with many key faculty members and administrators, including the President, Provost, and Vice President for Student Life. Candidates are assessed on all four of the institution’s major criteria—teaching, scholarship, capacity for service, and support for the institutional mission. The selection process is careful and prudent: even when good candidates are available, the faculty is committed to extending searches in order to find the best candidates. In the last five years, for instance, the average length of a faculty search has been nearly two years. Part-time faculty are also appointed with care: each adjunct or short-term appointee must be interviewed by the Provost or Vice Provost.

Promotion and tenure reviews are also extensive and require multiple levels of documentation about teaching excellence (CFR 3.2). An extensive sabbatical program, along with professional development funds, supports the ongoing enrichment of the faculty (CFR 2.8, 3.3). Approximately $200,000 is set aside each year for individual professional development...
requests, and other grants and budgets support collaborative projects, campus speakers and consultants, and additional ways of encouraging scholarly and professional growth.

There are multiple signs that faculty are deeply engaged with student learning. The results of our annual IDEA Student Ratings consistently indicate that students regard their Westmont faculty as effective teachers. In 2014, the average score for Westmont faculty in the IDEA ratings categories was higher than the average for the IDEA database. At the course level, more than 80% of classes are at or above the IDEA database average in the categories of “Excellent Teacher” and “Excellent Course.” By the time students reach the senior year, they indicate faculty have been extensively involved in cultivating high-impact learning practices. For instance:

- Students take practicum and internships classes in 18 of 19 academic departments, and many enroll in additional internship opportunities. In 2014–2015, the college allocated 2.4 FTE to supervise departmental and interdepartmental internships.
- Full-time faculty from Westmont lead most of the domestic and international off-campus semester programs as well as the two-to-four international summer programs annually.
- Faculty-mentored student research, which until recently was primarily in the Natural and Behavioral Science Division, is now occurring across all divisions. Each summer, 20–25 students receive financial support to engage in faculty-directed research projects. Research results are featured each September at a research symposium. In addition, 30–40 students doing research during the academic year present their work at the annual spring research symposium.

The hiring process for athletic, chapel, and Student Life personnel is extensive and reflects our strong tradition of an academic and co-curricular partnership. The Provost and faculty representatives participate in interviews for co-curricular appointments. The strategic planning process involves collaborative teams of academic and co-curricular personnel, and the Provost and Vice President for Student Life meet weekly to discuss common projects. Westmont’s desire for such a strong partnership led to the recent inauguration of the Jane Hideko Higa Award, given to one faculty member and one staff member who embody this spirit of collaboration. The award is named in honor of our long-serving Vice President for Student Life, a 2014 victim of ALS, who promoted rapport and cooperation with faculty.

3. Ratings. External rankings are not the sole indicators of merit, yet Westmont heeds how it is appraised on the major public scorecards. For the last several years, the college has appeared in US News and World Report’s first tier of national liberal arts colleges. Among Westmont’s stronger points in that review is its history of matching predictions for graduation rates.

Westmont is also among the top 100 schools in the Forbes and the Princeton Review rankings. Most recently, Westmont scored extremely well in national ratings of return on investment. In 2014, the college ranked 15th among all schools—public and private, college and university—in the Washington Post’s listing of institutions from which graduates experienced the highest average growth in salary between starting rates and mid-career rates. On a similar note, Forbes placed Westmont 23rd on its list of liberal arts institutions whose graduates earn the highest salaries. In light of this return on investment, Business Insider recently identified Westmont as a college that was actually “underrated” by U.S. News and World Report.

One striking element about Westmont’s strong marks for the career progress of graduates is that Westmont’s students are less economically motivated than those at most peer institutions. In
the 2014 administration of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), 45.9% of Westmont’s entering class had identified “helping others in difficulty” as an “essential” goal, while 22.2% sought “being well off financially” as an “essential” objective. These findings contrast notably with the goals of students from the other nonsectarian private institutions (31.3% for “helping” and 46.0% for “financial well-being”). For many Westmont students, then, career success is not envisioned at the expense of other civic and humanitarian goals. Westmont is also on the Templeton Foundation’s list of the nation’s top “character-building colleges.”

4. National Survey of Student Engagement. As part of assessment, Westmont periodically administers the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), largely to compare our educational practices to those of benchmark groups (CFR 4.1). Results from NSSE surveys are shared at faculty meetings, lunches, and the Provost’s Forums.

The most recent NSSE results (2014) demonstrate Westmont’s commitment to high-impact practices—notably, study abroad, research with faculty, learning communities, and internships—that characterize the strongest institutions. More than 96% of Westmont seniors participated in two or more high-impact practices, considerably above the national average (62%) and the average at California private institutions (73%). In several of NSSE’s major categories—reflective and integrative learning and quality of interactions with faculty, staff, and peers—Westmont’s scores for seniors were comparable to the top 10% of institutions in the nation. On the vast majority of questions related to pedagogy—such as organization, explanation, feedback—Westmont’s scores exceeded the mean for California private institutions. Our students are also far more likely than that cohort to be involved in campus social activities and to attend events addressing social, economic, or political issues. Moreover, given the residential and global planks of Westmont’s mission, it is notable that NSSE scores for “supportive environment” and “global study” place the college in the nation’s upper 10% (Appendix B13).

While Westmont’s NSSE results did reveal several features of a vibrant learning community, the college also uses the survey to identify areas for enrichment. For instance, career planning and academic advising receive less affirmation from students; such findings have prompted the college to undertake a multi-year Launch project in its latest strategic plan (see Chapter 1). Similarly, Westmont’s high-impact practices are far less evident in the first-year experience than in coursework for seniors. These results have prompted several recent initiatives in a more integrated first-year experience program, including a pilot First-Year Seminar, an expanded orientation program, and a more robust “early alert” protocol.

5. AAC&U Outcomes and Degree Qualification Profile. Although Westmont does not use the AAC&U’s Essential Learning Outcomes or the Lumina Foundation’s Degree Qualification Profile (DQP) as precise templates for its curricula, the college recognizes the value of appraising its goals in light of national discourse about the purpose of undergraduate degrees. In preparation for this report, the college audited its ILOs and program learning outcomes, comparing them to AAC&U outcomes and the DQP’s matrix of proficiencies (CFR 2.1, 2.2).

Westmont’s institutional, program, and general education outcomes align quite closely with most of the AAC&U’s Essential Learning Outcomes. Our general education requirements cover all of the subjects identified in the AAC&U’s Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World. Within the AAC&U’s list of Intellectual and Practical Skills, Westmont’s outcomes and assignments correspond closely to Inquiry and Analysis, Creative and Critical Thinking, Written Communication, and Teamwork and Problem Solving. Of the 19 academic
departments at Westmont, 18 provide capstone, synthesizing projects that the AAC&U defines as “signature assignments” in its LEAP initiative (Liberal Education, America’s Promise). Two-thirds of these Westmont projects have the interdisciplinary problem-solving tasks that exemplify the ideals presented in the LEAP criteria.

Westmont’s program learning goals also align fairly closely with the DQP. That is especially true for five of the seven Intellectual Skills outlined by the DQP—Engaging Diverse Perspectives, Communicative Fluency, Oral Communication, Analytical Inquiry, and Ethical Reasoning. Some alignment exists, yet could be strengthened, on Quantitative Literacy and Information Literacy—recent areas of scrutiny in Westmont’s own ILO assessments. The final two categories of the DQP—Applied/Collaborative Learning and Civic/Global Learning—are recurrent points of emphasis in Westmont’s curricula and mission. The projects, presentations, and documentation recommended in the Applied and Collaborative Learning category are strongly manifested in Westmont’s annual research symposium; this event features work by students in all Natural and Behavioral Science fields and is increasingly used by faculty in English as a capstone for student work. A wide range of student artwork, music performances, theatre productions, and internship projects fit this framework as well.

In short, a comparison with the AAC&U Essentials and the DQP matrix showed strong correlation with Westmont’s primary learning goals. Although Westmont will not be using the DQP as a blueprint for curricular development, this audit introduced us to some new student projects and tasks that we will consider as we refine our efforts to foster learning.

6. Graduate and Gallup-Purdue Studies. One of the more compelling studies about the outcomes of a college education is the recent Gallup-Purdue study of what contributes to graduates’ “thriving” in their lives and careers. The Great Jobs, Great Lives Report identified a handful of factors that influenced individuals’ emotional, social, and financial well-being after graduation. In the wake of this national survey of 30,000 college graduates, Westmont embedded questions about these same factors in its own survey (Appendix B07). While the methodologies of the two surveys vary slightly and comparisons cannot be exact, the overall results were encouraging for Westmont.

Eighty-two percent of Westmont respondents “strongly agreed” with the statement that they “had one or more professors who made them excited about learning.” The response to the Gallup-Purdue survey on the same question was 63%. Just as tellingly, 96% of Westmont respondents stated that they agreed that “their professors cared about them” as people, with 67% saying that they “strongly agreed.” By contrast, the Gallup-Purdue survey indicated that faculty’s care for students was rather low across the nation (27%). Furthermore, in the national survey, only 20% of students claimed to be “extremely active in extracurricular activities during college.” Yet over 88% of Westmont respondents claimed to be “extremely involved” in extracurricular activities. That 88% response is consistent with the college’s own records of students’ participation in its many extracurricular programs. Similarly, only 29% of college graduates nationwide stated that they held an internship during college while over 60% of Westmont’s respondents claimed that they had one. This gap echoes NSSE data indicating that the participation of Westmont seniors in internships was notably higher than the state and national averages. The significance of such data is that the Gallup-Purdue study links such factors—exciting and empathetic professors, internships and extracurricular activities—to graduates’ flourishing after college.
7. Strategic Planning. As the college undertakes more consistent and comprehensive planning, it strives to ensure that academic decision-making is linked to overall college decision-making. While the trustees of the college have sole responsibility for approving the new strategic map (CFR 3.9), the proposed map comes from the Strategic Planning Committee, which includes representatives of the faculty, academic administration, and the library (CFR 4.6). Westmont’s strategic planning process begins with developing a general map of the institution’s priorities and then establishes various tracks of work that engage key faculty and staff in addressing the highest priorities (Appendix B02). Some of the current tracks of work—expanding global programs and strengthening high-impact practices across the curriculum—have been entrusted to existing academic committees and offices rather than to separate, ad hoc task forces. In that respect, we are endeavoring to preserve the integrity and quality of the degree by keeping academic governance and strategic planning integrated. The integration informs the planning process with knowledge gained from our assessments of our students’ strengths and weaknesses.

Final Vista: The Art of Learning

Just below that iconic sandstone rock, with its fossil imprints, is the new Westmont Ridley-Tree Museum of Art, founded in 2010 and already the site of several acclaimed exhibits. The museum now owns works by many major figures—such as Chagall, Corot, Millet, Miró, Picasso, Renoir, and Winslow—and hosts shows free of charge for the public. In the spring of 2015, Westmont sponsored a display of Rembrandt prints, a series of biblical scenes and images of 17th-century Dutch society, given to Westmont by Jewish collectors impressed with the college’s quality and values.

In its own way, the Rembrandt exhibit displayed the five planks of the institution’s mission. Undergraduate students conducted research for the exhibition catalog and forum. An interdisciplinary, liberal arts symposium explored the aesthetic and historic dimensions of Rembrandt’s oeuvre, and the science of both making prints and authenticating them. Residence halls planned visits to the museum, pairing social interaction with the fine arts. The rich display of Old Testament scenes by one of the foremost painters of the Northern European Reformation gave students a glimpse into Christian theological history and tradition. On the eve of the public opening, President Beebe hosted Jewish and Christian leaders at a reception and lecture; the art of the Dutch Protestant opened a window to Jewish life and tradition. In that respect, the exhibit also spoke to the interfaith collaboration, a dynamic critical to students as they navigate through the increasingly intimate and contested places of our global landscape.

Our expectation is that the Westmont experience—and, in many respects, the meaning of our degree—will be inspired by these five perspectives. In recent years, we have indeed endeavored to bring greater rigor and order into our definition and appraisal of learning outcomes. Assessment efforts have led to curricular refinements and policy changes as well as to workshops and forums designed to help enrich teaching; faculty are challenged to consider innovative practices and to focus on student engagement and learning. In the best tradition of the liberal arts, however, we anticipate that the finest discoveries will exceed our foresight or rubrics. Even as the college refines instruments for measuring student performance, we recognize that the meaning and quality of a Westmont degree will rely on the imagination of our students—on what they envision as they move beyond our own grounds. It will take shape in the ways that our graduates craft new models of civic engagement, refresh service and worship, pursue lines of inquiry, address civic quandaries, and discern the historic and global dimensions of their own communities. The finest learning, we believe, requires both intention and epiphany.
CHAPTER THREE

INFRASTRUCTURE IN PLACE TO ENSURE QUALITY & IMPROVEMENT (WSCUC STANDARD 4)

Addressing Report Component 6

Component 6: Quality Assurance

Westmont has historically been committed to improving quality in its academic programs, a commitment evident in our strong faculty governance, curricular oversight, and support for the mission. When the Educational Effectiveness Review team arrived in Montecito in 2007, Westmont had many of the elements of a comprehensive assessment package in place but lacked the coordination, consistency, infrastructure, and sustainability of a flourishing program. As noted in Chapter 1, the 2011 visiting team commended the college for addressing these concerns and reinvigorating program review. Consistent withWSCUC’s emphasis on “assessing the assessment,” the college has spent the last four years further refining its assessment and review protocols. We recognize that the commendations in 2011 came largely for improving program review at the departmental level; we knew that the next phase would require more direct assessments of learning and a systematic review of general education. Indeed, we have made vigorous efforts to implement new protocols in these areas, fully recognizing that our ventures are works-in-progress. There is still turf needing to be plowed, even as some of the recently cultivated soil already needs weeding. This chapter summarizes the refinements—and some of the remaining tasks—since the favorable Commission report of 2011.

Governance, Integration, and the Central Strands

As with any rapid adoption of new systems, Westmont’s expanding assessment efforts generated forms, reports, and procedures that multiplied hastily and tested the capacity of faculty and administration to keep pace, not to mention using the data to make decisions. Some pruning and compression of those protocols have been necessary—and will continue to be so.

Equally critical was the need to ensure that assessment activities were neither isolated from faculty governance nor treated as a bureaucratic overlay. As much as possible, we have sought to assimilate our major assessment and review activities within the key decision-making procedures of the academic community (CFR 2.4). We did not want strategic planning, faculty governance, and assessment endeavors running in separate and non-connecting tracks.

That integration requires collaboration between the Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness, major committees, and department chairs. At Westmont, it has required clarifying the role of the major curriculum committee—the Academic Senate—as an overseer of the endeavors of the Program Review and General Education Committees. It also requires dispersing the assessment responsibilities a little more broadly, and widening the conversation about the results of assessment work. All these have been central aims since 2011.

So, in an attempt at synthesis and integration, we have envisioned our program review and assessment efforts as three central strands: 1) Institutional Learning Outcomes, guided by a Lead
Assessment Specialist and the Academic Senate; 2) General Education Review, guided by the General Education Committee; and 3) Departmental Six-Year Reviews and Annual Reports, guided by the Program Review Committee. The Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness oversees all three strands.

At the October 2013 faculty meeting, the Provost defined the three strands and the work of refinement that lay before the faculty. We have used the three strands, therefore, to organize this discussion of our assessment and review infrastructure.

1. **Strand One: Institutional Learning Outcomes** (CFR 2.2a). Westmont previously had multiple statements of the institution’s outcomes and objectives. One of the tasks of the past few years has been the compression of several different definitions of college-wide outcomes into seven categories of Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs). The institution’s broadest learning goals are now embedded in these seven ILOs—the fiveWSCUC core competencies (which reflect essential aims of liberal learning) and two specific Westmont objectives (which are central to our mission). Those two outcomes are Christian Understanding, Practices, and Affections and Global Awareness and Diversity. Each year, the faculty focuses on assessing one or two of the seven ILOs. The annual focus on one or two ILOs allows for a broad community conversation; progress and results are shared at faculty meetings, Provost’s Forums, Faculty Forums, and other group discussions. To date, we have assessed ILOs in:

- Written Communication (2011-2012)
- Oral Communication (2011-2012)
- Christian Understanding, Practices, and Affections (2012-2013)
- Critical Thinking (2013-2014)
- Information Literacy (2014-2015)

Reviews of Quantitative Reasoning and Global Awareness and Diversity are scheduled for 2015–2016 and 2016–2017, respectively. As much as possible, the ILO assessment is embedded in existing courses, as selected faculty integrate the assignments into their courses.

One faculty member is appointed each year as the Lead Assessment Specialist; she or he typically works closely with a team of three or four colleagues and the Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness to select and administer assessment tools and strategies. Lead Assessment Specialists and their teams become advocates for assessment and student success. They are instrumental in designing assessment projects; organizing data-guided discussions, workshops, and scoring sessions; and presenting their findings to stakeholders. They prepare reports and recommendations for improving student learning (CFR 2.4, 4.1). Lead Assessment Specialists are encouraged to attend assessment-related workshops, conferences, and training sessions as well as to familiarize themselves with national standards and best practices. Westmont’s Lead Assessment Specialists presented findings at the 2013 and 2014 WSCUC Academic Resource Conference meetings.

In the past three years, oversight of the ILO review process has been entrusted to the Academic Senate, the faculty’s primary curriculum and academic policies committee. Prior to this move, it was unclear who was responsible for “closing the loop” on the assessment activities after data collection. Under the current structure, the Lead Assessment Specialists and their teams present proposed assessment plans to the Senate for discussion and advice prior to the start of the work. Following administration and scoring of assessment instruments, the results are presented first to the Senate, then to the faculty, inviting commentary and providing proposed
action steps. Gathering input from both Lead Assessment Specialists and the faculty, the Senate assumes responsibility for determining how the institution will make improvements after such evaluation.

2. Strand Two: General Education (CFR 2.2a). The appraisal of the general education program is the second of the three strands. Westmont’s current general education program, adopted as an entirely new curriculum in 2004, is broad and pliable. There are 18 distinct requirements or subcategories in the program, and students have a plethora of options for fulfilling these requirements. One of the hallmarks of the program is that students can satisfy some requirements with courses in their majors. Faculty members have crafted more upper-division courses to meet general education requirements, thereby distributing the general education options throughout the four-year college experience rather than enclosing it primarily in the first and second years.

The wide array of options, however, does create challenges for assessing all requirements. When the current general education requirements were introduced in 2004, the effective assessment of the program proved daunting. One issue was that the objectives were presented as aspirational goals, requirements, or courses, rather than outcomes. Even as outcome statements were initially crafted, they were often imprecise or non-measurable. There was no shortage of outcome statements, but clear outcome statements were in short supply. As a result, faculty engaging in assessment found it challenging and not always productive. Despite such challenges, a comprehensive assessment of the new program from 2004–2010 was conducted by the General Education Committee (Appendices B14 & B15).

Largely because of that review, the 2011 visiting team commended the college’s progress on the assessment of general education; the further refinement of our practices has remained a focal point in subsequent years. The Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness made the redesign of general education assessment her major project at the WASC Assessment Leadership Academy in 2011, and faculty members spent the next two years exploring possible models for revising our curriculum and strategies for review. By October of 2013, the Provost announced that the establishment of a new protocol for evaluating the general education curriculum would be one of the central objectives of the year. After deliberations by the General Education Committee and the Academic Senate, the faculty adopted a revised protocol in the spring of 2014 and launched it in the fall of 2014.

This new process seeks to synthesize and simplify. The task of assessing 18 different general education requirements was made easier by aligning seven of the requirements with ILOs. The review of those general education requirements is integrated into the schedule of ILO assessments. The General Education Committee covers the remaining 11 by evaluating two requirements each year, part of a six-year cycle. These eleven requirements are:

1) Reading Imaginative Literature; 2) Exploring the Physical Sciences; 3) Exploring the Life Sciences; 4) Performing and Interpreting the Arts; 5) Reasoning Abstractly; 6) Thinking Historically; 7) Understanding Society; 8) Modern/Foreign Languages; 9) Physical Education; 10) Philosophical Reflections; and 11) Serving Society/Enacting Justice.

The General Education Committee’s review occurs in two phases. The first phase is the appraisal of syllabi. The syllabi for all courses that satisfy a general education requirement are examined to ensure that they match all of the certification criteria set by the faculty. To refine the review and improvement of syllabi, the Academic Senate developed a new syllabus template (Appendix B06). The template informs faculty how to list and link relevant course and program outcomes while encouraging faculty to develop syllabi that reflect creative vision and express
broad aspirations for their students (CFR 2.3, 2.4). The aim of the template is to strike that difficult balance between measurement and motivation, and between accountability and inspiration.

Once the fall syllabi review is completed, the General Education Committee begins the second review phase—direct assessment of student learning in the two target areas that year. A signature assignment, developed in the fall, is embedded in multiple spring semester courses. Rubrics for assessing the students’ learning are developed and approved by the General Education Committee and relevant department chairs. The instructors, department chairs, a General Education Committee representative, and the Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness discuss the results and prepare recommendations.

Recommendations can take many forms. The committee can propose that department chairs refresh certain aspects of their department’s courses or propose to the Academic Senate that fine-tuning be done to the actual certification criteria. For instance, when the General Education Committee recently recognized that too few courses satisfied a narrowly drawn Speech Requirement, the certification criteria were amended to include Oral Communication, enlarging options for students and avoiding some scheduling logjams. Also, when it became apparent that the college’s Quantitative and Analytical Reasoning criteria lacked application skills, the General Education Committee proposed a modest revision of the criteria’s language.

In the fall of 2014, the college adopted LiveText, an assessment management web application, using the program primarily for general education assessment. This tool has been helpful in gathering and storing aggregate data from a variety of classes.

3. Strand Three: Departmental Six-Year Reviews and Annual Reports (CFR 2.7, 4.1) The final strand falls under the supervision of the Program Review Committee (PRC) with guidance from the Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness. This third strand focuses on program review at the departmental level, both in Six-Year Reviews and Annual Reports. Department faculty, led by their chairs, assess student learning while the PRC and Dean provide process support and feedback on the department’s report.

Both Annual Reports and Six-Year Reviews were implemented prior to the 2011 WASC special visit; however, some modifications have since made the processes more meaningful and manageable. The Annual Report has been substantially streamlined, requiring a brief (1–2 page) update on progress made on one or two of each department’s six-year goals (Appendix B04). Six-Year Reviews have also been shortened and revised. A clear template for this report—and other resources—is now available on the Educational Effectiveness webpage (Appendix B03). Now, in addition to assessing program learning outcomes (PLOs), the Six-Year Review process asks a department to identify its central strategic questions. Identifying these questions helps move the review beyond a compliance exercise; rather, it becomes an opportunity to think strategically about the road ahead. In addition, instead of granting load credit or a stipend to just one faculty member to write the report, we have set aside funding to engage the full department in the process; many departments now schedule retreats to plan or discuss their reviews.

Other refinements have been valuable. The PRC has also standardized its response to departments’ Annual Reports and Six-Year Reviews through greater use of evaluation rubrics. External reviewers were previously used intermittently but now are mandatory participants in all Six-Year Reviews. After all information has been gathered and appraised in a Six-Year Review, the department prepares an action plan for upcoming years; subsequent Annual Reports must address components of this plan. The action plan receives a written response from the Provost.
after consultation with the President’s Executive Team. The Provost’s appraisal includes affirmation, promptings for further development and analysis, and responses to any issues related to funding. There has also been progress in standardizing the presentation of program review work to external audiences. Academic departments now post on their webpages both Annual Reports and Six-Year Reviews along with program learning outcomes (PLOs) and recent assessment results in a standardized style. (See department listings on the Student Achievement page.)

The college has been successfully keeping a regular schedule of Six-Year Reviews with small adjustments made only when there are unusual situations regarding personnel. When appropriate, Six-Year Reviews have been aligned with formal evaluations by professional guilds. For example, the Music Department used its program review self-studies to support its successful application for accreditation from the National Association of Schools of Music, and the Chemistry Department’s external review will correspond with a visit from the American Chemical Society as part of an application for ACS certification. One area for refinement is the evaluation of interdisciplinary programs and minors.

Student Life Review and Assessment

Running concurrently with the three academic strands is an enhanced procedure of program review and assessment in the Student Life Division (CFR 2.11, 4.1). Biennial program review has been the staple of the Student Life Division since 1996. In this cycle, two colleagues from other respected institutions join one Westmont Student Life colleague and one Westmont faculty member in conducting a two-day evaluation of one Student Life program every other year. In recent years, reviews have been conducted in Residence Life (2009), the Campus Life Office (2011), Counseling Services (2013), and the Office of Life Planning (2015). Feedback from reviews has led to revised policies, enhanced student services, and the reallocation of resources.

The Student Life Division supplements its program review efforts annually by exploring one of its learning and developmental outcomes. Following the WASC site visit in 2011, the Student Life staff began refining its assessment process. In this refinement, the division sought to 1) create a clear link between Student Life programming and Westmont’s educational vision and goals; 2) develop better clarity on each learning and developmental outcome; 3) identify current “interventions for development” that match the Student Life Division’s philosophy and objectives; and 4) explore possible variations (in physical space, policies, services, social arrangements, role models and staffing, planned gatherings, etc.) for improving students’ learning and personal growth. Four white papers were written during this season of refinement, each one composed by small groups focused on a specific outcome. As a result, a four-year cycle of assessments was established:

- Global Awareness and Diversity (2013–2014)
- Physical and Emotional Health (2014–2015)
- Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (2015–2016)

Westmont has enjoyed a strong heritage of collaboration between the curricular and co-curricular elements of the college. Truly assessing how well our students become “grateful servants” and “faithful leaders” requires the joint expertise of academic and co-curricular colleagues. For example, Student Life personnel teamed with faculty during the assessment of Christian Understanding, Practices, and Affections. Such cooperation strengthened the
conversation about how learning in the classroom was connected with practice; the scope of the assessment spread from students’ theological knowledge to their involvement in churches, engagement with service, and capacity for empathy. Some of the alignment will be more difficult now that the faculty has pruned the number of ILOs, including ones devoted to Physical and Emotional Health and to Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement. In consultation with the Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness, the Student Life Division will continue to focus on these two areas, renaming Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement as Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. Deliberate involvement of faculty in these Student Life evaluations, however, will ensure that co-curricular and curricular departments maintain a robust conversation about holistic student learning and growth.

Along with the formal periodic review and assessment process, the Student Life Division routinely surveys students to assess the effectiveness of its programs. For example, a recent survey conducted by the Office of Residence Life looked specifically at residents’ experiences relative to their resident directors and student resident assistants. A second survey examined perceptions of diversity and belonging in the residence halls. Findings have been used to identify gaps in perception that may exist between White students and students of color. The Chapel Office, along with the Martin Institute for Christianity and Culture, regularly surveys students about their values, activities, and needs.

**Institutional Research**

Good assessment requires good research, and Westmont has expanded its Institutional Research (IR) endeavors since 2011 (CFR 4.2). Prior to the fall of 2013, the primary IR responsibilities were in the hands of the Associate Provost, who also carried duties for overseeing the college’s academic budget and extensive off-campus study programs. The appointment of a Director of Global Education freed the Associate Provost from non-IR responsibilities. As a result, IR has been able to expand into new areas. One of the primary achievements during this time has been the identification and synthesis of many of the research and data-gathering functions of the college, creating a more coordinated effort. A calendar of IR surveys, studies, and reports is now established; this calendar enables the college to link IR information more precisely to decision-making moments (Appendix B08).

As we build our capacity and vision for Institutional Research, we need to bridge efforts between academic and non-academic divisions of the college—to unite what we learn from program review with what we learn from research on alumni, advancement, student life, and admissions. In the future, synthesizing such data and disseminating results broadly are both important tasks for the IR program.

**Next Steps in Assessment**

The WASC visit in 2011 raised morale at Westmont; the visiting team commended the college’s progress in contrast with a more critical review in 2007. That reassuring appraisal helped kindle greater commitment to the refinement of our program review and assessment protocols. Considerable energy and vigilance will be required to maintain this positive trajectory. We’ve learned a few things on this recent journey, hitting a few potholes and detours but persisting through rough stretches of the road. We conclude this chapter, therefore, with several observations on what we have learned and what we anticipate in the passage ahead.
1. Perceptions and Philosophy of Assessment. One vital challenge is to reinforce the three strands—to be sure that the faculty as a whole comprehends the general architecture of Westmont’s plan for review and assessment. All colleagues need to understand their own roles in the process. Helping colleagues envision the three strands as a general map for review and assessment will require winsome repetition. On a similar note, most of our students know the college mission but not our ILOs. Steps need to be taken to increase students’ understanding of these learning goals and their active role in achieving them.

Everyone involved in program review and assessment efforts must also continually find language that invests the protocols and assessment endeavors with the highest ideals of the liberal arts tradition. At times, when assessment has faced obstacles at Westmont, this resistance has been founded partially on the perception that assessment activities abandon the broader vision of liberal learning to settle simply for what is measurable. Over the past seven years, we have gained greater experience working with embedded assignments and data to prompt more nuanced conversations about learning. We recognize the need to seek continually for that difficult mean where our assessment activities are manageable and meaningful without being expedient and reductive.

2. Institutional Learning Outcomes. Since 2007, Westmont has for the first time used direct measures to assess ILOs. Much has been learned during the first round of ILO assessment that will improve the gathering of future assessment data.

- Something as basic as having a good random or representative sample proved challenging for the early ILO assessment teams. In recent years, assessed work was embedded more frequently within regular class assignments and exams. Embedded work should increasingly become the standard means of ILO assessment.
- More complex ILOs will require more comprehensive means of assessment. There are more accessible tools for measuring Information Literacy than Christian Understanding, Practices and Affections. We will need to use more multi-dimensional, qualitative tools for assessing some ILOs than has been common practice in our previous endeavors—or in higher education in general.
- Our ILO assessment teams did not always develop performance standards against which student learning could be compared (CFR 2.3). Faculty had implicit standards in mind, and that led to impressionistic judgments (for instance, faculty concluded that the students’ biblical and theological literacy was disappointing while their scores on the critical thinking test were good, but neither verdict was informed by explicit standards or benchmarks). This shortcoming is now being addressed. The Academic Senate recently approved a Critical Thinking performance standard that will be used in the next assessment cycle. Additional performance standards need to be set.
- Implementing changes after ILO assessment will take persistence and time, but the benefits can eventually come to fruition. For example, conversations after the result of oral communication assessment have resulted in proposed modifications to the writing and speech general education requirements.
- Lead Assessment Specialists and team members have been most productive when they attend regional or national conferences related to their ILO work. It has been important to engage several faculty in scoring work and to train them in inter-rater reliability.
3. Departmental Reviews. A more extensive commitment to program review has also called attention to several areas worthy of improvement:

- Many departments continue to work with student learning outcomes that were written 10–15 years ago. While some of these are good outcome statements and still effective assessment tools, others need refinement. The PRC will partner with departments to help them refine their outcomes. Have the right outcomes been identified? Can they be written more precisely? Are other assessment tools needed?
- A recent choice to add key questions to the Six-Year Review process has been valuable. It has helped faculty begin to understand more clearly that program review can be a tool to help them address important issues of interest to them.
- Throughout the 2014–2015 academic year, departmental web pages were revised to ensure that the key components of program review were included. These web pages have been designed to give the reader quick access to assessment and program review data while giving departments some flexibility about how to present this information.
- In some quarters, departmental reviews are still seen as “compliance,” though faculty engagement with assessment is much more vigorous than in 2007 or 2011.
- Adjunct faculty members need to be included more fully in departmental assessments and program review and their assessment responsibilities more clearly stated.
- External reviewers need to have access to samples of student work (sample papers, portfolios, and capstone projects).
- A Program Review Guide for co-curricular departments needs to be developed. (The current guide’s focus on academic departments and classroom instruction often is not helpful for co-curricular programs.) Under the leadership of the director and associate director of the library, this project has started.
- The college has concentrated on making program review effective for academic department programs with majors. The PRC should give greater attention to working with other programs, such as internships and interdisciplinary minors.

4. Closing the Loop. With several new measures—the Senate’s stewardship of the ILOs, the departmental action plans, and the enhanced role of the General Education Committee—a much more lucid design is in place for closing the assessment loop. The Academic Senate now discusses the annual ILO assessment report, seeks additional feedback from the faculty or from curricular committees as required, and develops recommendations for improving student learning. In the fall, recommendations emerging from the ILO assessment report and Academic Senate deliberations are presented to the faculty. Departmental action plans are now shared with the Executive Team and reviewed and responded to by the Provost. It will be important to monitor how well the agreed-upon changes are implemented and if further assessment is warranted to refine the changes or gauge their success.
CHAPTER FOUR

ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES THROUGH CORE FUNCTIONS (WSCUC STANDARD 2)

Addressing Report Components 4, 5

Component 4: Student Learning

In Chapter 3, we traced the map of assessment and program review procedures. This chapter recounts the journey. What have we learned from it all? What refinements are in order? The spotlight will be on recent efforts, especially since much has been done in the past five years to refine our assessment infrastructure, though many changes have longer pedigrees. In some cases, reviews and appraisals have led to immediate corrections of our course, and we have noted those turns in the road. In other instances, the process has drawn us onto trails that will take years to traverse. But we have suggested how the data now help us chart our way.

This chapter offers several vantage points from which to view student success. We begin with the three strands of academic assessment described in Chapter 3 and then deliberate on graduation and retention rates as well as aesthetic, emotional and intercultural competencies. There are reflections about how we have tried to enrich the educational landscape through global engagement and diversity. There are perspectives from both current students and our alums. As at many institutions, our data are most relevant to the goal of educating “thoughtful scholars,” but we have also kept an eye on studies that shed light on the more elusive—yet essential—tasks of preparing “grateful servants” and “faithful leaders.”

Strand One: Institutional Learning Outcomes Assessment (CFR 2.2a)

Westmont’s seven Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) comprise the first strand of our academic assessment endeavors. For each ILO, a Lead Assessment Specialist works with a team of faculty and staff to select or design the assessment instruments, collect data, and analyze the results. The team’s report forms the basis of discussions with the full faculty, and those discussions inform decisions by the Academic Senate about changes in our curricula, pedagogies, and evaluation techniques. The current six-year cycle for assessing our seven ILOs began in 2011–12, and five ILOs have already been assessed (the full assessment reports made to date can be found on the Educational Effectiveness website). What follows are summaries of data, findings, and actions taken to close the loop on the assessment process.

1. Written Communication (assessed 2011–2012): Graduates of Westmont College will write effectively in various contexts.

Sarah Skripsky, director of Westmont’s writing center and associate professor of English, served as the Lead Assessment Specialist. Her team of faculty reviewed syllabi from courses for which students receive credit for the general education writing requirement. They also conducted a survey of student and faculty experiences in writing-intensive courses and analyzed data collected about student participation in Westmont’s writing center. A focus of the team’s efforts
was analyzing a sample of writing portfolios from Westmont seniors. Each portfolio consisted of two-to-four writing samples from at least two disciplines as well as a writer’s memo; in each memo, a student author could introduce the writing samples he or she had selected and make a case for the portfolio’s overall quality.

The team scored the portfolios using a rubric developed by Dr. Skripsky. The table below gives the average score (on a scale of 1 to 5) for all portfolios in each of five major categories on the rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria Rating Averages</th>
<th>1A</th>
<th>Rhetorical Sensitivity</th>
<th>3.86</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1B.</td>
<td>Rhetorical Mobility</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Content / Message</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Form / Organization</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Style</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reasonably high scores in all categories suggest that Westmont seniors have learned to write effectively in various contexts. That conclusion was reinforced by a closer inspection of the portfolios after the rubric scoring was completed. Students in the sample scored particularly well on Style, the category measuring sentence-level correctness as well as technical ability in source citation. In general, Style is an aspect of student writing that draws the most attention from professors, so it is predictable that our seniors have benefited from extensive feedback about style. While the portfolios reflected reasonably high performance in the other three areas, the team responded to comparatively lower scores in Rhetorical Sensitivity and Rhetorical Mobility by focusing its recommendations on those aspects of student writing (Executive Summary, Appendix B16).

Several program enhancements resulted from the discussion of these findings in the Academic Senate, in the English Department, and among the full faculty. Sarah Skripsky and Cheri Larsen Hoeckley, English faculty members as well as the most recent writing center directors, held two workshops for faculty that focused on improving writing instruction. Faculty were given copies of John Bean’s Engaging Ideas and access to a newly developed website on writing instruction and assessment; faculty can now access a greater range of resources for writing across the curriculum. Discussions exploring the introduction of First-Year Seminars emphasized the significant place that writing could hold in such courses. First-Year Seminars, piloted in 2014–2015 and continuing in 2015–2016, focus substantially on writing as a tool for learning.

As First-Year Seminars continue, the Academic Senate will monitor their impact on writing instruction and reflect on how the 2011–2012 assessment of student writing can inform ongoing curricular enhancement at all levels of instruction, from departmental requirements to the general education program. As the first institution-wide effort to assess student learning, the 2011–12 project has also provided an occasion to “assess the assessment,” and we expect to make refinements to the process of assessing this ILO when the next cycle begins.

2. Oral Communication (assessed 2012–2013): Graduates of Westmont College will effectively communicate orally in various contexts.
As with the writing ILO, this outcome stresses “various contexts,” requiring an assessment of multiple types of presentations. Therefore, an interdisciplinary team of faculty reviewed and scored recordings of student presentations from seven different disciplines, relying on a rubric adapted from the National Communication Association Competent Speaker Evaluation Forum. Tatiana Nazarenko, the Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness, and Deborah Dunn, professor of Communication Studies, worked with a task force in the assessment work. Presentations were analyzed for content, structure, and delivery. The table below gives the mean and mode of scores in seven categories for the presentations, where the possible scores were 1 (C- or lower), 2 (C to B range), or 3 (B+ to A-):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation Competencies</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic Selection</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating Thesis</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Material</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal Delivery</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Presence</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the data, the assessment team concluded that students were performing adequately on this ILO (Executive Summary, Appendix B17). Just as useful as this particular data, however, was the larger analysis that it prompted about course offerings and syllabi.

That analysis focused on the need to clarify expectations with respect to this ILO and prompted discussions about restructuring the curriculum slightly in order to improve students’ communication skills. At the time of this assessment, Westmont’s general education program included a Speech-Intensive Requirement. The certification criteria were so strict, however, that only a handful of courses met that standard. The team’s analysis determined that many courses not certified as speech-intensive did in fact include an oral presentation as a significant assignment; most of these courses also had room for some additional instruction and expectations in oral communication. The narrowness of the certification criteria for the Speech-Intensive Requirement had not only limited the options available for students but also discouraged faculty from using the oral requirements of their courses as fully as they could for cultivating students’ communication skills. Based on these observations, the General Education Committee, in response to instructions from the Academic Senate, revised the definition and certification criteria. The relevant general education category is now called Oral Communication rather than Speech-Intensive. Since more courses can meet the criteria, not only will students have more options, but also more professors will be motivated to foreground oral communication in their instruction and evaluation.

In the years ahead, the General Education Committee will continue to monitor course offerings in the Oral Communication category in order to consider the impact of the relevant changes on student learning. Plans are set to sponsor workshops and make written and web-based resources more accessible to faculty and students, in much the same way that resources for teaching and evaluating writing have been enhanced.
3. Christian Understanding, Practices, and Affections (assessed 2012–2013): *Graduates of Westmont College will demonstrate literacy in biblical and orthodox Christian faith (Christian Understanding) and demonstrate faithfulness in Christian service (Practices and Affections).*

Of all the ILOs, this one (commonly called CUPA) presents the most substantial challenges for gathering data. Central to Westmont’s mission, it is an ILO that should permeate college life; therefore, its assessment requires a number of lenses rather than a few select instruments. Moreover, evangelicals are often wary to talk about “evidence” of spiritual formation, especially since the religious tradition emphasizes that claims of knowledge or achievement should be tempered by humility and self-reflection. Lead Assessment Specialist Telford Work, chair of the Religious Studies Department, and his team (which included two representatives from the Student Life Division) chose to focus on students’ biblical literacy, their attitudes and values, and their involvement in church and ministry activities. These studies cannot confirm the habits of the heart, but they did give glimpses into students’ understanding of the Christian faith and their participation in Christian “practices” (Executive Summary, Appendix B18).

The biblical literacy survey was given to 76 graduating seniors. Twenty-five of these participated in follow-up focus groups to further explore their survey answers. The results of the survey and focus groups were mixed. A majority of students demonstrated familiarity with and understanding of texts from the Bible that are commonly taught in churches, youth programs, and Sunday Schools. They were proficient in biblical interpretation and hermeneutics related to the most prominent issues in their church communities, and some students displayed a high level of interpretive sophistication in applying theological concepts to contemporary issues. From the assessment team’s perspective, however, many other students fell short of the scope of biblical knowledge that the team expected to find. The results indicated that students’ knowledge of the Bible was often limited primarily to the passages that receive the most attention in churches.

In addition, 502 students from all four classes took the Christian Life Survey administered among several evangelical institutions by Taylor University. The survey showed that 90% of Westmont students engage in service and faith-based practices. For example, a high percentage of students indicated that regular church attendance played an important role in their spiritual growth. In fact, church attendance actually increased among Westmont students between their first and senior years. The survey also revealed that Westmont students were more inclined than peers at other evangelical institutions to raise questions about conventional assumptions and teachings, but they are also generally persistent in their commitment to a life of faith.

As the results were discussed by the Academic Senate and the full faculty, several questions emerged that will help shape subsequent assessments of this ILO. The 2012–13 assessment was not designed to measure growth in biblical literacy over the student’s time at Westmont. Future assessment will seek to compare seniors with entering students. The survey will also be refined, measuring not only knowledge of biblical details but also broader theological concepts and applications.

The ILO assessment did spark a widespread and robust conversation across many aspects of the campus. The results were presented at Faculty Meetings, Faculty Forums, a Provost’s Forum for co-curricular staff, and even at the Board of Trustees. These discussions have already resulted in the creation of new programs and the enhancement of existing ones. The Office of Residence Life, in partnership with Westmont’s Dallas Willard Center for Spiritual Formation, initiated an internship program in the first-year residence halls, placing peer mentors in the halls as Spiritual Formation Coordinators. These upper-class students oversee a range of programs for residents aimed at encouraging their participation in faith-based activities on campus and in the local...
community. Throughout 2014–2015, the Provost’s Office sponsored a series of nine seminars for faculty and co-curricular staff; dubbed Brown Bag Conversations on Biblical and Theological Issues, these lunch meetings were led by faculty from the Religious Studies Department and were aimed at enhancing participants’ biblical literacy and theological understanding. Participants were encouraged to explore ways of enhancing student education in these areas in their own courses—even those not directly focused on faith-related content. Finally, conversations are ongoing in the Academic Senate about possible adjustments to the pedagogy and sequencing of biblical and theological studies courses.


Unlike the case of CUPA, numerous instruments assess critical thinking skills in higher education. Jim Taylor, professor of Philosophy, served as the Lead Assessment Specialist for this ILO and devoted considerable time to testing and selecting an instrument with national benchmarks. As a result, he and the assessment team chose to administer the Critical Thinking Assessment Test (CAT) to 71 seniors from six departments. This test was developed by the Center for Assessment and Improvement of Learning at Tennessee Tech University. The local assessment team scored the tests and the scores were verified, analyzed, and compared to national norms by the Tennessee Tech center.

Since CAT scores are moderately correlated with entering ACT/SAT scores ($r=.5$), the Center for Assessment and Improvement of Learning provides information on the regression model's predictions of CAT scores for a range of ACT and SAT scores. The average SAT score for the Westmont sample was 1180. The Center for Assessment's regression model predicts a CAT score of 21.43 for students with that SAT. Westmont's mean CAT score of 21 is thus comparable to what the model predicts. While the Center for Assessment does not provide the standard error of the regression prediction, it seems that graduates of Westmont are performing at approximately the same level on the CAT as the national sample when ACT/SAT scores are taken into account (Appendix B19).

Examining scores on the fifteen questions of the CAT, we identified three aspects of critical thinking in which our students did less well than the national average. These areas involve (1) identifying additional information needed to evaluate a hypothesis; (2) separating relevant from irrelevant information when solving a real-world problem; and (3) using and applying relevant information to evaluate a problem (Appendix B20).

After reviewing these results, the assessment team and Academic Senate focused their recommendations on these three areas. In particular, the Senate identified lower-division courses where students will receive more focused instruction in these areas. A workshop on critical thinking pedagogy was held in February 2015; it will be repeated in the fall of 2015. The Academic Senate also considered whether evaluating evidence “in support of a claim” is a sufficiently broad encapsulation of critical thinking. As a result, the Senate revised the ILO to add the expectation that students will be able to “apply critical thinking creatively to problem solving,” and the Senate set a performance benchmark.

5. Information Literacy (assessed 2014–2015): Graduates of Westmont College will be able to identify, evaluate, and integrate sources effectively and ethically in various contexts.

Molly Riley, the Instructional and Research Services Librarian, served as the Lead Assessment Specialist for Information Literacy. This project evaluated how well students used
sources in their writing. Writing samples were collected from lower- and upper-division courses and appraised by a cadre of faculty and librarians against a rubric created for the project. The rubric concentrated on three aspects of Information Literacy: source evaluation, integration, and attribution. A total of 84 papers were evaluated, 37 from lower-division courses and 47 from upper-division courses. These particular students were also given a survey in which they reflected on their approach to the research process. Additional data was gathered through NSSE’s Experiences with Information Literacy survey, administered in 2014 to a group of first-year students and a group of seniors (Executive Summary, Appendix B21).

The project revealed that upper-division students were notably more accomplished than lower-division students in their use of sources. It was especially noteworthy and heartening to see the senior students’ strength with source integration, one of the most challenging and important aspects of source use in academic writing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4 - Proficient</th>
<th>3 - Competent</th>
<th>2 - Developing</th>
<th>1 - Beginning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source Evaluation</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source Integration</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source Attribution</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses gathered from the survey revealed that overall upper-division students are likely engaging more deeply in and have a better understanding of the research process. Westmont’s seniors’ relevant NSSE responses were at or above the national mean scores for almost every question asked.

Several discussions are planned for the coming year, providing faculty and librarians with forums for reviewing data and collaborating on ways to improve students’ information literacy skills; in such discussions, colleagues can also identify areas of concern not necessarily covered by this assessment. Because information literacy is so closely tied to critical thinking, strategies for simultaneously addressing both will also be discussed. A related question to explore is what particular factors might have contributed to the marked improvement found in upper-division course writing. On the research process survey, one senior commented that “librarians visiting classes isn’t enough; a mandatory one-on-one meeting with a librarian was more effective.” Librarians are committed to exploring creative ways of working with students in order to help them develop and refine their information literacy skills.

In future years, Information Literacy assessments would be enhanced by looking at student writing from a greater number of senior seminar courses. Another tack for the future is to refine the rubric to allow for a more nuanced look at source evaluation and integration. Together, those two refinements will enable us to inform departments more specifically about the research tasks that need greater attention in their majors. It is the recommendation of the assessment team that any assessment efforts of Information Literacy continue to focus on actual student work and writing produced in the everyday context of the classroom since such direct assessment affords the best portrait of students’ capacities to find, understand, and use information.

**Strand Two: General Education Learning Outcomes Assessment (CFR 2.2a)**

As Chapter 3 recounted, the General Education Committee completed a comprehensive review of the general education program in 2011. More recently, the faculty approved an assessment strategy that examines two specific components of the general education program
each year. Seven of the 18 general education requirements were already aligned with Westmont’s ILOs, so the review of those seven is embedded in the appraisal of our ILOs. The remaining 11 requirements are being assessed in a six-year cycle that began in 2014–2015. The findings from the assessment of the first two general education requirements are summarized below. During the 2015–2016 academic year, the General Education Committee will be focusing on three additional areas: Physical Education, Thinking Historically, and Quantitative and Analytical Reasoning (aligned with the Quantitative Reasoning ILO assessment).


   Faculty from the Art, Music, and Theatre Arts Departments collaborated with members of the General Education Committee to assess student learning in the category of Performing and Interpreting the Arts (PIA). The enterprise began in the fall of 2014 with an appraisal of the syllabi for courses meeting this general education requirement. This review revealed that a majority of courses match the certification criteria for the general education category, yet approximately half of the syllabi could articulate the learning outcomes more clearly. Based on this phase of the assessment, the team recommended that the General Education Committee, the Art Department, and the Academic Senate discuss the appropriateness of this general education category for the two studio courses that did not match the certification criteria sufficiently (ART 001 and ART 15). That discussion will take place during the 2015–2016 academic year.

   In the spring of 2015, faculty members from three departments embedded a signature assignment in four courses (two in Music, one in Art, and one in Theatre Arts). Students in each course were asked to analyze and respond to two productions; the assessment team analyzed 70 pairs of responses using a locally developed rubric. The rubric focused mostly on students’ ability to write an essay using appropriate methods and processes for analyzing, interpreting, and engaging artistic productions. In general, most Westmont students did acceptable or commendable work in their essays. The table below gives the percentage of students whose essays were rated by the evaluators as “developed” or “highly developed” in each category of the rubric (Executive Summary, Appendix B22):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Percentage of Student Papers Rated Developed or Highly Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure and Organization</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument and Analysis</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Evidence</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style and Mechanics</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   For the most part, the team was satisfied with students’ ability to organize and structure essays and with their mastery of style and mechanics. They did conclude, though, that improvements could be made in developing an argument and using evidence. (The results here echo some of the same themes in the Information Literacy ILO assessment.) For this round of assessment, the rubric featured rather generic skills in written composition; a refined rubric will
incorporate more nuanced distinctions between the specific critical skills and aesthetic sensibilities. That refinement will enable faculty to identify which interpretive tasks and skills need to be emphasized in their courses. Discussions about refining PIA pedagogy and assessment will continue into the 2015–2016 academic year.

The process of evaluating students’ PIA work also prompted some spirited conversation among the faculty about the relationship between creativity and criticism. As a result, faculty have proposed renaming the category Working Artistically, largely to underscore that students should learn to see how production informs interpretation and vice versa. Students will not only be expected to analyze the artistic productions of others but also will be asked to reflect on how their own art emerges out of discovery, experimentation, and observation. In 2015–2016, the Academic Senate and the full faculty will consider proposals regarding the new name, its criteria for certification, and refined SLOs.

2. Understanding Society (assessed 2014–2015). Student Learning Outcome: Students will be able to 1) identify foundational theories that offer explanations of social, political, economic and/or cultural phenomena; 2) apply foundational theories to analyze contemporary problems or controversies; 3) make personal and social application of various theories—informed by a biblical perspective.

This task brought together faculty from a range of disciplines: Anthropology, Communication Studies, Economics, History, Political Science, and Sociology. The very length of this SLO—identical with the certification criteria—signaled one of the challenges for the team, though they designed an embedded assignment and a rubric that encompassed all three dimensions of the current SLO. One of the fruits of the deliberations has been a proposal to reduce the SLO to a single sentence. As with the Performing and Interpreting the Arts (PIA) category, the Understanding Society assessment began with a review of syllabi, which confirmed that the vast majority of classes met the certification criteria, although only one-third of them precisely followed the college’s syllabus template. That inadequacy was soon addressed at a meeting of the Social Science Division’s department chairs.

During the spring semester, a signature assignment relevant to each discipline was embedded in six classes, reaching two-thirds of the students who earned Understanding Society credit that term. A single rubric, generically drawn, was used to assess student work in all six classes. Challenges with scoring reliability made the results suggestive rather than conclusive, but there were clear trends that emerged. More than 75% of students showed “highly developed” or “developed” capacities for identifying foundational theories. A similar percentage (72%) was able to make reasonable applications of the theories to problems or controversies. The faculty members were less satisfied with the students’ abilities to think about social theories from the perspectives of their faith (52% were rated “highly developed” or developed”). To be sure, the faculty raters were certainly aware that it is more difficult for students to apply theories from multiple disciplines (i.e., their own discipline and theology) than to rely solely on the methodologies of one’s own major. But the assessment results did prompt a vigorous discussion about how assignments and pedagogy could engage students more fully in relating disciplinary theory to viewpoints on faith. The initial proposal is to continue the tradition of Brown Bag Conversations so that faculty from the Social Science Division and faculty from the Religious Studies Department can mutually explore strategies for helping students connect faith and learning in the consideration of social problems. Faculty will also be revising the rubric and
Striving for a higher percentage of students in the “highly developed” and “developed” categories (Executive Summary, Appendix B23).

**Strand Three: Departmental Program Review (CFR 1.2, 2.3, 2.6, 2.7, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4)**

Westmont’s academic departments have long been adapting and refining their curricula, though the more systematic approach to assessing PLOs in the last decade has increased their scrutiny of their programs and the need for accountability. More curricular refinements are being made in light of what we have discovered about our students’ learning. Detailed Six-Year Reviews and Annual Reports for all departments can be found on the Student Achievement website.

Here is a brief panorama of some recent findings and enhancements made by academic departments after reviews:

- **In 2013**, the **Art Department** changed its senior seminar from a one-semester, 4-unit course to a two-semester sequence of two 2-unit classes. The adjustment provides students time to develop senior projects over the course of a year. The change grew out of the faculty’s assessment that student projects were not reaching the quality desired. Following the change, faculty perceived an immediate improvement in the projects. Also, at the exhortation of external evaluators, instruction in 4-D art will be added in fall of 2016.

- **The Biology Department** has benefited from renovation of existing lab facilities and the additions of a new teaching lab and new research space. An assessment of the PLOs in 2012 identified the need to address students’ scientific writing skills and led to the implementation of a curriculum-wide strategy to teach scientific writing. Core knowledge in the major was evaluated in 2014 by administering the ETS Biology Major Field Test. The average score at the 58th percentile exceeded the department’s benchmark: the 50th percentile for national liberal arts colleges. Subtest scores for animal biology (79th percentile) and biochemistry and cell energetics (66th percentile) also exceeded the benchmark, but students scored below the benchmark on the plant biology (16th percentile) and ecology (29th percentile) subtests. The department is reviewing the core curriculum in 2015 and weighing adjustments in response to these findings.

- **Since 2009**, the **Chemistry Department** has annually administered the American Chemical Society national exams (ACS) as an assessment of students’ core knowledge program learning outcome. Average scores in analytical chemistry (79th percentile), physical chemistry (78th percentile) and inorganic chemistry (91st percentile) exceeded the established benchmark of the 60th percentile. The average in general chemistry (53rd percentile) and organic chemistry (53rd percentile) fell just short of the benchmark. Department faculty reviewed student performance and set a detailed plan to address the lower scores in general and organic chemistry.

- **The Communication Studies Department** observed that a two-semester course sequence requirement was impeding their majors from enrolling in global education programs. The simple change of making the second-semester course in the sequence an elective eliminated the barrier. Students continue to take the elective course but now have freedom to take it in a later semester. Assessment of the department’s written communication PLO determined that 75% of students were writing at standard. Areas
where students showed the greatest deficiencies in written argumentation skills were in stating a thesis and understanding what constitutes a claim. In response, faculty developed an argumentation worksheet and a “make an argument” document in order to provide students with additional practice and instruction.

- **Computer Science** faculty assessed the core knowledge PLO with the ETS field exam. Westmont ranked at the 65th percentile among colleges and universities using the ETS exam: 72% of students scored above the 50th percentile and 44% above the 70th. Students’ best scores were on the programming subtest, but they scored below average on the discrete structure/algorithm and systems (architecture, operating systems, networking, and database) subtests. Consequently, CS 45 (Computer Organization and Architecture) was changed from an elective to a major requirement in order to provide further training in this subject. In addition, the faculty decided to drop CS 50 (Morality, Information, Logic, Knowledge) because students are exposed to much of its content in other courses.

- After mapping their curriculum and appraising their PLOs, the **Economics and Business Department** determined that students would be well served by the addition of several new courses and the redesign of some existing ones. One new course, EB 107 (Business at the Bottom of the Pyramid), will be offered as part of Westmont’s new Center for Social Entrepreneurship. An existing course, EB 191 (Entrepreneurship and New Venture Development), has been redesigned to include new, significant components asking students to address global business needs in applied contexts.

- The **English Department** completed a substantial revision of the curriculum for the major in 2014–2015. The revisions came in response to the Six-Year Review as well as a special 2012 consultation with Susan Felch of Calvin College. As a result, the department moved from an Anglo-centric curriculum to a major that requires more diversity, including core courses in American literature and at least one other national tradition or in transnational literature. The former Major Author requirement (retitled Authors in Conversation) now includes women and traditionally underrepresented voices. The revised curriculum also includes a fuller range of writing courses. In addition, the major now includes required introductory and final capstone courses, both designed to help students better understand the skills and capacities they are acquiring as majors.

- In the fall of 2013, the **History Department** evaluated senior seminar students to determine their ability to read primary sources historically and use them effectively (primary source PLO). The majority of students did not meet department standards. The essentials have been introduced in HIS 001, but in the future the faculty will reinforce the skills learned in the introductory class in multiple upper-division classes. Review of these changes is ongoing, but there are early indications of student improvement.

- The **Liberal Studies** program enhanced the summative assessment process by moving to an e-portfolio format. Teaching-credential students prepare a final e-portfolio documenting their work relative to 13 California Teaching Profession Expectations. Majors create summative e-portfolios in their senior seminar class.

- The **Kinesiology Department** responded to a weakness identified by its graduates by adding a required internship/research component to the major. New research and
internship options have begun, including partnerships in England, Uganda, and Costa Rica. These changes have created new expectations for screening and hiring faculty.

- **The Mathematics Department** changed the sequence of some upper-division courses (students now must take MA 110 or MA 108 before MA 180). This change emerged from assessment of students’ writing and critical thinking abilities as well as their knowledge of content. A second change increased writing instruction in lower-division courses in response to what was learned from appraising students’ writing skills (a departmental PLO) in upper-division courses. The core knowledge PLO was assessed by administering the ETS math field test to seniors from 2008–2012. One area where students did less well than expected was in linear algebra. As a result, the department is now cycling back to that subject in subsequent courses.

- **The Modern Languages Department** assessed students’ writing (its written language proficiency PLO) and determined that students were not meeting the standard. As a result, its faculty reviewed the curriculum of two classes (SP 004 and SP 100) in order to provide additional instruction and writing practice. Students’ oral proficiency PLO was assessed using the Oral Proficiency Interview developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Students are meeting the department’s expectations.

- **The Music program** was recently accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). The accreditation process gave the department the opportunity to align its curriculum and PLOs with NASM’s standards and led to the creation of a new degree track and a new major (Bachelor of Music in Music Education).

- **The Philosophy Department** recently introduced a capstone senior seminar that has become a focal point for assessment. In a recent appraisal of its philosophical skills PLO (argument understanding, construction, and evaluation), 80% of students demonstrated proficiency in argument understanding and construction and 75% demonstrated proficiency in argument evaluation.

- **The Physics Department** responded to its Six-Year Review in 2010–2011 with several curricular changes in the two majors offered by the department (Physics and Engineering/Physics). The changes include an internship option, a new course in computational physics, and a senior seminar.

- **The Political Science Department** refined its curriculum to address deficiencies in writing (a department PLO) and research methodology (a PLO). The changes led to a new gateway course (POL 040) preparing students for the greater demands of writing and research in upper-division classes. Assessment of the active societal engagement PLO in the internship class (using the AAC&U’s Value Rubric) found students scored above the standard on diversity of communities and cultures, civic identity, and commitment and connection to Christian service. Students scored below the departmental benchmark on analysis of knowledge. In response, instructors will pay greater attention to connecting service learning back to issues and theories in political science.

- **The Psychology Department** created new laboratory assignments in Sensation and Perception, Neuropsychology, Social Psychology, Developmental Psychology, and Behavioral Neuroscience, all made possible by new facilities. These additions have contributed to a dramatic increase in the professional level of students’ research. An
assessment of the scientific research methods and skills PLO generated mixed results, however. Students generally demonstrated successful use of databases in conducting a literature review, but demonstrated less competence at evaluating theories embedded in the literature and linking the literature to designing an experiment. Consequently, the research design curriculum and course (PSY 197) has undergone redesign.

- The Religious Studies Department has increased major requirements in church history to address the lack of training that past students have received in the history of Christianity. In addition, the senior seminar was updated to place a greater emphasis on systematic theology, which was established as a core requirement of the major in 2014.

- The Sociology and Anthropology Department has sought to improve students’ performances in two capstone classes. A faith-learning reflection paper has been added to SOC 195, and SOC 192 now requires a service activity with a sociological lens. Assignments were modified in both classes, and follow-up assessment will determine the effectiveness of the changes.

- The Theatre Arts Department received additional space in 2011 and 2012: a movement classroom with black box theatre technology, a theatre arts seminar classroom, and additional storage. Responding to feedback from graduates, the department created a senior seminar course in 2013. This seminar provides opportunities to synthesize knowledge gained in the department’s offerings; to integrate theatrical thinking and creativity with the moral imagination; and to encourage skills, networking, competencies, tools, and pre-professional work that will aid graduates’ transitions to the professional world. The department also created new local internship opportunities at high-profile professional theatres.

Other Program Reviews (CFR 2.11, 2.13, 4.3)

Similar to academic departments, other programs also undergo periodic reviews. Some examples:

1. Athletics. The Athletic Department reports to the Provost and is perceived as an important nucleus of learning and personal development; therefore, the department undergoes review in a six-year cycle. The most recent evaluation took place in 2014 (Appendix B24):

- The department patterned questions after the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey in order to compare Westmont athletes’ values and perspectives with those of Westmont’s entering students in general. The results suggested notable gains in athletes’ personal and intellectual confidence during their years of study and competition.

- In addition, the CIRP survey focused on athletes’ academic performance and connection with the religious mission of the institution. In response to survey results, the department is developing programming for first-year athletes to help them connect to the Westmont community and the mission.

- The CIRP results also called attention to a certain paradox: a slight decline in athletes’ graduation rates yet a rise in athletes’ GPAs.
  - The decline in graduates underscored the need for greater clarity in recruitment—to ensure that athletes were being pursued with the ability to perform as well as the desire to persist toward graduation at Westmont. Athletes who recently left
school early—due to lack of fit, struggles in the classroom, or loss of playing time—had begun to affect the graduation rate slightly.

- On an encouraging note, the rise in GPAs showed the influence of efforts by current coaches to promote academic success. This increase in academic success is especially noteworthy since Westmont’s athletic teams have also witnessed a marked increase in success on the track, fields, and courts—success evident in the number of teams and athletes advancing through national tournaments. Moreover, in the last two years, a Westmont team, an athlete, and a coach have been the sole recipients of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics’ Champion of Character award. Overall, our recent athletic success has not come at the expense of academics or of the integrity and character of programs.

### 2. Global Education

Of all of the interdisciplinary areas, the Global Education Office has sponsored the programs making the most advances in recent years in terms of program review:

- In an early attempt at formal review, a review team visited the longstanding Europe Semester in 2012 to examine its residential and co-curricular dimensions.
- The new Westmont in Istanbul program went through an assessment of its pilot years during the spring of 2014. The Istanbul review led to a strategy for helping students continue to study the Turkish language, adjustments in contingency plans regarding travel to potential “hot spots” in the Middle East, and some refinements in the post-trip seminar.
- An expanded and refined procedure for the appraisal of Westmont’s international semesters was approved by the Academic Senate in the fall of 2014.
- The new Westmont in Northern Europe program will host a visiting site team—consisting of both Westmont colleagues and an external evaluator—in the fall of 2015.

While Westmont continues to make use of the Intercultural Development Index (IDI), the college’s new Director of Global Education was also a principal investigator in an Assessing Global Learning study involving 11 colleges (Cornell, Duke, Northwestern, Kansas State, SUNY, and Westmont, among others). This 2014 study evaluated the development of intercultural, civic engagement, and critical thinking outcomes after students’ semesters abroad or short-term study and service opportunities. A sampling of the findings includes:

- Based on pre-trip and post-trip surveys, Westmont students showed gains in all of the major areas: intercultural competence, global civic activism, civic efficacy, political voice, and critical thinking. Compared to the aggregate of the other ten institutions, Westmont’s strongest scores were in critical thinking and global civic activism.
- In terms of activism, Westmont’s students were more likely than students at the other institutions to be involved philanthropically but less inclined toward political advocacy.
- Compared to the aggregate group, Westmont students scored relatively well in the appreciation of other nations, cultures and customs, and the college had comparable results for students’ awareness of dominant cultural assumptions and marginalization.
- The researchers concluded that “qualitative responses point strongly toward the specific character of Westmont as a Christian institution.” Unlike the other institutions, students
at Westmont tended to describe their learning in terms that made “direct connections to their faith.” The full study can be found in Appendix B25.

3. Library (CFR 2.3). The Voskuyl Library has received greater attention in recent years with the appointment of a new director and other staff as well as a major renovation of its space. A comprehensive review in 2014 offered affirmations and prompted new actions (Appendix B26):

- The review team praised the smart and collaborative renovation of space, the development of the liaison program, and the growing respect for library staff among the faculty. It noted that a growing number of faculty members speak appreciatively about the library personnel as partners in the educational enterprise.
- The team recommended a more centralized policy for acquisitions. In 2015–2016, the library is developing a clearer collections policy, not only for guiding the library internally but also for expressing the library’s vision to external constituencies.
- The review process foregrounded the importance of digitization and subsequent hiring of a digitization librarian.
- The review noted the value of creating advancement opportunities for library staff and identifying more occasions for them to contribute to the curriculum. Accordingly, library staff have been invited to teach some of the new First-Year Seminars, and the college is beginning to develop a promotion and evaluation system for library staff akin to the kind of process that faculty undergo when they pursue advancements in rank.

4. Student Life Division. As described in Chapter 3, the Student Life Division has a regular cycle of program reviews and annual outcome assessments. Here are a few recent results and actions:

- The Campus Pastor’s Office went through an external review in 2010, and the spiritual dimensions of the college’s mission were appraised during the ILO assessment of Christian Understanding, Practices, and Affections (CUPA) in 2012–2013. One aspect of the CUPA review was a study of students’ ongoing participation in church and service communities. The data showed that involvement in small-group study and ministry sessions declined over four years of college while participation in local churches increased. Overall, it is encouraging that students were beginning to make the transition from immersion in peer groups and college life to engagement with multi-generational religious communities. The survey also indicated that students saw the importance of church attendance in relation to their spiritual formation. As a result, a pilot program was initiated in fall 2014 to have an upper-class student serve as a Spiritual Formation Coordinator (SFC) in each of our first-year residence halls. A primary role of the SFC is to connect first-year students with opportunities for church attendance.
- In 2008, there were 11 known cases of students who exhibited suicidal ideation behaviors. While debriefing these cases among campus personnel, it was discovered that many of these students were being supported in some way or another by one or more departments on campus, yet these departments were unaware of the others’ efforts, which created a more disjointed and less-than-effective support system for those students. This discovery led to the formation of the Student Care Team (SCT) in fall 2009. The SCT is a collaborative support model that involves the staff of the Counseling
Center, Disability Services, the Health Center, the Registrar’s Office, and Residence Life. The SCT model is based upon best practices in higher education; the team meets weekly to determine how the college can best support students at risk and assist them in their success. Since SCT’s implementation, the number of students presenting suicidal ideation has dropped dramatically—to an annual average of 2.75 known cases per year. The collaboration of the SCT has been effective in creating a network of support for students most at risk, and has created greater collaboration among departments in promoting student success.

- The 2009 external review of the Residence Life department revealed questions regarding the effectiveness of the student conduct (disciplinary) process. Following the review, surveys and focus groups engaged students who had gone through the student conduct process; the results from this inquiry suggested that students were not experiencing intended growth and development. In an effort to bridge this gap, the department discovered and implemented a best practice for student conduct developed at University of Texas at San Antonio called E.P.I.C. Journey (Engagement, Personal Development, Interpersonal Development, and Community). E.P.I.C. Journey utilizes motivational interviewing and other student-centered practices through the student conduct process to better identify the developmental needs of each student, then uses a system that involves more of the campus community in the student’s development (e.g., via a mentoring program). Assessment conducted prior to and after the implementation of the E.P.I.C. Journey program suggests that the E.P.I.C. Journey approach has been more effective in meeting our goals for the student conduct process. In the area of process, students reported feeling more listened to (76% compared to 46%), and that staff members were more interested in their overall success (76% compared to 53%). Though the pre-E.P.I.C. assessment did not include questions related to changes in behavior, questions related to changes in behavior in the post-E.P.I.C. assessment indicated a degree of effectiveness. Seventy-six percent of students indicated that they had decided to follow college policies as a result of the student conduct process. Additionally, 58% of students indicated that the student conduct process had transformed their decision-making patterns. Overall, the implementation of the E.P.I.C. Journey model at Westmont has led to more effective interventions with students who typically are more at risk for failure in their educational experience.

5. Career Advising. To prepare for an expanded effort to assist students with life beyond Westmont, the college completed a survey of current students regarding career advising. Surveys were completed by 393 students. The breakdown by class was fairly equal: seniors (28%), juniors (26%), sophomores (21%), and first-year students (25%). A few results:

- Half of the students (50.4%) stated that they had discussed their sense of calling with their advisor, while 43.2% of the students claimed to be satisfied with the advising.
- A large proportion (82.4%) of students had discussed their career plans with their advisors, and 61.9% expressed satisfaction with this advising.
- The data most likely reflect appreciation for faculty when students initiate conversations about their larger hopes, goals, and purpose; they also reveal the high interest, from the earliest stages of college, in finding a career trajectory.
One dimension of the new advising effort will be to incorporate more career awareness and counseling into first- and second-year experiences.

Component 5: Student Success

High Ideals

Westmont has high aspirations for students, many that are difficult to quantify. We desire students to be “thoughtful scholars,” whether they earn doctorates or quietly bring a spirit of inquiry and discernment to their personal lives. We want them to become “grateful servants,” distinguished by generosity and charity, as well as “faithful leaders,” committed to principle and not merely accomplishment. No surveys or tests fully assess such attributes, though we get glimpses of students’ personal, spiritual, and ethical development through many questions in the NSSE (most recently administered in 2014) and in the College Students’ Beliefs and Values Survey (2004 – 2007), a study sponsored by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). These indirect measures of outcomes offer evidence about how students perceive their intellectual and personal development. Here are few salient features from the surveys (CFR 4.1, 4.3):

1. National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). In our most recent administration of the NSSE, many Westmont seniors affirmed that their “experience at this institution contributed to [their] knowledge, skills and personal development.” Students responded “quite a bit” or “very much” when asked how much they improved in the following areas (Appendix B27):
   - Writing clearly and effectively (90%)
   - Speaking clearly and effectively (82%)
   - Thinking critically and analytically (92%)

   These encouraging responses were all at higher rates than the NSSE national sample. In only one instance—“analyzing numerical and statistical information”—was Westmont’s 56% favorable rate lower than the norm. Overall, the NSSE results suggest that our students saw progress in becoming more “thoughtful scholars.”

   Westmont’s positive responses (“quite a bit” and “very much”) were also high for questions pertaining to interpersonal and personal development, namely:
   - Acquiring job- or work-related skills (69% Westmont; 68% NSSE sample)
   - Working effectively with others (79% Westmont; 73% NSSE sample)
   - Developing or clarifying a personal code of values and ethics (91% Westmont; 63% NSSE sample)
   - Understanding people of other backgrounds (72% Westmont; 61% NSSE sample)
   - Solving complex, real-world problems (66% Westmont; 63% NSSE sample)
   - Being an informed and active citizen (72% Westmont; 58% NSSE sample)

   On two of these six issues—“developing a personal code” and “citizenship”—Westmont’s differences from the NSSE national sample are statistically significant.

2. College Students’ Beliefs and Values Survey. With this longitudinal study conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA, we had the opportunity to perceive how students’ self-assessments changed over their college experience. The results indicated a number
of positive changes in the dimensions of thinking and behavior that are consistent with Westmont’s mission.

- The number of Westmont students scoring “high” for *ethic of caring* increased by 36 percentage points, from 20% to 56%. In the HERI national sample, students scoring “high” increased from 17% to 30%.
- Regarding if they were *trying to change things that are unfair in the world*, students increased in responses of “some” or to a “great extent” by 25 percentage points, from 69% to 94%. The national sample went from 67% to 71%.
- Students’ claims that they “frequently” *prayed to relieve the suffering of others* rose by 19 percentage points, from 52% to 71%. The national sample went from 49% to 54%.
- When asked if *reducing pain and suffering in the world* was important to them, students increased in responses of “essential” or “very important” from 56% to 85%. The national sample went from 55% to 67%.

Another cluster of responses showed some signs of discomfort and ambiguity. Although some of these responses might at first raise concerns, they do reflect healthy tensions characteristic of college students during times of growth.

- The proportion of students stating that they “occasionally” or “frequently” *struggled to understand evil, suffering and death* increased by 18 percentage points, from 77% to 95%.
- The number of students stating that they “occasionally” or “frequently” *questioned their religious and spiritual beliefs* increased by 20 percentage points, from 66% to 86%.
- However, the number of students who described themselves as *secure in their current views about spiritual and religious matters* remained stable (73%). Only 12% reported an attitude of “doubting” and only 17% stated they were “conflicted.”

Such results suggest that students are acquiring the ability to engage questions of significance that do not have simple answers. A liberally educated person ought to be able to hold in balance the uncertainty associated with big questions while still holding some foundational beliefs. These results imply that this balanced grip is largely what Westmont students are learning to achieve. According to HERI research, many educational features that Westmont values—global learning, service opportunities—lead to short-term disorientation and reappraisal; however, in the end, those same experiences nurture students’ spiritual development. (For the full College Students’ Beliefs and Values Survey, see Appendix B28.)

**Retention and Graduation Rates (CFR 1.2, 2.10)**

Increasingly, the national conversation about college success has focused on improving students’ persistence to graduation. Westmont has maintained healthy retention and graduation rates for several decades. This section summarizes those rates for first-year and transfer students. The data on first-year students are disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, Pell grant recipients, major, and high school and college GPA.
1. Methodology. Since the fall of 1991, the methodology Westmont uses to compute persistence and graduation rates has conformed to practices established for Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) reporting. Each fall the “full-time/first-time” cohort is established, and then enrollment and eventual degree completion are tracked. As required by IPEDS, Westmont reports 4-year, 6-year and 8-year graduation rates. In this report, the 8-year graduation rates are not included since there are no significant differences between 6-year and 8-year rates.

It should also be noted that the 3%–6% differential between 4-year and 6-year graduation rates is not an indicator of how many students enroll at Westmont for more than four years. Our policies allow students to finish as many as eight units of credit after the last term of attendance. Consequently, 10% or more of senior degree candidates every year finish one or two classes following Westmont enrollment. Students tend to do so at institutions closer to their homes rather than to re-enroll in Westmont for a final class or two.

2. First-Year Students: 1991–2013 Cohorts. During this period, Westmont’s retention and graduation rates gradually increased. Both our first-to-second-year retention (90.4%) and 6-year graduation rate (80.2%) peaked with the 2002 cohort and have since remained stable (Appendix B29). Strikingly, there is little or no evidence that the fire of 2008 or the economic recession had a negative influence on these rates.

Retention and graduation rates at Westmont compare favorably with national averages and selected benchmark schools. Take, for example, the first-year cohort of 2005. According to IPEDS and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the overall 4-year and 6-year graduation rates for the 2005 cohort at all 4-year institutions were 38.6% and 58.7%, respectively. For all private, non-profit institutions, the rates were 51.9% and 65.1% (Appendix B30). In contrast, Westmont’s 4-year and 6-year graduation rates were 75.3% and 77.7%.

Westmont regularly compares its retention and graduation rates with institutions that are more selective than the national sample reported by NCES. Three benchmark groups were studied: 1) a subset of California schools that are members of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU); 2) members of the Christian College Consortium (CCC) that are also categorized as national liberal arts colleges; and 3) a select group of private California colleges and universities. Of the CCCU and CCC schools, only Wheaton College—the most selective of these institutions—has graduation rates higher than Westmont. Compared to the broader list of California colleges, Westmont compares favorably (Appendix B31).

3. Disaggregated by Gender (Appendices B32 & B33). In our 2005–2008 cohorts, there is very little difference between Westmont’s average 6-year graduation rates for men (76.7%) and women (77.9%). This similarity is in contrast to NCES data for private colleges, in which the 6-year rate was 62.9% for men and 67.6% for women (2006 cohort). At Westmont, there is also no gender difference in the retention patterns following the first and second years of enrollment. For both men and women, 87% continue into the second year, and 80% continue into the third year. What the data also reveal is that almost all attrition occurs during the first two years of college. The 80% persistence rate into the third year and the 6-year graduation rate of 77% indicate that most students who begin the third year of study will graduate. Graduating “early” (completing the traditional four-year degree in three years) is the only dimension where gender makes a difference. Women graduate in 3 years at more than twice the rate as male students do (5.5% vs. 2.5%). This difference has consistently been observed for more than a decade.
4. Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity. Examining race and ethnicity longitudinal data has been complicated by two recent developments with IPEDS reporting. First, IPEDS chose in 2008 to divide the Asian/Pacific Islander category into two groups: Asian and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Second, multiracial students had previously reported themselves in the category with which they most identified or they declined to provide the information. Students now mark as many categories as they want and are classified as “two or more races” unless one of their choices is Hispanic. This change has resulted in an apparent sharp enrollment decline in Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders students despite an increase in the overall percentage of non-White students (Appendix B34). Many of the students now classified in the multiethnic category would have previously been classified as Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Computations have always been based on small numbers in the cohort for Blacks and American Indians/Alaska Natives, but now the cohorts are even smaller for these groups (as well as for Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders). Therefore, given small population sizes, graduation rates for the three groups must be interpreted cautiously. The following is a summary of key data found in Appendices B35 and B36:

- **American Indian/Alaskan Native.** The NCES reports that 6-year graduation rates at private, nonprofit institutions for the 2003–2006 cohorts ranged from 46% to 51%. For the same period, graduation rates at Westmont fluctuated between 40% and 100% with a mean of 72%.

- **Asian.** The NCES reports that 6-year graduation rates at private, nonprofit institutions for the 2005 and 2006 cohorts ranged from 77% to 78%. Westmont only began using the Asian category with the 2008 cohort, and the graduation rate was 75%.

- **Black.** The NCES reports that 6-year graduation rates at private, nonprofit institutions for 2003 to 2006 cohorts ranged from 44% to 45%. For the same period, graduation rates at Westmont were between 54% and 80% with a mean of 65%.

- **Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.** The NCES reports that 6-year graduation rates at private, nonprofit institutions for 2005 and 2006 cohorts were 53%. Westmont only began using the Hawaiian/Pacific Islander category with the 2008 cohort, and the graduation rate was 100%.

- **Hispanic.** The NCES reports that 6-year graduation rates at private, nonprofit institutions for 2003 to 2006 cohorts ranged from 59% to 62%. For the same period, graduation rates at Westmont were between 61% and 85% with a mean of 69%.

- **White, Non-Hispanic.** From 2003 to 2006, the NCES reports a 6-year graduation rate of 68% at private, nonprofit institutions. For the same period, graduation rates at Westmont were between 79% and 81% with a mean of 80%.

- **Two or More Races.** The NCES reports that 6-year graduation rates at private, nonprofit institutions for 2005 and 2006 cohorts ranged from 75% to 78%. Westmont only began using the Two or More Races category with the 2008 cohort, and the graduation rate was 100%.

- **Race/Ethnicity Unknown.** The NCES does not report graduation rates for this group. Westmont only began tracking the category with the 2008 cohort, and the graduation rate was 78%.
5. Pell Grant Recipients. Along with disaggregating the data by gender, race, and ethnicity, Westmont is interested in the success of students from less privileged backgrounds. How do their persistence rates compare with other students? Students who qualify for Pell grants typically have greater financial need, so the graduation rates of Pell recipients are informative. The 6-year graduation rate of Pell recipients (73.1%) is only 4.3 percentage points lower than Westmont’s overall 6-year graduation rate for the same period (77.4%). There is some indication that Pell students take slightly longer to complete the degree (Appendix B37). The 4-year Pell graduation rate was 66.4%, whereas the college rate was 73.5%, a difference of 7.1 percentage points. Pressures to work during college may account for a slower pace, but degree completion is not significantly less likely for this group.

6. Academic Major and Degree Completion. The retention and graduation rates for Westmont’s students do not vary significantly by major (Appendix B38). A look at three cohort years (2006, 2007, and 2008) indicate that the majors with the greatest number of non-graduates (Art, Biology, Communication Studies, and Kinesiology) were also some of the largest majors, so their number of non-finishers would be predictably larger. The most telling point is not the major chosen, but whether a major was chosen. Of all the students who did not graduate, 73% were “undeclared.”

We also examined the majors dropped by students who eventually did graduate with another major. Only Art, Computer Science, and Social Science failed to achieve an 80% graduation rate from students who initially declared these majors. Time to completion also did not vary much between majors (Appendix B38). Most students completed degrees in 3.5 to 4 years. Only English, History, Religious Studies, and Social Science majors had 3-year degree completion rates greater than 10%. The two majors with a high percentage of completers beyond 4 years (Engineering/Physics and Physics) had very small sample sizes, and some of the students participated in a 3/2 engineering program that requires 5 years. Given the small sample size and the generally high academic profile of these students, the graduation rate does not indicate a problem.

7. High-School GPA, College GPA, and Degree Completion. Students enter Westmont with different levels of academic preparedness—as reflected by varied high-school GPA. The mean high-school GPA of the 2008 to 2011 cohorts was 3.52. There were some differences in GPA based on ethnicity (Appendix B39). White students had the highest average GPA (3.56) while Blacks had the lowest (3.22).

For each of the ethnic groups, we examined whether high-school GPA was a predictor of degree completion in college (Appendix B39). The high-school GPAs of students who graduated from Westmont were greater than those of non-graduates for all ethnic groups except Black students; however, differences between graduates and non-graduates were small (mean difference of 0.13). There was no difference in high-school GPA between Black students who graduated from college and those who did not.

The picture is different for college GPA. Grades earned at Westmont are indeed predictors of college persistence. Graduates had a notably higher mean GPA (3.33) than non-graduates (2.88), a difference of 0.45 (Appendix B40). White and multiethnic graduates had the highest Westmont GPAs while Hispanic, Black, and Native American graduates had the lowest. Among non-graduates, Black and Native American students had the lowest averages.
Intercultural clubs and programs offering support and services to students of color have been in place for many years. One of their goals is “to support students of color, international, and missionary and third-culture students in their academic success, spiritual growth, and social well-being.” In practice, there has been less programming directed at academic success than other dimensions of the mission. In January 2015, the Provost and Student Life Division jointly initiated a working group focusing on issues of success and retention. The data presented throughout this section indicate that ethnic diversity should be one focus for study and action.

8. Transfer Students: Retention and Graduation Rates. Transfer students have constituted 10% to 15% of new students entering Westmont in the fall the past five years. Although transfers are a small group relative to the first-year student population, they are an important part of the Westmont enrollment management strategy. Disaggregation of this data by ethnicity or academic major is less meaningful since these subsets of the annual cohort (only 40 to 60 transfer students, all told) are usually extremely small.

The graduation rate of transfer students has been stable in recent years, averaging 73%. The rates for cohort years 2006, 2007, and 2008 were 74%, 70%, and 75%, respectively. For those who eventually completed the degree, nearly half (47%) did so in 2 years or less. Another 47% required 2.5 to 3 years, while 6% took more than 3 years to finish (Appendix B41).

Many transfers who failed to complete a degree decided to withdraw quickly. Of the non-completers, 45% withdrew before the end of their first year of study. Most of these withdrawals occurred at the break between fall and spring semesters. Similar to first-year student dynamics, the choice not to declare a major was a significant factor. Fifty-five percent of transfers who exited without completing a degree had never declared a major.

Since the cohorts of transfer students have been relatively small, it is difficult to trace trends in their graduation rates by major. Dropped majors and declared majors by non-graduates indicate that most programs do not have a retention problem with transfer students. However, the results also suggest that further analysis of transfer student degree completion would be appropriate for two departments: Art and Communication Studies.

9. Conclusions about Persistence Data. Several conclusions from this data appear warranted:

- Westmont’s graduation rates are considerably higher than the national average and compare favorably with benchmark institutions. Of particular note is that the gap between the graduation rates of underrepresented students and majority students is smaller at Westmont than at most schools nationally.

- Except for Asians, Westmont's 6-year graduation rates for the IPEDS ethnic and racial categories are all higher than the rates for private, nonprofit institutions. The graduation rate for Asian students is two-to-three percentage points lower than national figures.

- At Westmont, the 6-year graduation rate for White students is greater than the graduation rates for the underrepresented categories of particular focus in higher education: Black and Hispanic students. However, the 6-year graduation rates of Black and Hispanic students at Westmont are approximately the same as the graduation rate of White students in the national sample of private, nonprofit institutions and much higher than the Black and Hispanic student graduation rates found in the national population. Still, the college should pay careful attention to the risk factors and support structures that affect the persistence of underrepresented student groups.
• There are no great discrepancies between graduation rates among majors. All majors appear to be effectively helping students persist toward degree completion.

**Diversity at Westmont (CFR 1.4)**

Westmont’s graduation rates tell an encouraging story about the persistence of different groups of students toward their degrees. But a college that truly thrives—intellectually, socially, and spiritually—is one that values diversity as more than a statistical end, but rather as an enrichment of learning and moral development throughout the campus. Our interest in international study and service compels us to consider not just the diversity of global communities but our engagement with local ones. To underscore the importance of promoting diversity, Westmont has woven the theme into several institutional documents. The Long-Range Planning Committee of 1995 set diversity as a priority: *Westmont strives to be a community informed and enriched by thoughtful and intentional study of and interaction with multiple cultures. As a liberal arts college rooted in Christ, we celebrate diversity as an aspect of God’s creation; we strive to create community out of rich diversity as an aspect of building God’s Kingdom in the world; we value the range of perspectives on the world that stimulates intellectual and personal growth; and we seek for faculty and staff to apprentice students in the art of dealing with diversity in constructive ways. It is an aim of Westmont to prepare graduates who will function intelligently, effectively and for the good of our increasingly intercultural world.* The college’s two most recent strategic plans established priorities to Increase Diversity and Global Awareness in all College Sectors (2011–2014) and Cultivate Diversity and Global Engagement Across the College (2014–2017).

No doubt, the college’s setting in the elite vicinity of Montecito presents some challenges for pursuing diversity and cultural awareness. Westmont has seen progress on some scores and shortcomings on others. Here is a short summary of relevant themes:

1. **Enrollment and Hiring.** Over the past decade, the ethnic make-up of the student body has shifted: the proportion of Westmont students from non-Caucasian groups has grown from 22% in the fall of 2004 to 35% in the fall of 2014. The greatest increase has been in the percentage of Hispanic students (7.6% to 13.5%) while that of Black students appears fairly constant (1.7% to 1.5%). Change in those sectors of the student body might be slightly masked by the fact that a higher percentage of students now identify as individuals of two or more races, a demographic tracked since 2010. The percentage of students identifying as persons of two or more races has increased from 2.3% in 2010 to 7.8% in 2014.

   There have been some modest gains in diversity among the faculty, staff, and trustees over the past few years. As of spring 2015, seven persons of color were on the Board of Trustees (four African-Americans, one Hispanic, and two Asian-Americans); this cohort represents nearly a two-fold increase over 2007. Between 2012 and 2015, 16 individuals have been hired as tenure-track faculty, including eight women and seven persons of color. Of the four academic administrators hired since the last WASC review in 2011, three are women. The two new members of the President’s Executive Team since the last review include one male (Provost) and one female (Vice President for Student Life). All told, 30 academics have been hired in tenure-track, multi-year, or administrative roles since January 2012, including 10 persons of color and 17 women. From 2004 to 2015, the percentage of female faculty rose from 30% to 36% while the percentage of faculty of color rose from 9% 14% (Appendix B42).
Among the primary concerns, Westmont has struggled to recruit African-Americans to the faculty, and the number of Hispanic faculty is also low, especially given the Southern California demographics. The emphasis on diversity does remain a priority in recruitment, and virtually every open faculty or administrative search has included persons of color among the finalists. There have been many offers to candidates from underrepresented groups which have not been accepted, in part because many of our top candidates have had multiple job offers. Along with faculty hires, the college has sought to secure and retain diverse hires in its Residence Life staff.

2. Strategic Initiatives. In light of the college’s emphasis on diversity in its long-term and strategic plans, a number of initiatives have been taken in recent years. For example:

- The faculty voted in 2007 to require each department to submit an Annual Report about steps they had taken to improve recruitment of diverse faculty; that report was enlarged in 2013 to include efforts to amend the curriculum and to increase campus speakers in order to incorporate a wider range of cultural perspectives. The goal was not only to build stronger networks for recruitment but also to keep sufficient pliability and dynamism in the curriculum as well as to encourage potential new faculty to see possibilities for enriching and reshaping the curriculum.

- Westmont hired a new Dean of Admissions who is Hispanic (2011) and promoted an admissions counselor who is Pacific Islander to Assistant Director of Admissions (2015). The Admissions Office also started a Multicultural Overnight Visit Experience (MOVE) with the aim of “empowering prospective students with the confidence and plan” to pursue study at Westmont.

- In January of 2012, the new Director of Intercultural Programs launched an annual multi-day workshop on racial justice during the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday, and the event has enjoyed robust attendance from several ethnic groups. The success of that program has led to an adapted version of the program for staff and faculty, offered as a Diversity Engagement Workshop during spring break. The college has also offered its Westmont Institute—a multi-week seminar for staff about the history and mission of the institution—in Spanish.

- In 2014, the trustees renamed our Diversity Committee, now the Diversity and Global Engagement Committee. The change reflects Westmont’s strategic interest in connecting the local and the global.

- A new semester program in downtown Santa Barbara, set to launch in the fall of 2015, will enable students to work and study in a wider variety of cultural settings in the immediate region. (For 40 years, Westmont students have had opportunities to engage an urban context through enrolling in the college’s San Francisco semester.)

- In 2014, the Director of Global Education offered stipends and workshops for faculty who were able to revise their syllabi to incorporate a wider range of readings and multicultural perspectives.

- The college has increased the number of staff and faculty with roles supporting international students, and several dinners have been held for international students from 2013 through 2015.

- Westmont is pursuing a partnership with the Act Six program, joining California institutions and organizations in funding scholarships for a cohort of urban students. The
chair of the trustees has committed to funding scholarships for two South African students to attend Westmont as part of each new class.

3. Campus Climate. With an eye toward assessing the campus climate for persons of all races and backgrounds, Westmont participated in HERI’s Diverse Learning Environment Survey in 2011. Westmont’s scores on the survey were significantly better than national norms and our specific comparison group (a group of rigorous, four-year, private institutions). In general, Westmont students’ “sense of belonging” (56.1 vs. 53.9, p<0.001) and their “experiences of positive cross-cultural interactions” (51.4 vs. 48.6, p<0.001) were greater than those of our comparison group. Asian, Hispanic, multiracial, and White students at Westmont also had similar scores. The sample of Black students participating in the survey (only four) made firm conclusions more difficult. However, three of the four did indicate that they felt themselves to be “member[s] of the college” and would recommend Westmont to others, although their “sense of belonging” (2.75 average on a scale of 4) was somewhat lower than that of other groups. The highest average for “sense of belonging” among underrepresented groups was from students of two or more races (at 3.34).

Another encouraging sign in the HERI data was that underrepresented groups did not report experiences of harassment or discrimination at higher rates than White students did. In all cases, Westmont’s results on the survey showed less bias or negative racial encounters than at most other institutions. For instance, only 3.2% of Westmont students claimed to have been harassed often or very often, a lower rate than our comparison group of private liberal arts colleges (7.0%). The experience of discrimination among Black students was no higher than among Whites and slightly lower than among Asian and Hispanic students. Admittedly, since 2011, the proliferation of social media has dramatically increased the capacity for offensive or hurtful comments to be aired among students, and there have been a few recent incidents of postings that have caused dismay. In each instance, Westmont has endeavored to provide support and occasions for conversation about the issues through the Office of Intercultural Programs.

In general, according to the HERI survey, Westmont students were more likely to have experienced “positive cross-cultural interactions” than students in the comparison groups. For instance, 87.6% of Westmont students indicated that they shared a meal often or very often with a member of a different racial or ethnic group. In the comparison cohort of private liberal arts colleges, the rate was 75.2%. Similarly, 45.4% of Westmont students asserted that they had often or very often experienced “meaningful and honest discussions about race/ethnic relations outside of class.” That result is certainly comparable to the cohort of private liberal arts colleges, where the rate was 42.5%. Admittedly, White students at Westmont were slightly less likely to report sharing a meal with a peer of a different group or to have joined in relevant “meaningful and honest discussions”; however, all of the sectors were high compared to national norms.

Westmont also conducts exit interviews with its staff, including some questions related to employees’ perceptions of the college’s commitment to diversity. Between September of 2011 and September of 2014, departing staff members were asked if they felt that Westmont was “open to diversity and differences.” Based on the comments submitted anonymously, 70% of the responses affirmed that Westmont was indeed open to diversity and differences; some stated that recent efforts have been “a huge encouragement.” “I know we have work to do still,” one respondent writes, “but I think that we have made much effort and I do think Westmont is open and working to be more open.” A few individuals (19%) gave more mixed reports, citing progress and examples of faculty and staff working to achieve positive ends while recognizing
the ongoing need to achieve more diverse membership within the community and address some matters of misunderstanding. Others (11%) answered “no,” primarily focusing on the need for more underrepresented groups to be present on the staff. In a recent survey of Westmont graduates (see below), the college’s need to hire more faculty and staff of color prompted some of the strongest critiques and most compelling recommendations for the future.

Surveys of Westmont Graduates (CFR 2.6, 4.5)

Westmont enjoys the loyalty of thousands of graduates, and has reasons to believe that a high percentage of those students are successful, even if much of that evidence has been anecdotal and intermittent. The success of the college’s graduates was implicit in recent studies by Forbes and the Washington Post about the financial advances of college graduates, wherein Westmont ranked in the upper echelon of the nation’s institutions (see Chapter 2). Westmont does not have a centralized, systematic routine of surveying alumni, however. There are some isolated and occasional studies, such as surveys conducted by academic departments during their program review cycles or those developed by the Office of College Advancement. The development of a comprehensive institutional schedule and the cooperation for such surveys are objectives that the college is beginning to address more earnestly.

Two recent surveys—crafted for this review—are steps in that direction (Appendix B07). First, as described in Chapter 2, the college developed a survey based on the Gallup-Purdue study Great Jobs, Great Lives. Second, in preparation for this report, all graduates from six classes (2004, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2012) were asked to complete a brief web-based survey that would indicate how well the students felt prepared for the early years following college. To encourage a good response rate, we kept the survey short, limiting it to questions on students’ post-Westmont education and satisfaction with preparation for graduate school and careers. Response rates ranged from 25% and 30% for each class with a mean of 28%. Response rates by gender also matched fairly well with the gender distribution of the classes (males 33%; females 65%; declined to identify 2%). That second survey yielded valuable data about students’ studies and attitudes after Commencement:

1. Graduate Degrees Completed. In the entire sample of all six classes, 35% of the respondents reported that they had completed a graduate or professional degree. Degree completion was time-dependent; not surprisingly, the oldest alumni had the highest rate of completion (42%) while the more recent classes had totals of 26% and 10%, respectively. For the most part, there were no gender differences within the data—except for the 2012 class, which saw 12% of its women complete a graduate degree but only 4% of its men.

Since it would be rare to complete a doctorate or most professional degrees in less than four or five years (except for law or an MBA), the type of degrees earned did vary across class years. The Class of 2012 reported completing only master’s degrees. Among the classes that had graduated four or five years prior to the survey (i.e., in 2009 and 2010), no one had yet completed a doctoral degree; however, approximately 25% of the degrees reported were professional degrees. For the classes of 2004, 2006, and 2008, 15% of the male respondents claimed that they had earned a doctorate while 5% of the women did.

2. Graduate Degrees in Progress. Many Westmont alumni are currently working on graduate degrees, especially alumni who have walked across the stage at Commencement in the past few years. Approximately 10% of the oldest alumni in this study (i.e., the classes of 2004 and 2006)
were still working on a degree; in contrast, 20% of graduates for 2009-2010 and 25% from the 2012 class were enrolled in graduate school programs. Gender was only a slight differential in the survey, except for the Class of 2012. In that class, women were nearly three times as likely as men to be in graduate programs (29% to 11%). For cohorts graduating from 2004 to 2008, only 4% of the women and 0% of the men remain enrolled in doctoral programs.

If we combine the data on completed degrees and degrees-in-progress, we can see that 50% of alumni who graduated from 2004 to 2008 have completed a graduate degree or are still enrolled. This number declined to 46% with the 2009 and 2010 groups and dropped to 33% for the 2012 cohort.

3. Satisfaction with Westmont Education. The survey asked three questions about graduates’ satisfaction with their education; participants used a 5-point response scale.

- **How well did Westmont prepare you for graduate school?** The online survey instrument made it possible to give this question only to survey respondents who reported attending graduate school. For all respondents, 82% replied with the two highest choices: “more than adequate” or “very well.” Another 15% replied “adequate.” Only 3% of respondents gave responses “less than adequate” or “not well at all.” Differences between class years and gender were minor.

- **How well did Westmont College prepare you for your current career?** Across all class years, 73% replied with the two highest choices: “more than adequate” or “very well.” Another 20% replied “adequate.” Differences between class years and gender were few. It is interesting to note that the most positive response (82% stating “more than adequate” or “very well”) came from 2012 men. This cohort is the same group that reported the least engagement in graduate school; it is possible that early career success decreased their interest in pursuing graduate study or simply provided an equally viable path.

- **Overall, how satisfied are you with your education at Westmont College?** Responses on this global item were even more positive than on the previous questions and were almost entirely limited to the two highest choices. The most positive choice (“very satisfied”) was expressed by 66% of respondents, and the next choice (“satisfied”) by 29%. Of the remaining three options, 3% marked “indifferent,” and 1% each indicated “dissatisfied” and “very dissatisfied.” Once again, there were minimal differences between class years and genders.

Graduates of Westmont express a high degree of satisfaction with their experience at the college—and specifically with preparation for employment and graduate studies. Within ten years of receiving their diplomas from Westmont, 50% of alumni report completing a graduate degree or continuing their enrollment in a graduate program. In the Westmont version of the *Great Lives* survey, 74% of Westmont’s respondents claim that their professors provided guidance for their careers, a notable result given Westmont’s liberal arts orientation.

**Final Reflections**

All told, the journey of the past decade has given Westmont reason to conclude that its educational objectives are largely being realized. Graduation rates are strong, without major
discrepancies by ethnicity or gender. Career satisfaction and graduate study are common. Academic departments are increasingly self-reflective, settling into robust conversations about “key questions” and taking cues from benchmark data. Most co-curricular programs are engaged in reviews, some taking innovative approaches to assessing both affective and cognitive outcomes. As always, some departments have conducted more rigorous and profitable reviews than others, but overall there is a sense that we have learned much that will make upcoming rounds of review more effective.

At the same time, the college realizes that student success is about more than test scores, persistence data, graduate degrees, and career preparation. The college’s mission to develop “thoughtful scholars, grateful servants, and faithful leaders” requires a holistic perspective. As our first round of ILO assessments reveals, we will need to develop increasingly sophisticated ways of evaluating our aptitudes for and effectiveness in pursuing those ideals. It is challenging to capture the full range of learning in such categories as critical thinking, Christian affections, intercultural maturation, and growth in integrity and character. Our early ILO efforts have reminded us of the value of keeping our focus concise and manageable—as well as the danger of letting a small handful of scores stand as measurements for larger, often intangible aspirations. The best evidence of those high aspirations may come from a more vigorous commitment to learn from our graduates several years after they get their diplomas in hand.

Nonetheless, there are encouraging signs from our recent efforts. According to the Westmont/Great Lives survey, more than 80% of respondents commend the “spiritual counsel” they received from faculty and staff. On national surveys—such as NSSE and HERI’s Beliefs and Values—Westmont students describe their personal and spiritual development positively, in most cases far more affirmatively than in the national samples of college students. More than 95% of Westmont alumni claim they are satisfied with their undergraduate education. To a great extent, Westmont students are thriving. We need to sustain and enrich this legacy even as we discern new ways of serving those who fail to connect or flourish.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUSTAINING QUALITY INTO THE FUTURE
(WSCUC STANDARD 3)

Addressing Report Component 7

Component 7a: Institutional Resilience

Four days after Thanksgiving in 2008, the Westmont community gathered for a service to mark the reopening of the college after the Tea Fire. Fourteen faculty homes had been destroyed, large sections of landscape charred, and $12 million of the college’s property damaged. The physical and psychological costs had been high. Yet Westmont persevered: classes resumed, homes were rebuilt, and new construction proceeded on course. The enrollment remained solid for the next semester and in the coming years. Sound insurance policies and risk management protocols were in place and aided the quick recovery. Many of the college’s supporters responded generously.

The fire hit Westmont just as the economic implosion of 2008–2009 affected many American lives and industries. The college immediately froze tuition, increased financial aid, and reduced operating expenses. Due to such prompt responses, Westmont was able to maintain its enrollment and to sustain programs and jobs. A new challenge came in 2014, as Westmont needed to replace one of our largest graduating classes even as Cal Grants had been cut and public doubts about higher education were intensifying. The college responded with several initiatives: an expanded visit program, adjusted aid policies, and a new online application. A larger number of first-year and transfer students enrolled in the fall of 2014, and the college exceeded budget objectives.

A similar spirit of resilience will certainly be needed as we navigate the shifting currents of American higher education (CFR 4.7). As a residential liberal arts college, Westmont belongs to one of the most distinguished sectors of American higher education—but also an increasingly narrow one. Liberal arts institutions enroll a much lower percentage of the collegiate population than ever before, and those with modest endowments rely heavily on tuition revenue and tuition discounting. In the fall of 2015, Westmont, like several of our peer institutions, will most likely see a slight dip in the yield rate among admitted students, requiring further recalibrations of our financial aid strategies going forward. Nonetheless, Westmont remains committed to the ideal that the liberal arts are not an antiquarian luxury but an important attribute for the college’s long-term viability. In his recent article “The Sustainable College,” Daniel F. Sullivan, a senior advisor to the AAC&U, contends that the colleges that will endure are those that recognize that the “21st century is the liberal-education century”—that there is “alignment between the intended outcomes of liberal education and the learning that the nation needs now and for the foreseeable future.” The “only approach to undergraduate pedagogy that has strong and growing research support,” Sullivan writes, “is one that is both challenging academically and based on eliciting high levels of student engagement.”

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These are themes that have long defined Westmont’s vision and practice. Our challenge now is to continue building the resources to support scholarships and endow many of the college’s programs. With a cap on its Montecito enrollment and a commitment to undergraduate education, Westmont will not pursue widespread expansion to generate new funds. However, the college has a clear understanding of its mission and its place within the panorama of higher education options. In addition, we have a robust fundraising program, a long record of operating “in the black,” and a heritage of adapting to new opportunities. This chapter surveys our recent financial history, some new strategic planning endeavors, and several specific steps taken to ensure that the college remains fiscally healthy and vibrant for decades to come.

Component 7b: Financial Viability

Fiscal Management (CFR 3.4)

A sustainable future relies strongly on prudent fiscal management. As we ended fiscal year 2015, the operating budget finished without a deficit for the 31st consecutive year. Much work goes into achieving a balanced budget. The President, each Vice President, and the many budget managers across campus exercise care with the funds for which they are responsible.

In addition to well-managed operational budgets, the college’s balance sheet continues to be strong. The college has been averaging 47 days of cash on hand for operational needs as of the last five fiscal year-end dates. In the middle of the fiscal year (December 31), the college has averaged over 80 days of cash on hand. Endowment assets have rebounded well from the recent low point in 2009 and have finally regained all the ground lost to the economic implosion and related drop in the markets. The endowment value as of March 31, 2015, was $82.5 million. While much of the rise in value can be attributed to the general rise in the markets, endowment gifts have also played an important role, as has the college’s new investment advisor.

Westmont has remained on schedule with respect to all debt principal and interest payments. In January of 2015, the college paid $1 million in principal, reducing the outstanding amount to $58.5 million, which is down from a high point of $65 million in 2012. The outstanding debt is offset on the financial statements by $35 million of the endowment total noted above, which has been earmarked as available for debt service and retirement. Also, incremental room revenue from the construction of the new Westmont Institute for Global Learning and Leadership is slated to be used for debt service obligations; the new facility will allow 140 students to live on campus rather than in the greater Santa Barbara community. This combined institute and residence hall is expected to be fully gift-funded and will generate in excess of $1 million of net revenue in year one. It is scheduled to open in fall of 2017.

The burden to pay the annual interest and fees on the debt has gone down significantly in recent years. The reasons for this decrease are two-fold. First, the college was able to renegotiate the terms of the bank letter of credit that supports the bonds, which lowered the annual fees from approximately 2.3% to less than 1.2%. This change alone saved more than $600,000 per year. In addition to fee reductions, the short-term interest rate environment, which has been extremely favorable throughout the life of the bonds, has become even better. The average interest rate since the bonds closed in January of 2010 has been 0.15%, but the average rate since January of 2014 has gone down to 0.07%. The bonds continue to be in variable-rate mode, although a 2.5% interest rate cap was purchased on one-third of the outstanding principal to provide some protection against a potential spike in rates.
Since the bonds closed in January of 2010, the college has remained in full compliance with all bank and bond covenants. Two of those covenants are minimum financial ratios that must be met. Specifically, they are the minimum debt service coverage ratio (1.35) and the minimum liquidity-to-debt ratio (0.60). At each semiannual reporting date, the minimums have been exceeded, often by a large margin. The most recent calculation of the ratios as of December 31, 2014, showed the figures to be 14.39 and 1.18, respectively.

Along with the bond ratios, the college tracks several other key financial indicators. One of those indicators, the Financial Responsibility Composite Score, is calculated each year by the United States Department of Education to determine an institution’s ability to access federal financial aid. The composite score uses the primary reserve ratio, the equity ratio, and the net income ratio, each of which is weighted and assigned a strength factor, to arrive at a possible score range of -1.0 to +3.0 with scores above 1.5 considered “responsible.” Westmont’s most recent published score from the Department of Education was 3.0 for the year 2012–13. Internal calculations for 2013–14 indicate that the college should again receive a perfect score of 3.0.

Another typical measurement of institutional financial health is the Composite Financial Index (CFI) developed by KPMG and several other firms. The CFI uses four common ratios—the primary reserve ratio, the net operating revenues ratio, the return on net assets ratio, and the viability ratio—and then applies a weight factor to each one. CFI scores can range from -4.0 to +10.0 with a score of 3.0 considered the threshold for institutional financial health. With the exception of fiscal year 2012, Westmont’s score has ranged between 4.1 and 5.5 since 2009 with an overall upward trend.

Westmont has a longstanding commitment to strong academic programs and related student support services. One measure of that commitment is the level of financial resources allocated to instructional and student-related areas of the college. The most recently completed fiscal year for which audited financial statements are available (FY14) shows that the areas of Instruction, Academic Support, and Research accounted for 43.2% of the total expenditures for the year (including resources allocated for academic facility depreciation). When combined with Student Services (athletics, counseling and health services, the Records Office, etc.) and Auxiliary Enterprises (including off-campus academic program travel expenses and expenses associated with the on-campus residential experience), total resources directly and indirectly attributable to the overall student experience increase to more than 80% of the budget.

**Enrollment and Marketing**

A fundamental reason behind Westmont’s current financial health is its ability to attract and retain students. Over 93% of the college’s operating budget is funded by student charges (tuition, fees, room, and board). The operating budget is based on an annual average of 1,185 on-campus students, and over the past decade the college has averaged above that mark. Because enrollment is so critical, the college has in recent years moderated the rate of increase of student charges (below 4% for seven consecutive years) and strategically increased the use of financial aid, both of which have helped address the affordability concerns of students and families.

The new strategic map accents the need for an integrated marketing plan as one of the college’s principal investments in the coming years. Previous studies have indicated a very high level of loyalty and regard for Westmont among constituencies that know the college but less “name recognition” among a wider public. A marketing firm has been hired to help the college fine-tune its story for multiple audiences, develop an overall digital strategy for Westmont
information and materials, and implement a comprehensive marketing strategy throughout a wide range of college endeavors.

**Component 7c: Preparing for Change**

**Strategic Planning (CFR 4.3, 4.6, 4.7)**

Westmont’s resilience and sustainability will also depend upon some discerning judgments about future initiatives and developments. The President has formed a Futures Group—consisting of faculty and administrators—to read widely on current issues and forecasts for higher education. The group helps inform the robust strategic planning process. Increasingly, strategic planning conversations are driven by data shared with the Strategic Planning Committee and the Board of Trustees (e.g., see Appendix B43). A recent increase in institutional research will further enhance strategic planning as a data-driven process. Trustees, faculty, staff, students, parents, and alumni are engaged in assessing key strengths Westmont can build on, areas of needed improvement, and critical issues facing the college in the next three-to-five years. The Futures Group aims at enriching that conversation by keeping current on a wide range of perspectives about imminent threats and opportunities for higher education. The group examines, among other issues, Moody’s analysis of the economic health of the higher education sector, studies on tuition and affordability, theories on disruptive innovation, current data on public opinion, and studies of the values and characteristics of millennials.

Under President Beebe’s leadership, achieving greater financial sustainability has become a central focus of Westmont’s strategic planning. The strategic map for 2011–2014 (Appendix B44) set a high priority on the need to Develop Resources Enabling Westmont to be Affordable and Competitive (cell D-6). This emphasis led to the creation of an Affordability and Competitiveness task force. That group prepared several recommendations, which were refined and endorsed by the Strategic Planning Committee and Board of Trustees. As a result, the following priorities are included in the strategic map for 2014–2017 (Appendix B01; parenthetical notes identify the particular cell for each objective on the strategic map):

- Achieve targeted growth in the endowment, including the number of endowed chairs (D-3 and D-4).
- Increase scholarship support to reduce the cost to students and provide greater opportunities for students from lower socio-economic contexts (D-5).
- Secure external grants and awards (D-6).
- Make an effective case for the challenges facing the college to help faculty and staff understand their roles in innovation and the prudent use of resources (C-4).
- Clarify the return on investment for Westmont graduates (C-4 and column B).
- Increase revenue by enrolling more students in programs beyond the Montecito campus and, therefore, not subject to the cap. This includes growth in off-campus and global programs (D-1, E-1).
- Expand programs that will bring in non-tuition revenue, including programs offered by Westmont’s various institutes (D-2).
- Find more ways to inspire and reward mission-driven innovation (D-2).
- Streamline systems and processes to lower the cost to serve (E-3 and row H).
Fundraising and the Capital Campaigns

The current strategic map underscores the priority of bolstering the endowment and scholarship support to remain affordable. On a positive note, Westmont has seen a substantial increase in its fundraising capacity and goals in the last several years, and these new resources are strengthening the foundation for the college’s future. Although many of the major gifts to the college have supported recent construction, Westmont’s fundraising endeavors have also emphasized building the deferred giving program, which will bear fruit in future decades and provide resources for a new generation. Here are several notable features of our recent fundraising efforts:

- The *Bright Hope for Tomorrow* campaign, which ended in 2012, brought in more than $82,000,000 in gifts and pledges. Those funds helped the college with its most recent capital projects: Winter Hall for Science and Mathematics; the Adams Center for the Visual Arts; the Westmont Observatory; a new track; new soccer and baseball fields; a new power building; and improvements to our perimeter road, campus signage, lighting, and lower entrance.

- The current *Campaign for Westmont* began in February of 2012, and has already raised over $110,000,000 in donations, bequests, pledges, grants, and gifts-in-kind. More than 1100 donors have made commitments to the campaign. More than $47,000,000 of the total is designated for scholarships, endowed chairs, and academic equipment.

- The addition of an art museum has led to several major donations; the estimated value of artistic gifts to the college in the last five years exceeds $30,000,000.

- In the last three years, more than 100 individuals have made new legacy or deferred commitments to the college, often as part of the *Campaign for Westmont*. The deferred gifts that have been pledged to the college in the past three years exceed $34,000,000. That brings the total number of deferred givers to more than 750 and the total amount of deferred gifts to over $125,000,000. The Office of Gift Planning has communicated with all legacy members to ensure that the accounting of the pledges is accurate.

- The current campaign will end in May of 2016, and the subsequent campaign will be devoted largely to building the endowment and supporting scholarships to keep Westmont affordable for a wide array of students and families.

This significant momentum in fundraising is laying a strong foundation for Westmont’s future. Much of the recent success in fundraising has involved a more successful engagement with the local Montecito and Santa Barbara communities; some of the new endeavors—an art museum, various institutes, and public lectures and conferences—have drawn more local attention to the college. An increase in gift income will help the college to pursue its strategic priority of keeping Westmont affordable and competitive.

New Revenue Streams

Although Westmont’s Conditional Use Permit has placed constraints on the undergraduate enrollment at the Montecito campus, that policy has also prompted the college to explore creative ways of enhancing revenue. In all such endeavors, there is a desire to match the mission with the market—to secure income for endeavors that reflect the college’s values and priorities. Some of the new initiatives include:
• A broader use of the campus during the summer months for conferences, camps, weddings, special events, etc. In the summer of 2013, the college set a goal of reaching $1 million a year for these enterprises and reached half of that total in the first year.

• A new semester program in downtown Santa Barbara will begin in the fall of 2015. Budgeted to break even in the first year with only eight students a semester, the program needs only modest growth to bring in several hundred thousand dollars annually.

• The college’s longstanding urban studies program in San Francisco is being expanded to appeal to more students, and the pricing has been adjusted to draw in students from a consortium of other schools.

• The Global Education Office is designing programs that would increase participation in international study by approximately 100 students.

• The new Westmont Institute for Global Learning and Leadership has been designed to accommodate income-generating summer conferences for executive leadership through the newly fashioned Montecito Institute (with anticipated groundbreaking in 2016). A successful Lead Where You Stand conference in May of 2015 tested the model and found considerable interest among the public for such events.

• Based on its own history with fires and other dangers, Westmont has launched a consulting service that will guide other institutions in disaster preparedness plans.

**Technology and Innovation (CFR 3.5)**

Most prognostications of higher education emphasize the necessity of institutions—even residential liberal arts colleges—to blend the salient innovations in modern technology into students’ learning experience. A relevant item on the college’s strategic map is the goal to Make Appropriate Use of Technology to Support Westmont Distinctives. Westmont’s Information Technology Department (IT) seeks to encourage the full use of technological resources on campus to support the mission. This approach has required significant restructuring of IT, the adoption of cloud computing, the ability to create software applications, support for personal devices such as tablets and smartphones, and a partnership model for determining which technologies the college uses. In the area of academic computing, IT has worked with the Provost’s Office and several faculty members to explore and implement projects that extend our students’ learning capacities. The department was recently recognized as one of the top 12 programs in the nation by eCampus News. Here is a sampling of recent innovations (link to technology projects):

• *Flipped Classroom*: Some faculty members have adopted this progressive instructional strategy, which reverses the traditional pedagogical model. By delivering much of their course content online, prior to class sessions, faculty reserve class time primarily for group work and discussion. IT provides technical resources and support, recording lectures and creating online learning environments in which students can prepare successfully for in-class activities.

• *Innovation Grants*: IT has partnered with the Provost’s Office and the Professional Development Committee to offer a few grants that encourage faculty to explore innovative uses of technology within their academic disciplines. At the end of the grant period, faculty members present their findings to their colleagues to extend their learning from the project.
• **Tablet Computing and Digital Books**: Westmont’s semester-long courses in Europe have created an opportunity to use iPads and eBooks, which the college purchases and develops. Faculty used technologies such as cameras, native applications, mapping, and GPS along with interactive guides that have introduced both a richness and independence to the student learning experience in different cities and countries.

• **Learning Management System**: In the fall of 2014, a small group of faculty and students undertook a pilot project to discover the impact of using a learning management system (LMS) with strong mobile integration. This group evaluated the LMS tool while looking at the impact of this agile product on student learning experiences.

• **Twitter and Glassboard Project**: In this year-long experiment, Twitter and Glassboard accounts were set up for several groups of students and professors to discover the impact of these mobile technologies on academic collaborations outside the formality of the classroom. The hypothesis was that combining text and images would allow students to bring the learning that took place in their informal learning environments back into the classroom.

As we continue to pursue such pedagogical innovations, we recognize that achieving the goal of our strategic map will require continued reflection and dialogue about the needs of students, faculty, and staff with respect to technology. Technology users must have opportunities to work closely with providers in order to ensure that resources match needs. We expect to be learning and adjusting continually as we determine which educational technologies fit best with the culture of a residential liberal arts college.

**Final Thoughts**

At 78 years of age, Westmont College is a young liberal arts institution and an old business. The inaugural years of designing a solid liberal arts curriculum and building its enrollment have been succeeded by more recent decades of national recognition, scholarly ambitions, and strategic aspirations. The trajectory of the college has reached the point at which several generations of successful alums, grateful families, community partners, and other supporters are poised to amplify the resources necessary for the endowment and student scholarships. The loyalty of such groups is stronger as a result of the college’s resilience during recent challenges, its fidelity to its mission, and its heritage of fiscal prudence. Nonetheless, the college recognizes that in a competitive marketplace a business does not prosper simply because of its longevity. At a moment of notable anxiety about the future of higher education, Westmont is heartened by studies that underscore the relevance of the liberal arts for economic, social, and personal fulfillment; yet it is eager to keep its innovative edge, including off-site programs and new educational technologies. The college also understands the importance of helping liberal arts graduates make effective transitions into post-baccalaureate studies and careers. One vital factor in our sustainability will be how well we succeed in “launching” our graduates and bolstering the confidence that a Westmont degree leads to worthy and invigorating outcomes. With the college’s history of adaptability and resilience, appreciative graduates and partners, and recent fundraising momentum, we believe that Westmont is an institution that will persevere and thrive.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Addressing Report Component 9

In the fall of 2012, Westmont commemorated the 75th anniversary of its founding. There was a full cascade of events—art exhibits, choral performances, a Shakespearean play, alumni reunions, and public lectures. All this set the stage for the anniversary gala, held near the waterfront. The banquet featured tributes to retired faculty colleagues, testimonials from past presidents, and streams of images, old and new. The evening also included a salute to 75 distinguished alums, from the world’s first transmyocardial revascularization laser surgeon (class of ’54) to the founder of All Nations Education, a non-profit organization promoting liberal arts education in Africa (class of ’08). President Beebe concluded the evening with a glimpse of future plans, including the new Westmont Institute for Global Learning and Leadership. As he looked ahead, he also took a few moments to recall his own courses with Westmont professors, taken during his one semester at Westmont as an exchange student. It was that semester, in many respects, that would eventually lure him back.

One year later, in the fall of 2013, the college held a quieter celebration to honor one of its most unpretentious scholars. At the conclusion of a fall symposium, the faculty commended chemistry professor Allan Nishimura on the publication of the 100th scholarly article that he had co-written with Westmont undergraduates. An expert on naphthalene molecules, sapphire surfaces, and light exchange, Dr. Nishimura has engaged several generations of Westmont students in laboratory study, and his endeavors have left their mark on campus life. Scores of chemistry students have pursued graduate study and careers in experimental science. Many departments now emphasize student-faculty collaborations. The college recently secured an endowment that will fund students’ summer research into the future.

Move another year forward, to the fall of 2014, when students in Westmont’s Northern Europe Semester (WNE) were present during the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Brandenburg Gate. Beginning over 40 years ago, Westmont’s international programs often took students under the shadow of the graffiti-splattered barrier between the two Berlins. Those journeys across the continent helped inspire widespread interest in global learning; over the last four decades, the college has increasingly sent a higher volume of students abroad. Last November, the WNE students in Germany visited scenes and chapels notable in resistance and peacemaking movements throughout the previous century; such sites included the Kreuzkirche in Dresden, once leveled by Allied bombs, and the Chapel of Reconciliation, built on the site of an old Lutheran Church destroyed when the East Germans widened the Berlin Wall. Aware that Westmont students were present for a litany of worship, the pastor of the Chapel laced some English into the service as a gesture of friendship.

These three commemorations—Westmont’s 75th, Nishimura’s 100th, and Berlin’s 25th—offer different perspectives on student success, but they do ring with some common themes, full of resonance for the college’s mission. They certainly underscore that one of our most valued outcomes is gratitude: to be a “thoughtful scholar” and a “faithful leader,” in so many respects, is to become a “grateful servant,” aware that the privilege of teaching and studying the liberal arts is made possible by the hard work and resilience of so many predecessors, often in austere
circumstances and humble beginnings. Those of us who teach, serve, and lead at Westmont recognize the responsibility of being good stewards of that heritage. This process of self-study and reflection has reaffirmed that obligation.

The three commemorations also intimate that one of the prime ends of a liberal arts education is the next start. As students reach their final semesters, the outcome of their work will not be full mastery or competence but rather a sense of energy for possibilities beyond, such as research ventures, reconciliation work, or intercultural engagement. In a similar spirit, the college needs to maintain its aspiring edge. With these final summary remarks, we offer some reflections on the prevailing challenges and foremost aspirations that have emerged from the last several months of self-reflection and strategic appraisal.

**Component 9: Reflection and Plans for Improvement**

Stories about the successes and gratitude of alumni continue to provide considerable inspiration for the faculty and staff, and the desire to equip students to make a difference in the “academy, church, and world” is now enhanced by a more robust collection of evidence on student success. Data on student graduation rates is generally encouraging, among students of color as well as among the majority population, and alumni surveys show high rates of satisfaction, career achievement, and graduate school pursuits. All told, the ILO assessments of recent years reveal that our students are achieving at respectable levels, comparable to or stronger than benchmark schools, on most of the specific foci in the studies. In cases where the data suggest areas of relative weakness, they allowed us to pinpoint issues for special attention. These include, for instance, focusing instruction on Source Attribution for Information Literacy or on Rhetorical Mobility in Written Communication. Similarly, direct assessments of learning in general education have highlighted the difficult interdisciplinary task of faith-learning integration, prompting vigorous faculty discussions about how to prepare students to navigate the interrelationships of their academic disciplines and personal faith. The data we gather on student success—progress in achieving the outcomes highlighted in our ILOs and program-level outcomes—will continue to play a critical role in our appraisal of Westmont’s strengths as well as in the refinements we make in our educational practices and strategies.

The last several months of self-study and reflection have, quite appropriately, required us to “assess our assessment,” especially the changes since the previous WASC evaluations. As we have surveyed and critiqued our program review protocols in recent years, we can point to the establishment of a better infrastructure and a more disciplined, consistent schedule of appraisals at the departmental level as well as with general education. The assessment process has matured at Westmont: departments are developing critical questions for their periodic reviews, questions that reflect central concerns for their programs, and are engaging collaboratively in developing post-review action plans that are measurable and manageable. Such refinement is an advance over the extensive collection of evidence and overly long or hasty lists of proposed changes, some with quick-fix intentions. Co-curricular and academic leaders have been collaborating to find new ways of measuring personal development in the experiential learning programs. The road forward will require us to sustain and enrich our process of reviews as generative, engaging, and team-building dimensions of departments’ planning and pursuit of quality.

One task requiring further refinement will be the practice of building action plans from our ILO and general education reviews. Interdisciplinary reviews such as ILO and general education assessment will inevitably require the focused work of small task forces and essential
committees, but our hope is that the results will continue to shape campus-wide conversations. In light of the close-knit nature of the faculty, the interdisciplinary assessments should enliven crosscutting dialogues on campus about improvements in pedagogy and curriculum. We have made notable progress in this regard by bringing assessment results and questions more intentionally into forums, lunches, department retreats, task forces, and faculty meetings. Keeping those conversations rich and meaningful will remain an important commitment. Harvesting these discussions to craft manageable action plans for the ILO and general education programs will remain a vital task for the Academic Senate and General Education Committee.

Of all of the priorities explored during the self-assessment and strategic planning processes, perhaps none are more important than building the endowment to ensure the affordability of the degree. As Chapter 4 summarizes, Westmont continues to demonstrate respectable persistence and graduation rates, yet most attrition that occurs stems from finances. Building the endowment in order to ensure the affordability of the institution is a compelling priority. Substantial achievements in recent capital campaigns have been promising. The next capital campaign will capitalize on momentum in deferred giving and focus on the endowment, particularly for student scholarship programs (with a goal of $250 million dollars). Residential income from the Westmont Institute for Global Learning and Leadership—funded with gift donations—will reduce the debt needed to complete the recent construction. Deferred giving, scholarship endowments, and debt reduction are clearly aimed at strengthening Westmont’s long-term sustainability rather than focused on immediate enhancements and new initiatives.

Ensuring a bright and viable future also requires a steady stream of tuition revenue, and our planning efforts have highlighted the importance of establishing an integrated marketing plan. Westmont enjoys the broad esteem of alumni, families, leaders, churches, and schools; it is well regarded within the world of higher education. National rankings are strong as well. While our brand is highly valued by constituents, people have lingering perceptions that the college’s costs are vastly higher than its primary competitors. A more comprehensive, integrated strategy for telling the Westmont story—including a more nuanced portrait of the college’s affordability—has emerged as a focal point for our leadership in the months ahead. The college has already hired a firm to help develop the marketing strategies and language. Related to telling our story, of course, is committing to enhance resources for scholarships that will help make a Westmont education possible for a larger number of students from underprivileged families and regions.

Part of the story that must be retold repeatedly is not only the value of Westmont but also the relevance of the liberal arts for lives and careers. Much of the current national emphasis on student success looks away from the liberal arts colleges towards institutions with a greater array of applied fields, especially in technology and health services. Concerns about the high costs of liberal arts colleges are raising doubts among families, some justified, about the value of investing in a liberal arts degree. Despite ample evidence to affirm that liberal arts graduates have flourished in their careers, there are legitimate expectations that all colleges must do more to help graduates launch into the global economy. As this report indicates, the college currently has a strong focus on restructuring its career services. The Office of Life Planning has been renamed the Career Development and Calling Office, in which there will be more focused integration of academic internships, career advising, and alumni programming. Rather than perceiving internships primarily as a capstone endeavor, we will help students understand it as a transitional opportunity. Career advising will start earlier—even, in some respects, as part of the recruitment process. Making the case for the quality of our degree requires us to demonstrate that our students not only gain greater vision and aspiration as a result of their studies, but also that
they find worthy options upon graduation. The college received two notable grants from the Council of Independent Colleges to improve advising and to organize a regional conference about career development.

As the legacy of Dr. Nishimura affirms, many Westmont students have successfully transitioned to post-baccalaureate study and work through rich opportunities to conduct research with faculty. Westmont professors—in the Social Sciences and Humanities as well as the Natural and Behavioral Sciences—have created collaborative opportunities for students, though cultivating a wider array of faculty-student research opportunities remains one of the aspiring edges for our academic programs. Capstone research experiences are being integrated in most majors.

One area where we have given special attention to research opportunities is in our Global Education programs. Decades ago, off-campus study programs around the country, including those at Westmont, concentrated primarily on acquainting students with the history and culture of different peoples and nations, with the notion that travel brought greater understanding and empathy. That orientation continues to be true to a great extent. Yet given the increases of travel, technological networking, and other influences of globalization, Westmont aims at offering more opportunities for cultural immersion, research, and partnership in cross-cultural study opportunities. Related to this redirection, the college intends to widen the geographic range of its sponsored programs, including the launch of the new Westmont in East Asia semester (fall 2016) and plans for internships in Singapore and Uganda. Moreover, capitalizing on the strong rapport between our academic and co-curricular programs, we are also endeavoring to build greater ties between the many international service opportunities and the credit-bearing academic programs.

While finding greater ways to immerse students in international settings remains a compelling objective, we are equally committed to helping the large percentage of Westmont students who study abroad re-immerses themselves in the campus community upon their return. Multiple studies underscore the challenges that study-abroad students have upon return to the campus, as they work through forms of “reverse culture shock” and often can remain disengaged, struggling to re-enter college. Addressing such struggles is part of the vision for the Westmont Institute for Global Learning and Leadership, which includes residences for 140 students. The Institute is envisioned as a learning community for students returning from abroad, mostly seniors. The Institute will also have a unique role to play in the career and calling initiatives, as we will endeavor to acquaint this community of globally minded students with a broader range of post-baccalaureate opportunities. The programming in the center will also create opportunities for returning students to contribute to college life, integrating them afresh into academic, spiritual formation, and community endeavors. The Institute’s vision is two-fold: both to reconnect returning students to Westmont and to enrich the community by drawing more intentionally on their experiences and their maturation.

In another respect, the Institute reflects one of Westmont’s vanguard endeavors: the formation of strategic partnerships and wider community service. During the summer, when most students are away, the Institute will be host to a new Montecito Institute, a program for executive leadership, and other professional development seminars for regional organizations. We envision similar opportunities during the academic year at the new Westmont Downtown (Center for Social Entrepreneurship) facility in Santa Barbara. Just recently, Pepperdine University has agreed to join us in order to offer its M.B.A. program in Santa Barbara. This collaboration—undergraduate programming from Westmont, graduate opportunities through
Pepperdine—gives both schools the chance to draw upon each other’s networks for internships, guest lecturers, and community service projects and contributions.

A significant aspect of this community engagement and participation in the public square will be the ongoing cultivation of our various institutes and centers. As an undergraduate liberal arts college, Westmont does not envision development of graduate programs, but it does perceive that its various endowed institutes—e.g., the Martin Institute for Christianity and Culture, the Gaede Institute for the Liberal Arts, and the Mosher Center for Moral and Ethical Leadership—will be hubs for the convening of scholars and the exchange of ideas around the college’s five planks: liberal arts, Christian, undergraduate, residential, and global. Such institutes and centers bring scholars to Westmont who will enrich the intellectual climate, even as they become public expressions of the ideas and values that define the college. Our objectives for the coming years include increasing the range of programs and special events—including conferences, special forums, scholarly fellows, and book awards—that will augment the institutes’ presence on the academic and ecclesiastical landscapes.

More than 75 years after the college was founded by Ruth Kerr, Westmont continues to embrace its early aspiration to be an “interdenominational and evangelical” institution committed to “careful scholarship” and “consistent Christian living.” We continue to value the beauty and intimacy of our campus and are eager to create an educational milieu that is hospitable, relational, and visionary. We hope that a Westmont experience provides students a fuller understanding of the heritage of the Christian faith, whether they are sharing prayer liturgies in Germany or worshiping with host families during a semester in Mexico. Some of the most heartening data from our recent assessments indicate high levels of church attendance and involvement in service work by our seniors—as well as high degrees of satisfaction and gratitude among alumni for the mentoring and spiritual encouragement they received at Westmont. Graduates leave Westmont to undertake a wide range of journeys, but many of our students establish their own commitment to the richness of our mission by helping churches, in both lay and clerical roles, to discern vigorous new ways of service to individuals and society. Some of the best examples of student success come when graduates reach beyond our own hopes and expectations.