

STANDARD III: DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Since the last Middle States Self-Study, West Chester University has continued to offer high-quality, dynamic, and continually refined educational programs at all degree levels. For example, renewed emphasis has been placed on the General Education component of our undergraduate programs. The importance of this liberal arts preparation is evident in the preeminent performance goals emanating from the Mission Statement that graduates will be able to: "... collaborate with others to solve problems and address societal needs, communicate effectively and participate in civic discourse, engage inclusively in a diverse society, and understand the ethical implications of decisions and the world in which they live." An assessment system was developed to evaluate a common set of learning goals to assure all programs of study are providing students with this general preparation, and all evidence indicates that our efforts are working. Our graduates are learning, thriving, graduating, and going on to contribute to the workforce, community, and common good.

This example of the refinement of the University's General Education program illustrates the process in place to make sure students in any program of study graduate with the knowledge and understanding that align with the mission and strategic goals of the University. It also demonstrates the commitment to be certain all University degree, certificate, and professional programs offer students a cohesive learning experience.

The Extent and Quality of Programs Leading to an Education Credential (*Criterion 1, ROA 8, 9*)

West Chester University provides high-quality educational opportunities through a broad range of disciplines on its West Chester campus as well as all additional locations. Overall, the University offers 60 bachelor's degree programs, 40 master's degree programs, 4 doctoral programs, and 40 graduate certificate programs. Bachelor's degrees require a minimum of 120 credits that include the general education requirements and at least one major program of study. A master's program must consist of 30 credits or more taken in a focused field of study. Doctoral programs vary in the number of credits based on the nature of the discipline. Certificates range from 12 to 18 credits, again, based on the nature of the course of study. The requirements for successfully completing these degree and certificate programs can be found in the electronic course catalog found on the University website.

The quality of the programs offered by WCU are ensured by thorough internal and external evaluations and reviews. Within the University, any new or revised course or program of study typically begins at the department level. Each department develops a course or program using departmental processes, which often include review by the departmental curriculum committees and faculty vote. Upon favorable review at the department level, department representatives enter comprehensive course/program information into the Curriculum Inventory Management system (CIM), an online system that ultimately syncs content directly with the catalog. From there, the proposal is reviewed on the CIM site by the college dean. It is then vetted by the University's Curriculum and Academic Policies Council (CAPC), the elected faculty body that reviews all changes to curriculum and academic policies. Proposals are also forwarded to CAPC requiring the same requisite approvals. After the appropriate review, CAPC forwards its recommendation regarding a proposal to the Provost/Executive Vice President, who finally approves or does not approve the proposed course or program change. During each step of the process, there are opportunities for University members to access proposals and offer feedback and comments. The

only variation of the above process relates to educator-preparation programs whose requirements extend beyond a single college. In this case, there is a Council of Professional Education (CPE) that reviews the curriculum or course and responds to the proposal on the CIM system before it goes to CAPC.

Every submission of a new or revised program or course must include an exhaustive rationale for what is being proposed. A comprehensive syllabus must be submitted for any new or revised course, including a list of the pertinent educational objectives, a measurable list of learning goals and outcomes, how these outcomes will be assessed, and bibliographic references.

To ensure sustained quality, all programs undergo an internal periodic review. The review process is conducted every five years. There are structures and processes in place to assess the quality of the programs. Sometimes this is done through an outside accreditor, while at other times it is handled internally. Criterion 8 and Standard V will discuss these processes in greater detail.

Online Delivery of Instruction

Since the last visit of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, WCU has made significant progress in using online modalities to effectively offer instruction to thousands of undergraduate and graduate students within the Commonwealth and beyond. Currently, the offerings include six master's degree programs, two doctoral degree programs, ten certificate programs, and over 170 undergraduate courses and 160 graduate courses taught fully online or in a blended/hybrid manner. We offer 11 fully online degree programs and 15 specialized certificates fully online as presented in our catalog.

As with all courses and programs of study, online curriculum development begins with faculty at the department level and follows the course and program approval process outlined above. Given the unique pedagogical considerations of online instruction, CAPC requires faculty to update their online teaching competencies every five years by completing a rigorous training program designed and delivered by WCU's Office of Distance Education. The training requirement ensures faculty stay updated on changing pedagogies and technologies while also encouraging continued engagement with the University's instructional designers. WCU uses this collaborative model to support the design, development, and delivery of digital instruction. The designers provide consultation on online pedagogy, syllabus construction, effective online activities, and assessment. They also help faculty create course materials and recommend or provide training on appropriate e-learning technology. For example, an instructional designer might work with a faculty member concerned about safeguarding the integrity of online testing to incorporate a third-party exam proctoring service such as Examity into the course.

Upon completing an online course, students are given the opportunity to evaluate the course. It is not just an evaluation of the instructor but of the course and the method of delivery that can inform the design team of needed refinements. Online courses and programs are treated the same as courses and programs delivered face-to-face and undergo the same periodic review.

As part of the effort to deliver online courses that meet quality standards, WCU has begun verifying online courses through Quality Matters. Quality Matters is an international body that certifies online courses and programs as having met a research supported set of design standards. Faculty have the option to submit an online course for a Quality Matters review by a team of three peer-reviewers with at least one reviewer external to the University. The review

process is overseen by the Office of Distance Education. The list of the University's certified courses is publicly available on [Quality Matters QM Certified Courses website](#). In 2019, West Chester University became one of only five institutions in the nation to obtain Quality Matters Program Certification for Online Teaching Support. This certification required three years of documentation demonstrating that all online faculty undergo training in best practices for online course delivery; have ongoing pedagogical support; are encouraged to engage in professional development; are available to provide feedback to learners; and collect and use feedback from learners to improve online teaching.

Off-Campus Programs

Since the previous self-study, WCU has established a robust educational presence in Philadelphia, serving more than 350 students. At the undergraduate level, students can complete a B.S. in Business Management, a R.N. to B.S.N. in Nursing, or a B.S. in Social Work. Graduate students can earn a M.P.A. in Public Administration, a M.S. in Criminal Justice, a M.S. in Transformative Education & Social Change, or a M.S.W. in Social Work.

Another trend in offering programs off-campus is found in delivering specialized programs at the location where the educational preparation directly relates to the work being done at that location. For example, the master's degree in Applied Studies in Teaching & Learning is being offered at local area PreK-12 school districts. This allows the program curriculum and approved learning objectives to be customized to meet those of the district.

West Chester University also offers programs offsite at Delaware County Community College. The University has a long-standing partnership with DCCC, including membership in the PA Academic Passport program. Recently, the University began offering the B.S. in Business Management at DCCC in order to offer DCCC students the opportunity to earn a WCU degree on a familiar campus. More recently, WCU began offering the R.N. to B.S.N. degree as a concurrent option for R.N. students at DCCC. Both programs are accredited by their respective boards, the AACSB and the CCNE, and are taught by WCU faculty members.

Study abroad

West Chester University is ranked 14th among similarly sized universities for short-term study abroad opportunities, offering more than 670 programs on every continent but Antarctica, ranging from week-long experiences to full-year study abroad. Students who study abroad advance their language and intercultural development skills. They also gain increased confidence, a deeper understanding of their studies, and advanced personal development. Study abroad fits with the University's overall mission on several levels including:

- Collaborate with others to solve problems and address societal needs
- Communicate effectively and participate in civic discourse
- Engage inclusively in a diverse society
- Understand the ethical implications of decisions and the world in which they live

Additional details pertaining to Study Abroad through the Center for International Programs can be found in Criteria 5.

Criteria and expectations for faculty evaluation (Criterion 2, ROA 8, 15)

The criteria and expectations for evaluating each faculty member at West Chester University are developed for each faculty, by employing two performance evaluation tools: The Teacher-Scholar Model and the Statement of Expectations. The use of both tools affords flexibility in building evaluation criteria for each faculty based on their individual strengths and contributions. Each tool is described the following sections.

Teacher-Scholar Model

The faculty at West Chester University are teacher-scholars whose research and teaching activities continuously inform each other. Each department has developed a teacher-scholar model that defines the ways faculty members bring their scholarship into their teaching and their teaching into their scholarship. Appendix contains a sample Teacher-Scholar model.

Statement of Expectations

Each new faculty hire receives an individual statement of expectations based on their unique background and job requirements. Each statement should be consistent with the departmental teacher-scholar model as well as the WCU promotion and tenure policies, and the faculty collective bargaining agreement. These are approved by the respective dean. The document summarizes duties and expected level of performance in three areas of activity: effective teaching and fulfillment of professional responsibilities, continuous scholarly growth, and service. Each area is given a percentage weight, which reflects its importance toward the faculty member's evaluation.

The weights for untenured faculty are as follows:

- teaching - 50%
- scholarly growth - 35%
- service - 15%

Tenured faculty may renegotiate these weights as follows:

- teaching - 48%-65%
- scholarly growth - 25%-42%
- service - 10%-27%

Faculty evaluation policies and process

Three basic instruments are used to compile data on teaching effectiveness: Student Rating of Instructor Surveys (SRIS), peer faculty evaluations, and department chairperson evaluations. Each is briefly discussed below, followed by a table summarizing the schedule of these evaluations for each faculty type.

SRIS

SRIS is an instrument designed to evaluate the quality of teaching provided by an instructor in a given course section. The instrument contains 16 items that measure evaluations on the dimensions of delivery and preparation, in addition to some demographic items and open-ended questions soliciting student feedback. The scores on the delivery and preparation items are compared to

historic averages of the faculty member's department, college, and the whole university. The SRIS are administered in all on-campus and online courses taught during each semester during which a faculty member is under evaluation (Appendix shows the in-person SRIS instrument and Appendix shows the distance education SRIS instrument). The questionnaires for face-to-face classes are administered by faculty peers -- instructors do not handle evaluations of their own classes. The delivery and preparation scores are used during periodic review by the faculty's evaluation committee.

Peer faculty evaluations

Classroom faculty are observed periodically (see table below) by their tenured peers during class sessions. The observers provide narrative evaluations of teaching skill, value and implementation of course objectives, and rapport with students. The observed faculty have the opportunity to discuss the observation report with the observer. The observation reports are included in the annual review, 5-year review, tenure, and promotion packets.

Department chairperson evaluations

Classroom faculty are observed periodically by their department chairperson during class sessions. The chairperson provides narrative evaluations of teaching skill, value and implementation of course objectives, and rapport with students.

Evaluation instrument administration schedule

SRIS reports, peer, and chair evaluations are administered based on the following schedules for faculty of different ranks and career stages.

Table: Faculty evaluation schedules

Faculty type	Frequency	What is administered
Tenure track faculty	During each of the five tenure track years	SRIS for all sections taught 4 peer evaluations 1 chairperson evaluation
Tenured faculty	Once every five years (5 th year review)	SRIS for all sections taught in the Fall 2 peer evaluations 1 chairperson evaluation
Tenured faculty applying for promotion	During each of the two years of the promotion timeline	SRIS for all sections taught 2 peer evaluations 1 chairperson evaluation
Adjunct faculty	Each academic year	2 peer evaluations 1 chairperson evaluation

The annual review of tenure-track faculty

In addition to the instruments above, tenure-track faculty are annually reviewed by their department's evaluation committee, chairperson, and dean. The annual review is comprised of assessing the dimensions of teaching, scholarship, and service. Overall, faculty are evaluated as to whether they meet professional standards, exceed them, or need improvement. Faculty are strongly encouraged to review the feedback from their peers and exhibit growth and progress based on their review.

Five-year evaluations of tenured faculty

While the above annual evaluation process helps ensure that probationary faculty are rigorous and effective in their duties, a similar evaluation is performed every fifth year for tenured faculty to report on whether tenured faculty continue to meet professional standards.

The most extensive evaluation takes place during the tenure and promotion application process. Faculty apply for tenure and promotion separately and each of these applications is based on separate criteria.

Tenure and promotion application and evaluation process

The tenure and promotion evaluation processes are based on detailed policies set forth by the Office of the Provost. The policies are informed by the Collective Bargaining Agreement and spell out clear expectations, deadlines, and steps for faculty at each career stage. The tenure and promotion processes are separate. Both tenure and application processes begin at the department level, with departmental review and evaluations, following with the Dean's recommendations, the review by the University's Tenure and Promotion Committee, and final approval by the University President.

Evidence of faculty teaching effectiveness

The historic means on the SRIS instruments for the whole University are all above 5 on a 6-point scale (see table below).

Table: Historic University means and standard deviations on SRIS (through Spring 2019)

Item	University Mean	University Standard Deviation
Please rate the quality of teaching provided by this instructor.	5.2	0.5
The instructor clearly presented course requirements and grading procedures	5.3	0.5
The instructor interacted in a positive manner with students.	5.6	0.6
The instructor responded to student questions in a way that encouraged me to learn.	5.4	0.3
The instructor met classes at the assigned days and times.	5.7	0.4
The instructor met the course objectives published in the course description or syllabus.	5.6	0.4
The instructor returned graded tests and assignments in a timely manner.	5.4	0.6
The instructor was prepared for class.	5.6	0.4
The instructor made good use of class time	5.3	0.6
The instructor maintained an environment in which students were comfortable asking questions.	5.5	0.6
The instructor facilitated learning by maintaining an atmosphere of civility.	5.6	0.4
The instructor clearly explained concepts and techniques.	5.2	0.7
The instructor allocated an appropriate amount of time to each topic.	5.2	0.6
The instructor was available during posted office hours.(Please leave this item blank if you have never been to the instructor's office hours.)	5.6	0.4
The instructor organized this class in a way that helped me to learn the material.	5.2	0.7

The instructor provided useful feedback on tests and assignments.	5.2	0.6
The instructor explained concepts using real-world examples, analogies, or circumstances relevant to students' lives	5.4	0.5
The instructor evaluated students fairly.	5.5	0.5

In addition to student ratings, evidence of instructional effectiveness at the academic program level is supplied by the assessment data collected during years 2011-2019. Refer to Standard V and appendices for data on assessment outcomes.

In each individual course, faculty evaluate student learning using a variety of methods, including exams and quizzes, presentations, papers, reports, creative works, and performances. CAPC policies recommend that undergraduate courses below 400 level should include at least three major evaluations during each semester.

Evidence of faculty scholarly productivity

Appendix summarizes data on faculty scholarship and creative work released during years 2011-2019.

Appendix summarizes the data on external grant awards obtained by faculty during years 2012-2019, per Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

As evident from the materials listed above, WCU faculty have been highly productive across programs and the external grant funding obtained by faculty has increased each year. It is important to note that consistent with the Teacher-Scholar Model, faculty often engage students in their research activities.

Evidence of faculty service effectiveness

All University faculty are expected to be involved in service to their departments, colleges, the University, their discipline, and local communities. Appendix shows the number of hours faculty at all levels spent engaging in institutional and community service, based on Snyder Data sheets.

Evidence of faculty qualifications

85% of full-time faculty and 27% of part-time faculty currently hold terminal degrees in their disciplines. The table below shows the numbers of faculty currently employed and the numbers of faculty of each type holding terminal degrees.

Faculty type	Count	Terminal Degree
Full-time Faculty	695	590
Parti-time Faculty	298	81
TOTAL	993	671

Depending on the discipline, faculty qualifications and continuous education credits are reviewed regularly by respective academic units in order to maintain program accreditations and individual faculty credentials within their disciplines.

Evidence of sufficient faculty size

The complement of faculty needed to sufficiently cover classes and provide other professional duties varies by departments and programs. The Provost and Deputy Provost work with the college Deans collectively to make certain faculty lines are distributed in a manner to effectively provide faculty resources where most needed. The University has expanded its employment to match its student growth. As a result, the current, university-wide student-faculty ratio is 19:1.

The number of tenured and tenure-track faculty is regulated in part by Article 11.f. of the Collective Bargaining Agreement between APSCUF and PASSHE. The article requires 75% of the faculty complement be tenured or tenure-track faculty.

Evidence of opportunities, resources, and support for faculty professional growth and innovation

Funding of Research, Creative Activity, and Pedagogy

New faculty are also provided with \$6,000 in startup funding (up from \$5,000 before the last self-study). The funding can be used for a variety of professional development expenses, including research and instructional purposes like costs of data collection, professional travel, professional equipment purchases, or course-development expenses. Each faculty member has two academic years to use the funds.

Beyond the startup funds, faculty are assigned an annual amount of professional development funding. The amount varies by department and is dependent on funding allocations determined by each college. In the AY 2019/2020, the average college allocation of professional development funds per faculty was \$1500. This is an increase in funding per faculty since the previous self-study and reflects changes in academic units that were implemented to better meet the professional needs of the faculty across the institution.

In addition to the funding above, faculty are provided with a number of internal grant opportunities, both campus-wide and at the college level (see Appendix).

In AY 2019/2020, the Provost's Office awarded a total of \$132,727 in internal grants across the University, funding over 30 research and creative projects in 23 disciplines.

Beyond internal funding, the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs provides faculty with extensive assistance in applying for external funding, including identifying the funding agency, preparing and submitting the project proposals, and project reporting. In AY 2018/2019, this resulted in \$6.51 million in federal, state, and foundation awards.

In addition to the monetary resources listed above, faculty can apply for sabbatical leave. Consistent with the Collective Bargaining Agreement, up to a total of 7% of the faculty may be awarded sabbatical leaves annually. Sabbatical leaves are granted to faculty who seek to complete meritorious projects advancing faculty research, teaching, and professional growth.

The University has increased the number of conferences its hosts, focused on improving teaching. In addition to conferences, faculty are given the following several other opportunities to disseminate their work on campus. The table in Appendix XX lists examples of on-campus scholarship and creative outlets.

Beyond the funding and presentation outlets, WCU faculty are provided a plethora of opportunities to develop and engage in professional growth. Appendix XX summarizes many of the rich opportunities afforded to faculty for professional development. Most of these are available to both tenure/track and adjunct faculty.

Academic Programs described in the Catalog (Criterion 3)

Since its inception, the institution now known as West Chester University has always maintained an annual catalog that outlines academic policies and the requirements of the various degree programs. In preparation for the 2015-16 academic year, the university completely overhauled the format of both the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. This update, which coincided with a new online curriculum management system (CIM, the Course Inventory Management system), provided a complete overhaul of how the curriculum is presented to students. Each program has its own curriculum table laying out all program requirements and elective options, including credit totals. All baccalaureate programs have a parallel format for the General Education component of the degree where any required General Education courses are clearly identified. When a single program has various concentrations (i.e., completion options) there is a separate page (curriculum table) for each option so that students can clearly see the requirements of their particular program. When changes are made to the curriculum through the approved process, these changes sync with the online system for the next publication cycle. An online archive is also stored for historical purposes. In addition to these changes which clearly improved a student's ability to understand the follow degree and program requirements, all degree programs also have a "suggested course sequence" which lays out a suggested path to degree completion. These plans, arranged by semesters, have been built in conjunction with individual departments such that the catalog now has the capacity to function much more like an "advising sheet" rather than just a list of requirements. Where appropriate, and based on demand, alternative suggested course sequences (e.g., part-time) are presented. On the back end, the university has also worked to streamline these functions into an easy-to-read "degree progress report" that any student can access. This report shows completed requirements and incomplete requirements in format groups by the category of course. Finally, and importantly, this new format is easy to navigate online (<https://catalog.wcupa.edu/>) on a variety of devices.

Student focused resources & opportunities that reinforce academic success (Criterion 4)

West Chester University continues to effectively support students in both the curricular and the academic dimensions. Selected examples are highlighted here.

The Learning Assistance & Resource Center

The Learning Assistance & Resource Center (LARC) offers free, regular weekly tutoring to students throughout the semester for select courses. One-time drop-in tutoring is also available for select courses. Tutors are students, who are formally trained by LARC staff. LARC also administers the Early Alert Program, which proactively identifies students in general education courses who have a grade of C- or below, prior to the course withdraw deadline. Students are notified that they have been identified by their course instructor via the Early Alert Program and are invited to discuss learning strategies with LARC staff. In the past, the demand for tutoring in the LARC was so high that there were often waitlists for tutoring. In response, in Spring 2019, LARC piloted the utilization of graduate student "generalist" tutors in broad disciplinary subjects like Algebra and

Chemistry who were available for drop-in or scheduled one-on-one tutoring with students. These tutors were well utilized, and in Fall 2019 this program was scaled to include seven broad disciplinary subjects, thereby eliminating the need for waitlists.

The Twardowski Career Development Center

The Twardowski Career Development Center serves students by developing self-awareness of interests, values and skills, offering group and individual support with major and career exploration, resume and cover letter writing, job and internship search strategy, networking and interviewing, and hosting career fairs and industry meet-ups. Annual reports published by the Career Development Center show significant student and employer growth in recent years. In 2018-2019, the Career Development Center experienced a 35% increase in employer engagement on campus as compared to 2017-2018, representing an all-time high in employer engagement. The Career Development Center also experienced an increase in student interactions in 2018-2019, including a 58% increase in one on one appointments, an 80% increase in student event attendance and a 5% increase in student attendance at workshops, compared to 2017-2018. Given the need for more experiential opportunities and to help students begin building their networks, the Career Development Center partnered with the Office of Alumni Relations to launch Ram Nation, an online flash mentoring platform where students can request informational interviews, job shadows or mock interviews from alumni. Additionally, an online mock interview platform called Big Interview was implemented to better prepare students for video interviews, which are becoming more common.

The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities

The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities assists students who have physical and learning disabilities. OSSD ensures compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990). The mission of OSSD is to maximize student success in an accessible academic environment, while keeping with WCU's mission to provide equal education for all qualified students. OSSD facilitates a proctoring center that provides testing accommodations for students who are registered with OSSD. Additional support includes reading technology via Kurzweil software, dictation software, and notetaking technology via Livescribe smart pens.

Success Coaching

The Success Coaching student resource provides individualized support to guide students toward academic and personal success at WCU. Unlike tutoring which fosters content knowledge, success coaching provides practical skills and strategies for students to achieve their academic goals. Each student is paired with a success coach to meet with regularly or as needed. Success Coaches are graduate students who have obtained a bachelor's degree and are trained to offer personalized support as an "experienced peer." Success coaching topics include time management, test taking and preparation, note taking, textbook reading, goal setting, college adjustment, and more. In Fall 2019, the first semester of the pilot year of this program, 195 students utilized this service, with 55% of these students visiting the Success Coach three or more times.

RAMP Up

A relatively new program, RAMP Up, was offered as a pilot in January 2019 for students in the College of Arts and Humanities, the College of Health Sciences, and University College. Students who earned a cumulative GPA less than a 2.725 after their first semester were invited to participate. Institutional data suggests that students who earn less than a cumulative GPA of 2.725 after their first semester are 3.8 times less likely to graduate within six years compared to those with a GPA of greater than 2.725. The themes of the program focus on goal setting activities, success strategies, career development planning, and time to meet with Success Coaches and the Financial Aid and Bursar office. The average cumulative GPA of those students who participated in RAMP Up in January 2019 increased 0.68 points following the completion of their second semester, whereas those who did not participate (but were qualified to participate) only saw a term GPA increase of 0.23 points after their second semester. Students who participated in RAMP Up in 2019 were retained at a 3% higher rate than students who were invited and did not attend. This pilot was viewed as a success and was scaled up to include qualifying students from all seven WCU colleges and schools in January 2020. A total of 111 students participated of 572 that were invited.

Summer Undergraduate Research Institute

West Chester University also continues to provide academic support to students through scholarship initiatives, such as the 5-8 week SURI program (Summer Undergraduate Research Institute), which aims to increase interest and opportunities for undergraduate research in all disciplines, promote scholarly collaboration between students and faculty, establish a community of undergraduate scholars, develop students' basic skills in project development, and prepare students for careers and/or graduate-level studies. Students are selected for the SURI program, and receive a stipend and summer housing to participate full-time in the program, over five weeks in the summer. In 2018 the SURI program sponsored 19 WCU students for a 5-week program and 5 students for another 3 weeks. For 2019, SURI sponsored 22 WCU students, 15 of whom continued in the program for eight weeks. A Survey of Undergraduate Research Experience assessment for the students in the 2019 cohort showed the desire of SURI students to attend graduate school increased from 23% to 41% after the SURI experience. Additionally, WCU-CARES and WCU-CARTS are new initiatives that support undergraduate researchers during the fall and spring semesters, as well as to provide travel funds for students to present at professional conferences and meetings. These new programs are aimed at increasing the numbers of students who have engaged in research by their senior year.

Academic Advising

In the past decade, academic advising has been identified as an area for growth and development. Several initiatives have been created to build this aspect of the student experience. The Office of Academic Advising at WCU is an umbrella that serves not only advising for students who are undeclared in their major, but also for students with a declared major who are navigating policies and procedures, and academic degree requirements. In 2016, WCU created the positions of five Student Success Coordinators, who are tasked with helping create equity among faculty advising loads, improving advising on campus, providing year-round access to advising, freeing up faculty to focus on students in upper-level courses, and facilitating just-in-time support for students. First-year students' perceptions of their experience with advising as reported on the National Survey of Student Engagement has increased from 4.9 out of 7 since hiring the Student Success Coordinators in 2016, to 5.4 out of 7 when recently surveyed in 2019.

Co-Curricular Student Learning Experiences

In addition to curricular student learning experiences, West Chester University has engaged in strategic growth in co-curricular student learning experiences. The university recognizes that learning happens both in and out of the classroom.

In 2017, the Division of Student Affairs began to transform the WCU student experience by implementing a co-curricular approach that aligns with students' academic experiences. This division-wide initiative, known as the WCU Co-curricular Experience, is one of the first of its kind in the nation. It serves as a foundation for student success and completes the educational mission of the University in developing graduates to succeed personally, professionally and contribute to the common good. The co-curricular experience will be described more in depth throughout Standard IV.

General Education Program (Criterion 5, ROA 8, 9, 10)

At West Chester University, the general education program is designed to provide students with the knowledge, perspectives, and competencies expected of them as citizens of the Commonwealth and of the world. The university believes that a liberal arts education base will prepare students to think critically and communicate as professionals, to understand the social and global contexts of their lives, to transfer knowledge and skills from one setting to another, to recognize ethical implications of professional practice, and to balance the various dimensions of their personal and professional lives. Therefore, West Chester University strives to give students the abilities to:

- Communicate effectively
- Think critically and analytically
- Employ quantitative concepts and mathematical methods
- Demonstrate the ability to think across and about disciplinary boundaries
- Respond thoughtfully to diversity
- Understand varied historical, cultural, and philosophical traditions
- Make informed decisions and ethical choices

First Year Experience

The general education requirement at WCU begins with the First Year Experience course (FYE 100), which provides students with a basic platform from which they can plan their growth and development while at WCU. First Year Experience courses are offered in a variety of areas, but they share common content across all sections, including:

- An overview of the liberal arts tradition in higher education and an explanation of the structure of WCU's general education curriculum
- An introduction of the e-portfolio and its use across the undergraduate degree as a digital repository of work
- Research about brain development, psychology of learning, and metacognitive, affective, and social dynamics; information intended to help students understand the learning process and the factors important to a successful college experience
- An opportunity for experiential learning
- Information pertaining to university policies and campus life

The First Year Experience (FYE) is a four-credit requirement and applies to incoming first-year

students as well as transfer students with fewer than 24 college-level credits. All incoming first-year students are enrolled in a FYE course in their first semester. These courses are taught by an interdisciplinary team of typically 4 faculty members. The bedrock of this four-credit course has been developed to broaden student perspectives by solidifying a foundation in the liberal arts through curricular activities and experiential learning. In FYE, all students are engaged in various forms of experiential learning (which might include research and/or service learning), learn the foundations of success, and engage in deep reflection to facilitate metacognition and critical thinking. FYE faculty members teach at all levels of the university, resulting in a unique opportunity for students to engage with some of the university's most sought-after professors and experts in their first year.

Students are scheduled into a FYE course based on their major or stated areas of interest. In addition to the common content, FYE courses introduce students to content in a particular area of study while remaining completely transferrable (i.e., no section of FYE is required for a specific major). FYE sections are offered with a focus on the Arts, Humanities, Culture & Communication, Social Science, STEM, Education, Health, or Business, as well as sections that are truly exploratory. Students that enter the university without a declared major may be placed into a section with a clear focus if they indicate their interest in that area or the exploratory section if their focus has not been already identified.

One of the common requirements of the FYE is that students develop a "four-year plan" for successfully completing their major. Through a series of scaffolded self-reflective work, instructors guide students to critically engage with their major and chart their path to degree completion. This includes completion of their entire program of study, not just their major. In this context students are encouraged to think strategically about the general education courses they will take and any other credentials they want to pursue. Taking this one step further, the ideal four-year plan also includes goals about co-curricular activities as students think about and plan out their entire college experience. As with other aspects of the FYE course, this assignment is done in steps where feedback from FYE instructors, advisors, and other university personnel are incorporated. The format of the course, taught in both large lecture and smaller breakouts, facilitates a variety of ways for information to be disseminated and discussed.

General Education Program

At WCU, no matter their chosen program, every student must complete a general education curriculum designed to develop skills and thought in diverse subjects and perspectives. Through the general education program, students take a total of 40 credits (inclusive of FYE) that cover English composition, mathematics, interdisciplinary, and diverse communities courses. Additionally, students take distributive courses in science, behavioral and social science, humanities, and arts. WCU also has writing emphasis and speaking emphasis requirements for all baccalaureate programs along with an ethics requirement. A full outline of the general education requirement can be found in Appendix.

ACADEMIC FOUNDATIONS:

First Year Experience

Credits

4

English Composition

6

Mathematics

3

Interdisciplinary

3

Diverse Communities

3

DISTRIBUTIVE REQUIREMENTS

Science	6
Behavioral & Social Science	6
Humanities	6
Arts	3
Total Credits	40
ADDITIONAL BACCALAUREATE REQUIREMENTS	
Writing Emphasis	9
Speaking Emphasis	9
Ethics	3

The structure of the general education program at WCU has changed since the last accreditation by MSCHE. Since the previous review, WCU faculty engaged in a comprehensive evaluation and review of the general education program aimed at improving the program to better ensure that students acquire and demonstrate the essential skills articulated in the goals listed above (N.B. assessment methods are discussed in Standard V). WCU recognizes the importance of contextualizing these goals and skills, both as stand-alone aspects of a liberal arts education but also integrated into a student's major area of study.

Toward that end, and as described above, we have created a new course aimed at not only introducing students to WCU and its general education program, but also aimed at acclimating students to college in general and WCU in specific. The FYE is the launching point, and all baccalaureate programs now have a capstone course which provides the opportunity to bookend the general education program.

The two-course writing sequence is still an essential part of our general education program; however, we have improved both placement and access. Placement into writing courses is now guided by a directed-self placement tool, the WRITE Survey. Students are given both agency and control in their writing course placement based on their own ability to assess their skill and confidence levels as writers. Further, we have replaced our non-credit bearing developmental writing course with a four-credit supplemental writing workshop course. Together these transformative changes in our first-year writing program have yielded improved student access to required courses (with no credit-deficit). These changes also offer a more uniquely tailored approach, allowing us to better meet students where they are.

We have retained several aspects of the general education program aimed at introducing students to a diverse array of topics (the distributive areas), as well as the limitations of disciplinary knowledge creation. On the latter, we have maintained the Interdisciplinary requirement so that all students come to appreciate that many complex problems cannot be addressed by a single discipline. Further, we require all students to take a course emphasizing the importance of diversity in human culture. The Diverse Communities course is a hallmark of a WCU education that not only introduces the topic but goes further to illustrate the role that structural inequality plays in marginalizing groups of people.

In the shift to a new general education program, we have retained these categories of courses but we have also purposefully refocused and aligned them by creating a common set of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) that any course fulfilling one of these requirements must assess. Each general education course is designed to achieve SLOs in critical thinking and effective communication; distributive, interdisciplinary, and diverse community courses are designed to achieve additional SLOs. These SLOs are provided in Appendix. All courses are required to go

through a process of re-approval by the faculty curriculum body (CAPC) and Provost to continue counting toward the general education program.

We recognize that students value (and benefit from) the integration of the general goals of a liberal arts education within the specific goals of the major field of study. Toward that end, we have retained a Writing Emphasis requirement and created a Speaking Emphasis requirement that can be scaffolded across the curriculum, emphasized in general education and major courses. Students take 9 credits of each of these categories of courses 3 credits of each must be taken at the 300/400 level. We have also created an Ethics requirement – a course that can be a general education or major-specific course -- to enable students to engage in contextualized discussion of the importance of ethical decision making.

Starting in the FYE, and continuing throughout the general education program, students are taught the importance of reflection and metacognition – the true keys to learning. This culminates in the capstone course where students complete a capstone assignment that asks them to reflect on their entire college experience, the integration of their general and major-specific education, and their progress on the general education goals. We have instituted an ePortfolio as a digital repository of artifacts that students can create over their college career and reflect on at its completion.

WCU as an institution has worked together as a community to build and launch this new general education program. Further, with support from the Provost's office and CAPC, we have created a General Education Council, a group of dedicated individuals charged with leading and stewarding the new general education program. These faculty members are subject matter experts and innovative pedagogues that provide support for the various parts of the general education program by identifying best practices in their respective areas of responsibility, convening workgroups to develop policy and curricular proposals, and creating related ongoing professional development opportunities. Led by a faculty General Education director, this council includes faculty members (14 total) dedicated to and focused on each of the following areas: the First Year Experience course, the Distributive courses, the Interdisciplinary courses, the Diverse Communities courses, the Ethics courses, the Writing Emphasis courses, the Speaking Emphasis courses, the Pathway Certificate programs, the ePortfolio, the Capstone courses, and General Education Assessment. The General Education Council was established in 2019-20 and is charged as the long-term steward of the General Education program. We aim to capitalize on the current momentum to continue the process of continual improvement.

Additional Opportunities for Intellectual Growth

As we strive to produce graduates that are fluent in their major area and proficient in other aspects of a liberal arts education, we continue to seek additional means by which students access additional opportunities for intellectual growth including the integration of their major and general education courses. Ideally, we want all students to see the general education aspects of their baccalaureate degree program as critically important, not something to “get out of the way.” Below we describe a number of additional options for students, elective components of a WCU education that are aimed at enriching both the general and specific aspects of the WCU experience.

In an effort to encourage more cross-disciplinary thinking, to provide students more opportunities for applying information and learning approaches across multiple disciplines, and to provide a cohesive approach to more easily integrate the general education program within the goals of a

degree program, faculty can work collaboratively to create 12-credit certificate programs for general education pathways designed to address specific themes. These certificates will appear on student transcripts. Faculty are encouraged to develop pathway certificate programs representing linkages across multiple areas of the general education curriculum. While the range of potential pathway themes is certainly open for discussion and approval, initial themes recommended by the Gen Ed Advisory Committee include the following (those in bold are approved and described in the catalog):

- Sustainability
- Global Awareness
- Community Engagement
- Diversity, Power, and Justice
- Digital Literacy

In addition to the noted course opportunities, the University provides hundreds of options for participation in service each year. Alternative Spring Break Trips are just one of many examples in which students from any major can volunteer for a variety of programs, from creating sustainable food resources in urban communities, a cross-educational experience in Guatemala, and empowering youth through financial literacy education in New York City to serving the LGBTQ+ community impacted by HIV/AIDS. With a deep commitment to enhancing the students' academic training with experiential learning, both faculty and administration incorporate clear trajectories to expand an individual's cultural & global awareness and cultural sensitivity.

For a more immersive cultural and global experience, WCU's Center for International Programs (CIP) ensures access to a variety of programs to enhance the educational opportunities for our diverse population of students. In 2017-2018 alone, 536 students studied internationally—good enough to rank WCU 14th (correct) in the nation among similarly sized institutions for short-term study abroad according to the 2019 edition of *Open Doors*. CIP offers faculty/staff-led initiatives, exchange residencies, and programs by eight affiliate partners. In order to further enrich the student experience, students who have studied abroad are eligible to become WCU Global Ambassadors to act as invaluable resources for peer advising.

To ensure that our students are career-ready, every WCU program provides opportunities to complete an internship, as an embedded or enhanced part of their major. Career shadowing programs, business competitions and hackathons serve to expose our students to the many diverse ways their major and minor has impact on an everchanging marketplace. WCU's Career Development Center further supports these efforts by offering directed career training and advising services to every student (and alumna/us).

To achieve WCU's goal to develop civic-minded and responsible individuals, students are encouraged to participate in Green Dot training which uses situational cases to demonstrate the requirement for all individuals to act with responsibility, empathy and accountability. In addition to solidifying WCU's zero tolerance (policy?) for any violence, the campus' goal to keep every individual safe becomes an embedded truth that permeates into student's external and future lives.

Strategic Growth and Planned Expansion (Criterion 6, ROA 8, 9, 10)

WCU has experienced significant growth in its graduate degree programs and certificate

programs. Currently the university offers 40 Master-level degree programs, 4 doctoral-level degree programs, 40 graduate-level certificate programs.

Life Cycle of the Graduate Student

The university has 2104 students enrolled in in-person graduate programs and 950 students enrolled in distance education graduate programs and certificates (Fall 2019 enrollment fig). The university focuses on providing graduate students guidance and mentoring throughout the complete lifecycle of their graduate education. This effort begins before the student has enrolled in their first course and extends throughout their academic and professional career. For instance, as part of the Graduate Enrollment Management (GEM) Plan the university provides graduate students support through the process of recruiting, admitting, retaining, and graduating students in their respective degree programs.

For those graduate programs that include online courses, Faculty are provided with course facilitation training through the Office of Distance Education. They are provided instruction through programs with New Faculty Orientation, Technology Bootcamp, and many technology training programs (e.g., Online Faculty Development) in the best practices and skills in Distance Education. The Office of Distance Education also provides training and technical assistance for faculty in order to continually improve their online courses.

Research Opportunities, Grants and/or Assistantships

Graduate students are supported by dedicated faculty who mentor them through teaching and research opportunities. Students are provided opportunities to participate in submitting grants for external funding, coauthoring manuscripts submitted to peer reviewed journals, and present at conferences.

Recognizing the importance of graduate education to the university's mission, the university has substantially increased its support for graduate student education by increasing the number of graduate assistantships. Graduate students are provided opportunities to apply for Graduate Assistantship funding to cover their tuition and their living expenses. Teaching Associates gain valuable teaching experience and mentorship as they facilitate courses with faculty. This provides them with critical experience as they graduate and move to other positions in academia. Graduate students also receive support through grants and scholarships. In recognition of the unique factors required in educating graduate students, the university designates select faculty as a graduate-line faculty. These faculty specialize in facilitating only graduate-level courses and mentoring students in their research activities.

Outlets for Graduate Publication and Presentations

Overall, the university has made significant investment in delivering a quality graduate education for students and enabled them to engage in research and scholarship. The university will continue making long-term investments in their graduate students through developing new programs of study, enhancing current programs, and supporting them through faculty mentorship.

Graduate students publish and present their research through a wide array of peer-reviewed local, regional, and national forums. They present their research through the Fall and Spring Research and Creativity Days on campus. Graduate students collaborate extensively with their

faculty mentors who have been funded through internal and external grant funding. Graduate students also regularly present their research at regional and national conferences in their field.

Review and Approval of Third-Party Student Learning Opportunities (*Criterion 7*)

Most student learning opportunities are provided by the university. When third-party providers are used, they are overseen by specific departments on campus. Third party providers are most often used as a quality check. Here is an example.

Oversight of International Learning Opportunities

The Center for International Programs (CIP) acts as the centralized oversight for all international student learning experiences offered through the University. Any University employee planning to take students on an experience abroad is required to submit a plan through the Center for International Programs and receive approval. Part of that process includes proof that study abroad courses for credit have received the necessary approvals from CAPC and have been incorporated into the teaching schedule via the department chair and dean. The CIP is also responsible for vetting third party providers and vendors to ensure appropriate procedures are followed for international programs. Major international learning experience providers go through a Request For Proposal (RFP) process every five years. Vetting includes scoring providers on criteria such as cost, location, safety and risk management, timing of programming, academic offerings, recommendations, credibility, reputation, and references.

Periodic Assessment (*Criterion 8, ROA 8, 9, 10*)

Student learning at West Chester University is rigorous and coherent, and we know this because we continue to scrutinize our methods and their outcomes, to adapt them when needed. External reviews of programs and course work are completed at various levels by PASSHE itself and by external accreditors.

All academic and nonacademic programs undergo review, as mandated by PASSHE, on a five-year cycle. Usually, an entire academic department will be reviewed, including all programs it offers. One focus of that review are the student learning assessment plans for each program. Program review involves a department/program self-study as well as review by the dean and, if appropriate, the graduate dean, and an external reviewer. At the end of the process, recommendations and an action plan are negotiated for all department goals, which may include recommendations for improving the program and general education assessment processes. The processes of the assessment of programs and student learning are explained in greater detail in Standard V. The Division of Student Affairs provides co-curricular programs and services. The detailed assessment plans of the support programs and services are outlined in Standard IV. Administrative and educational support assessment is assessed annually as outlined in the Institutional Effectiveness Plan, this process is detailed in Standard VI.

Conclusion: The Impact of COVID-19 on the Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

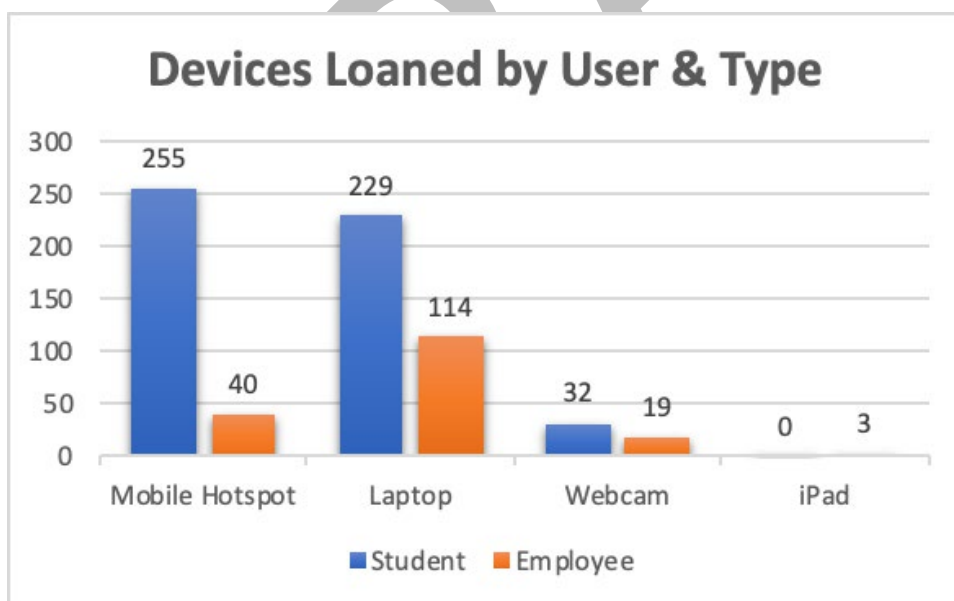
As with other institutions in the United States and around the world, the COVID-19 outbreak has forced West Chester University to rapidly alter its typical educational and operational functions.

Appropriately, administrators, faculty, and staff responded to the challenge by maintaining a focus on the University's mission: *West Chester University is a community of educators that develops graduates to succeed personally and professionally and contribute to the common good.* Plans were swiftly developed to allow the University to adhere to its central mission effectively in the light of the possible threats imposed by the pandemic.

It was apparent that face-to-face instruction would no longer be possible, and students would not be able to live on campus. Fortunately, WCU already had a substantial cyber infrastructure in place that could support a rapid increase in the use of alternative learning modalities. The system was also robust enough to continue to provide for the needs of a fully remote workforce.

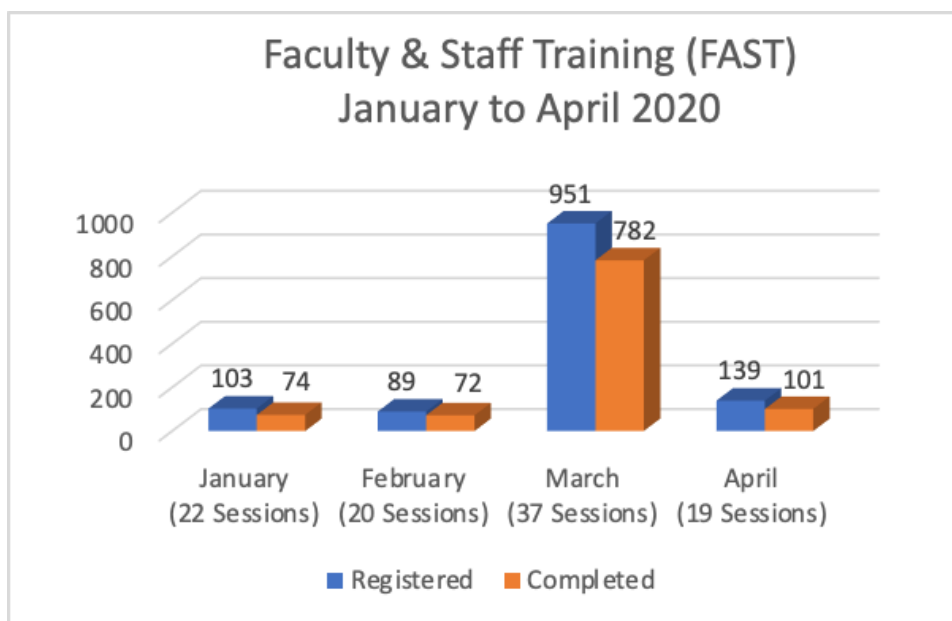
Many faculty members had significant experience teaching online and using various virtual methods of instruction. To assist instructors who were not as prepared to teach through cybernetic options, Instructional Designers and Instructional Support Specialists collaborated to provide a series of webinars designed to help these faculty move their courses to an online format and continue instruction. More experienced faculty also established an online support group for the transition process, where they could mentor those with less familiarity teaching online. Additionally, a Work Continuity website (<https://www.wcupa.edu/workcontinuity>) was published to provide the campus community with guidance on how to obtain necessary technology equipment, get onto the internet, access training resources, and view the University's Continuity of Instruction Plan.

The number of devices loaned to faculty and students after publishing the website is summarized in the graph below.



Two weeks were added to the end of the spring break week to give faculty time to prepare to instruct classes virtually. The type of training provided and the number of faculty participating during this period of preparation was record breaking. From March 16 and April 24, 853 faculty and staff registered for 56 webinars, covering specific tools and best practices related to five

main areas; site preparation, communication, delivering course content, assessing students, and accessibility. All webinars were recorded, captioned and made available to the campus community through the Work Continuity website.



The positive response of faculty members and students suggest the modification of instructional modalities and instructional support services were successful considering the critical circumstances.

Other elements of the student learning experience were also modified by the University through the shared governance process. Learning that was typically augmented through internships, student teaching, and other forms of field experiences were impeded by the situation and instructors became creative in finding ways to help students emulate such experiences in novel ways. For example, students- teachers who had been assigned to teachers of record who continued to teach classes online, were permitted to join virtually to help the classroom teacher prepare and deliver the instruction. At the graduate level, for example, a typical face-to-face experience in which students presented a defense of their thesis, was completed through a virtual means. Zoom meetings were arranged in which a professor could oversee a student's defense and parents, significant others, and friends could join to witness the presentations online.

In changing the way instruction was to be delivered, grading methods had to also be altered to be realistic and fair during this period of rapid transformation. The administration, again through shared governance, developed a grading policy for the semester being impacted. Highlights of the revised grading policy are presented below.

Throughout the entire University, offices that provide many important services developed systems that would continue to make personnel available to students, faculty and staff. The overall response by all members of the university community to support the learning experience of the students and assist faculty and staff during the pandemic was commendable.

While this is being written during a time of uncertainty, as things unfold WCU will continue to provide appropriate resources to support the design and delivery of the student learning experience.

FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

On a course-by-course basis, and one week after grades have been posted, undergraduate students will have the option to select one of the following grading options:

- Option 1: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C- will continue to be recorded and will impact a student's GPA.
- Option 2: A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, and C- will be recorded as "satisfactory" and not impact a student's GPA.

In addition, the following will be applicable for all undergraduate students:

- D+, D, and D- will automatically be converted to "credit earned," will count as credit earned for the course and have no impact on a student's GPA.
- F will automatically be converted to "no credit earned," will not count as having successfully completed the course and have no impact on a student's GPA.

FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

On a course-by-course basis, and one week after grades have been posted, graduate students will have the option to select one of the following grading options:

- Option 1: A, A-, B+, B, and B- will continue to be recorded and will impact a student's GPA.
- Option 2: A-, B+, B, and B- will be recorded as "satisfactory" and will not impact a student's GPA.

The following will be applicable for all students regardless of the option they select:

- C+, C, and C- will automatically be converted to "credit earned," will count as credit earned for the course and have no impact on a student's GPA.
- F will automatically be converted to "no credit earned," will not count as having successfully completed the course and have no impact on a student's GPA.