

STANDARD VII: GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, AND ADMINISTRATION

Introduction

Over the past five years, under the leadership of President Fiorentino, West Chester University has transformed into an engaged, transparent, inclusive, and viable community. Despite a crowded higher education ecosystem and declining demographics, continuous PASSHE system redesign efforts, inadequate state appropriations, and inconsistent application of the PASSHE allocation formula, West Chester University has stable enrollment to include intentional moderate growth of new students as well as retention and graduation rates that exceed the national norm. In addition, the University is financially strong as evidenced by our revenues, expenditures, and net assets.

Strategic leadership at West Chester University is actively approached and grounded in many of the same principles taught to our over 17,000 students, make decisions that will be in the best interest of the community, be prepared for a challenge, always be agile, work to ensure inclusion, and embrace opportunities that present themselves in a variety of forms. West Chester University's strategic leadership was indeed most evident in the proactive actions taken at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, West Chester University was the first university in the region to halt the return of students from spring break to protect the community from the spread of a deadly virus and to give professors time to prepare for remote instruction. Senior leadership's bold decision prompted numerous universities in the Commonwealth to quickly follow suit in an effort to save lives. Always working in the best interests of its students, senior leadership recognized the added burden placed on students by the devastating effects of COVID-19. Once again, it took the lead and chose to develop and release a temporary grading policy centered on the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for students to be successful in their personal and professional lives. With passion, conviction, and determination, leadership at West Chester University is effective due to its ability to consistently align the University's strategic goals with the inspiration needed to guarantee its long-term success. Our shared governance groups have come together to discuss, adopt, and support temporary policies in order to support our students. From a procedural perspective, this group included the Curriculum and Academic Policies Council Executive Committee, a group empowered to make decisions between the body's Assembly meetings. The University's primary shared governance leadership was and continues to be consulted during the pandemic event, including the President of the WCU Chapter of APSCUF, the Faculty Senate President and Immediate Past President, and the Chair and Co-Chair of the Council of Chairs.

Transparent Governance Structure (Criteria 1)

West Chester University is one of 14 schools in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). Created by Act 188 of 1982, the System's purpose is "to provide high quality education at the lowest cost to the students. The primary mission of the system is the provision of instruction for undergraduate and graduate students to and beyond the master's degree in the liberal arts and sciences and in applied fields, including the teaching profession".

Act 188 clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the System, its Board of Governors (BOG), and its Chancellor, as well as each university's Council of Trustees (COT) and its President. The 20-member [Board of Governors](#) is responsible for planning and coordinating development and operation of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). The Board

establishes broad educational, fiscal and personnel policies, and oversees the efficient management of PASSHE. Among other tasks, the board appoints the chancellor and university presidents, approves new academic programs, sets tuition and coordinates and approves the annual PASSHE operating budget.

An 11-member [Council of Trustees](#) governs West Chester University. Its members are nominated and appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate serving a term of six years, and until their successors are appointed and qualified. At least two members of the group are alumni of the institution and one member is a full-time undergraduate student. The Council meets on a quarterly basis at the University or from time to time as may be called upon by the president, chairperson, or upon request of three of its members. Meetings of the Board of Governors and the Council of Trustees are subject to the Pennsylvania Public Agency Open Meeting Law.

West Chester University is led by President Christopher Fiorentino, Ph.D. The president is appointed by the Board of Governors of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education to be the University's Chief Executive Officer.

Administrative Governance Structure

At the executive level of operations, the President's Cabinet (Cabinet) establishes West Chester's overall commitment to shared governance. The Cabinet is composed of the University's Executive Vice President and Provost, Vice President for Administration and Finance, Vice President for Student Affairs, Vice President for University Affairs, Deputy Provost, and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer. The Cabinet provides advice and counsel to the president on matters regarding policies, budget, procedures and strategic planning. The Cabinet discuss[es] mission, vision, allocation of University resources, programs, services, major events, and University goals. This team guides the implementation of the President's priorities through their respective areas of leadership and are held accountable for quantitative and qualitative results. The final approval of policies and responsibility for alignment with both WCU and PASSHE policies and priorities rests with the President and Cabinet. This body also ensures the alignment of the Institutional Priorities and Strategic Plan: Pathways to Student Success, as discussed in previous Standards.

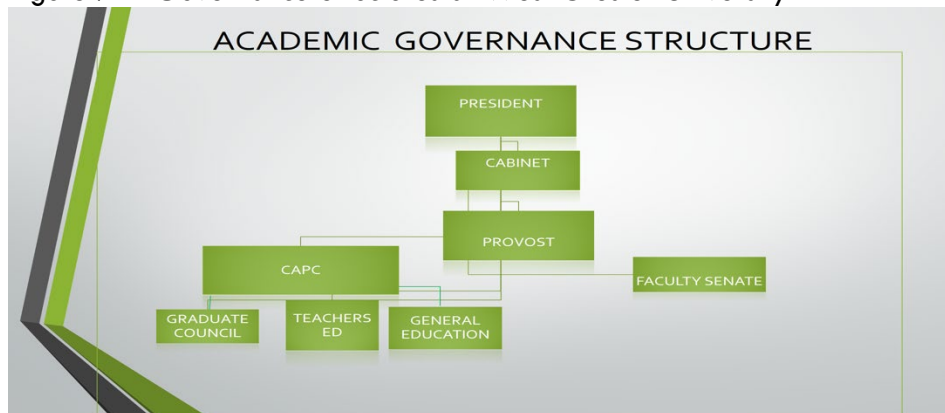
The President reorganized and streamlined the administrative units of the university in alignment with the university mission and talent management. In addition to the re-organization, the President also created the position of Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer. The administrative units include Academic Affairs, Finance and Administrative Affairs, Student Affairs, and University Affairs. The President is aided in day-to-day operational oversight by members of his Cabinet. The University organizational chart reflects division of responsibilities among units, colleges, departments, and other aspects of the university.

Like the President, the Executive Vice President and Provost regularly convenes the Provost Executive Cabinet, which includes the Deputy Provost, Academic Deans, Vice Provosts, Associate Provosts, Associate Vice Presidents and other senior managers that manage departments. This strategically allows for clear planning, communications, and coordination across undergraduate, graduate studies, and administrative operations.

Each unit is organized to combine a clear leadership structure with an efficient distribution of responsibilities, allowing for most decisions to be made quickly at the most proximate level of

impact. This commitment to shared governance is articulated across several policies that delineate the responsibilities of multiple constituent bodies in support of West Chester University's oversight of academic, curricular, co-curricular, and student life matters. Relevant bylaws, constitutions, and statements of principles are included in the evidence inventory.

Figure 7.1: Governance Structures at West Chester University



Shared Governance

West Chester University's internal governance structure is illustrated in three organizational charts: academic/curricular, co-curricular and student life, and budget. Numerous committees serve as important shared governance units to be consulted on both matters of policy and operations: Budget Review Committee, Curriculum and Academic Policies Council (CAPC), Council of Chairs, Council for Diversity, Inclusion, and Academic Excellence, Campus Climate Intervention Team, Sustainability Council, President's Commission on the Status of Women, Multicultural Faculty Commission, Transportation and Parking Task Force, Athletic Advisory Board. In addition to the formal reporting process, several campus-wide committees offer feedback on curricular, co-curricular, and budget policies and operational practices.

Academic/Curricular

A key element in shared governance at WCU is the Faculty Senate. It is composed of over forty faculty representatives and meets monthly to discuss matters of faculty concern. The Senate annually elects officers and an Executive Committee. Senate meetings provide an outlet, open to all faculty, to hear directly from managers with the opportunity for dialogue about relevant policies, priorities, and academic/educational objectives. As is the case with APSCUF, management regular invites Faculty Senate representation on both search and standing committees above and beyond any contractual requirements.

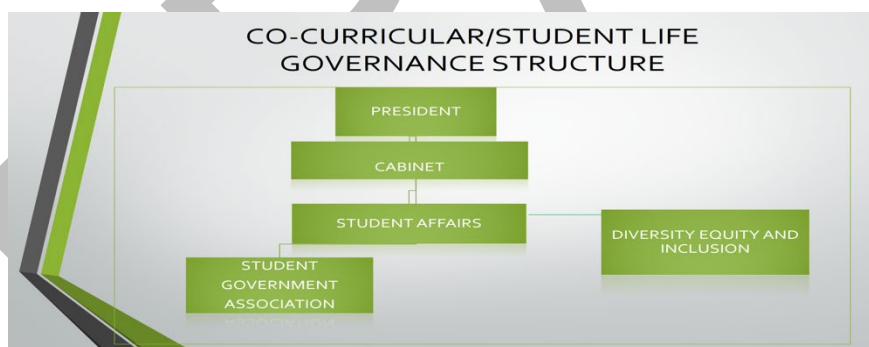
As the CBA explicitly allows for a curriculum committee, at West Chester, the Curriculum and Academic Policies Council (CAPC) plays a role of heightened importance in advancing curricular and pedagogical interests on campus. While CAPC bylaws are negotiated between APSCUF and management, CAPC exercises substantial operational autonomy and provides important input regarding initiatives affecting the academic mission of the university. In the last several years, West Chester has substantially re-organized its academic structure and made important revisions to its general education program. In each case, management heavily involved CAPC throughout the process.

The Graduate Council was formerly chaired by the Deputy Provost and Dean of the Graduate School along with, 1-3 student representatives selected from and by the Graduate Student Association, and the graduate coordinators. The Graduate Council meets a minimum of once each semester. The Graduate Council, by its faculty membership, elects an Executive Secretary who serves as the chairperson of the Graduate Council's Executive Board. WCU has exceeded over 3,000 students for the first time in the 2019-2020 academic year and as such has determined that the time has come for the Dean of the Graduate School position to no longer be part of a dual role but rather a full-time role. An interim Dean of the Graduate School was named in May of 2020 with the goal of a permanent dean starting with the Spring 2021 semester. This is critically important as WCU further enhances graduate education to include the transition of our Carnegie Classification from Master's Colleges and Universities—Larger Programs to Doctoral Universities—High Research Activity.

The Council of Professional Education (formerly the Teacher Education Council) discusses and recommends to the appropriate person or body changes to the programs, courses, and policies affecting the Educator Preparation Programs. The General Education Council serves as an “ad hoc” committee of CAPC and is a group of dedicated individuals charged with leading and stewarding the new General Education program. They are subject matter experts in innovative pedagogies that provide support for various parts of the General Education curriculum by identifying best practices in their respective areas of responsibility, convening workgroups comprised of faculty and staff to develop policy and curricular proposals for review by CAPC, and creating related ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

(A few sentences related to the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council will be added to this section. Copies of the various Councils by-laws will be in appendices and are in the evidence inventory.)

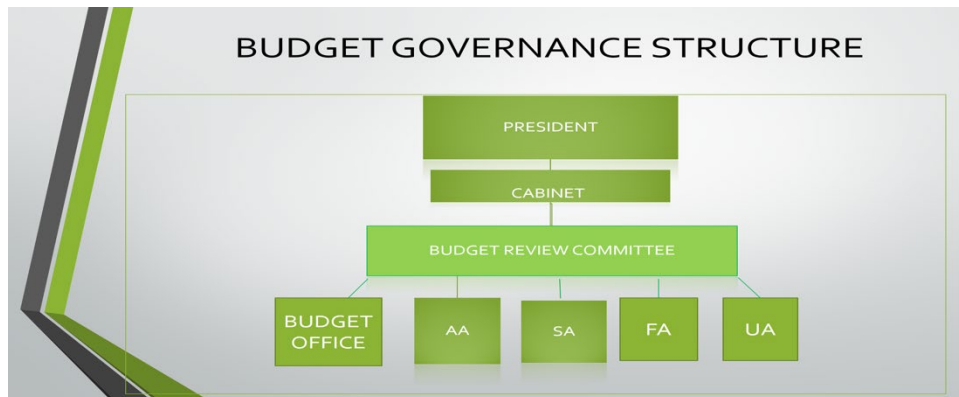
Co-curricular/Student Life



There are also formal governance structures for students. The Student Government Association (SGA) is the official governing body of all undergraduate students at West Chester and is overseen by elected representatives. The Budget and Finance Committee of the SGA manages funds collected from student fees. The SGA also nominates student representatives to the various campus-wide governing committees such as the University Forum and CAPC's curriculum committee. Graduate students are represented by the Graduate Student Association (GSA), which appoints students to University-wide committees and advocates for common concerns for the welfare of the student body, as well as for the continued progress and betterment of Graduate Studies at WCU. Consequent to the last self-study the GSA bylaws have been substantially revised to account for

significant growth in the graduate student population at West Chester.

Budget



Subsequent to the last self-study, West Chester University has replaced its Administrative Budget Committee (ABC) with the Budget Review Committee (BRC). The [Budget Review Committee](#) was formed in fall 2015 by the President to engage and promote transparency in the University budgeting process. The Budget Review Committee is responsible for reviewing the University's preliminary annual budget and making recommendations to the President for revisions to the budget prior to finalization in support of the University Mission, Values Statement, Vision Statement, and Strategic Plan. The inclusive composition of the BRC includes nearly thirty members and is made up of administrators, faculty, staff, and students and meets regularly to hear information relevant to the budgetary process, including the setting of budget priorities. BRC members are expected to communicate this information back to their various constituencies in the service of greater understanding and transparency.

Meet and Discuss

At West Chester, the Faculty-Management Committee, also known as Meet and Discuss, serves as a shared governance body. This contractually mandated body brings together representatives from APSCUF and management to discuss issues affecting the university (need to add to evidence inventory and link thereof). APSCUF leadership makes annual appointments to university governing boards and committees. Further, the monthly Meet and Discuss sessions do not only cover the working conditions of faculty, but also matters that impact institutional quality such as best practices for implementation of initiatives and policy changes. These include (give examples and add to evidence inventory and link thereof). While the CBA sets out formal grievance procedures, many issues are addressed at Meet and Discuss prior to them rising to the level of becoming grievable. APSCUF and Management also jointly negotiate policies affecting working conditions and expectations for faculty, such as the Tenure, Promotion, and Sabbatical and Leave policies. Finally, management regularly goes beyond the CBA requirements and awards APSCUF representation on major administrative search committees.

Similar Meet and Discuss meetings are held for the other bargaining units which include: American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), The State College & University Professional Association (SCUPA), Security, Police, and Fire Professionals of America (SPFPA), Office of Professional employees International Union Healthcare Pennsylvania (OPEIU). A

Managers Association also holds regular meetings for non-represented staff. This paragraph will be expanded a bit more.

Legally Constituted Governing Body (Criteria 2 a-e)

The Council of Trustees (COT) is the legal governing body of West Chester University. The eleven members of this body are appointed by the Governor with approval from the state Senate. The [COT members](#) possess sufficient expertise to effectively govern and guide a university. Currently, the COT includes six alumni who provide a sense of University history and context with pride. Members possess significant leadership experience from business, industry, government and non-profit sectors, and bring extensive knowledge of policymaking, fiduciary responsibility, and strategic thinking to the Council. The council meets at least five times a year. The COT developed [by-laws](#) that contain provisions related to the ways it conducts its affairs.

The COT helps to govern the university in a variety of ways. Act 188 specifies its responsibility is to serve the “interest and needs” of the public and the university by assisting “the president in developing proper relations and understanding between the institution and its programs and the public, in order to serve the interests and needs of both”. It is not, however, involved in the day-to-day operations of the institution. *The Role of Trustee in Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education*, written by the Pennsylvania Association of Councils of Trustees (PACT), explains this idea more fully: “in principle, trustees should not be involved in the day-to-day administration of their institutions. Act 188 clearly delegates the management function to the president. However, oversight by a local council can make an invaluable contribution to institutional integrity, vitality and engagement” The COT is also held accountable for academic quality, institutional planning and policies, and fiscal well-being.

During this accreditation cycle, the Office of the Chancellor commissioned a review of the State System (PASSHE) through the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, *Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education: Strategic System Review, Findings, and Recommendations* (2017). Similarly, the Commonwealth legislature commissioned a System-wide review of PASSHE under the leadership of the RAND corporation. The RAND report, *Promoting the Long-Term Sustainability and Viability of Universities in Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education*, was published in Spring 2018. The impact of the current System Redesign work, proposed legislation to aid in the System Redesign, and implications for new funding and allocation formulas are still being reviewed and there are still many unknowns. In addition, the new model of a unified accreditation process being sought by the University of Maine system bears close scrutiny.

Evaluation of the CEO (Criteria 2 f)

PASSHE’s BOG, upon the recommendation of the COT, appoints the university President, who serves as the Chief Executive Officer. Act 188 gives the Council the power “to make recommendations to the chancellor for the appointment, retention, or dismissal of the president following consultation with students, faculty, and alumni”. [BOG Policy 2002-03-A: Evaluating Presidents](#) specifies the process and provides for a three-person Evaluation Committee composed of Council members appointed by the Chair of the COT that evaluates the President’s performance annually and every three years (See BOG 2002-03-A, pp. 3-4). The triennial evaluation is conducted by the COT to include guidance from a consultant with expertise in presidential and university leadership. This process also includes formal input from university

constituencies and PASSHE University Presidents. Performance measures are developed in consultation with the Chancellor and COT and largely based upon the institution's Strategic Plan. The evaluation consists of a Professional Development Plan devised by the President, the Chancellor, and the Council's chair, and the Evaluation Committee prepares a report for review by the BOG.

Principles of Good Practice and Conflict of Interest (Criteria 2 g-i, ROA13)

The Council of Trustees adheres to principles of good practice in board governance. It is a member of PACT, which provides training and development opportunities for Council members. Periodic workshops hosted by PACT support the development of best practices related to legal obligations, conflicts of interest, and ethics.

The Council has a clearly written conflict of interest statement that all members must abide by and sign annually. Said statements obligates Trustees to disclose any conflict of interest that may arise at any time during their tenure, be they payments for services, contractual relationships, employment, or any matters involving familial or financial interests. Further, the members of the COT must abide by [BOG Policy 2012-01: Conflict of Interest](#). It states, among things, that "if a friend, family member, or business associate of a Council member applies for a position with a State System university or the System itself, the Council member must recuse himself from the selection process" (See: [BOG 2012-01](#), p. 3). COT members must also abide by several Pennsylvania policies designed to prevent conflicts of interest ([PA Public Official and Employee Ethics Act](#); [Executive Order 2015-01](#); [Governor's Code of Conduct 1980-18 Amended](#); [State Adverse Interest Act](#); [Right to Know Law](#)). Policies like these maintain the impartiality of the University's governing body.

The Council supports the President in maintaining the autonomy of the institution as prescribed by Act 188 and other BOG policies. Some of these BOG policies allow for individual institutions to operate more autonomously. (need to add examples thereof)

Presidential Autonomy and Support (Criteria 3)

As explained above, WCU's President (CEO) is appointed and evaluated by the Council and the Chancellor. Selection of the President is governed by BOG [Policy 1983-13-A: Process for Recommending Presidential Appointment](#). Following the policy, the West Chester University Council of Trustees forms a Presidential Search Committee that will consist of representatives of faculty, staff, students, and alumni, as well as Council members and a current or former President at a similar university. Some members of the Search Committee are selected by the COT, others are elected or selected by the group on campus they represent (See Standard VII: [BOG 1983-13-A](#), pp. 1-2).

President Christopher Fiorentino's educational background, faculty experience, and administrative roles serve him well leading West Chester University as the Chief Executive Officer. President Fiorentino was inaugurated as WCU's 15th president on April 21, 2017. He has earned a B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. from Temple University. President Fiorentino's roots at West Chester University are broad and deep; he began teaching at WCU in 1983 while working on his Doctoral degree. He began as an assistant professor and rose to become the Dean of the College of Business and Public Affairs (now College of Business and Public Management), a position he held for more than

20 years. In 2013, he became the vice president for External Operations; in 2016 he was chosen to serve as the University's interim president.

President Fiorentino has been active in numerous leadership roles on campus, helping to secure AACSB accreditation for the School of Business; developing off-campus academic centers, including the Graduate Center in West Goshen Township; and working with faculty and supporters to create the Cottrell Entrepreneurial Leadership Center. As vice president for External Operations, President Fiorentino helped WCU fulfill its mission to serve local communities and the Commonwealth as a source of knowledge and skill development, a research center, and a service provider. His responsibilities included overseeing the University operations at the State System's Center City Philadelphia site.

The President of West Chester University has the authority and autonomy to fulfill the responsibilities of the position as established by Act 188. According to Act 188, the President establishes and implements policies and procedures related to: instructional programs and academic standards; administration of the institution; admission and enrollment; use of institutional facilities; student activity fees; and operating and capital budgets. While the COT oversees many of the same areas, Act 188 simply grants them the right to "review and approve such matters." It is the President, acting autonomously, who carries out these responsibilities directly.

Upon assuming his presidency, President Fiorentino transitioned the university away from a culture of distributed leadership and corresponding lack of overall strategic direction to an empowered, inclusive, and transparent culture that is clear about the overall vision and associated strategic plan. Faculty, staff, and administrators are empowered to set, measure, and achieve goals thereof. President Fiorentino has emphasized student success as a critical part of West Chester's comprehensive Strategic Plan. This emphasis drove the college re-organization in Academic Affairs and led to the creation of the position of Associate Provost for Student Success. Additionally, each executive and faculty search includes language that directly mentions student success.

West Chester University has recently re-organized some of its key inclusion and equity efforts, particularly with the creation of the position of Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer. Following a national search, WCU hired Dr. Tracey Ray Robinson, who has already begun instituting several initiatives. West Chester now regularly conducts a Campus Climate Survey to gauge potential areas of concern and all new department chairs now participate in a "Chair's Boot Camp," to familiarize the chairs with various processes and resources connected to chairing a department, including programming specifically focused on issues of diversity and inclusion.

West Chester University made the intentional decision to create the strategic entity of an Associate Vice President and Chief Human Resource Officer (AVP CHRO) to oversee both Human Resources and Labor Relations in an effort to provide operational transparencies and strengthened support to its staff. Through this position, immediate implementation of strategic practices have increased lines of communication between non-represented and represented constituents across campus. Today, the AVP CHRO makes regular appearances at Provost Executive Cabinet meetings; multiple trainings and open forums are now held for Deans, Associate Deans and Managers; and the University actively participates in, as well as shares PASSHE-wide communications regarding new collective bargaining contracts.

A Faculty Ombuds Office, reporting to the Deputy Provost, was created in Spring 2020 to serve

as an informal and impartial resource to assist faculty with issues and concerns related to their work experience. The goal of the Faculty Ombuds Office is to provide a free, confidential space for faculty to bring issues and concerns, to be heard, and to receive assistance in strategizing and exploring options. The work of the Ombudsperson is three fold: 1) listening; 2) strategizing, exploring options, and information gathering; and 3) identifying patterns and instances of concern, and where appropriate, recommending policy or procedure change.

The President is responsible for carrying out assessments of the institution's efficiency and effectiveness. Act 188 specifies that Presidents have the responsibility "to develop and implement policies and procedures for the administration of the institution" (See Standard VII: [Act 188](#), p. 12). President Fiorentino has provided the necessary resources to review current practices of institutional assessment to include the hiring of an Associate Provost for Assessment and Accreditation to oversee all administrative assessment practices as referenced in Standard VI. President Fiorentino is aided by well-qualified administrators. A review of their curriculum vitae demonstrates that members of executive cabinet have the appropriate degrees and work experience.

Administration and Organizational Structure (Criteria 4 a-d)

West Chester's administrative structure and reporting relationships are clearly documented in the appendices. The credentials and professional experience of executive cabinet members can be seen through a review of their curriculum vitae.

The search process ensures that the appointed individuals have the functional knowledge and the skills to perform their duties.

Managers are aided by a variety of information systems that help them to perform their duties. After an administrator is hired, they receive training on use of technology applications that are specific to their department and business processes if they are not already familiar with them.

As the President has brought on new team members, he has been intentional in approving the structure of divisions that support them in achieving their goals.

Engagement with Faculty and Students (Criteria 4 e)

President Fiorentino believes in self-reflection, listening, and feedback from the entire university community is critical to student and university success. President Fiorentino holds an open forum or town hall style meeting at least once each semester, separately, with both faculty, students, and staff. The meeting with students typically occurs in the evening at an event held and well-publicized by the Student Government Association (SGA). In most semesters, there are multiple availabilities with faculty, one at a regularly-scheduled Faculty Senate meeting, and another during a standalone question-and-answer session. Each is also well-publicized in advance of the event. President Fiorentino is regularly joined by Cabinet members who can speak directly to issues of concern to the relevant constituents. The level of commitment to these exchanges was apparent during the spring 2020 semester, when leadership ensured the open forums continued, albeit virtually, due to the global pandemic.

He instituted Lunch at Tanglewood (the President's official residence) as an opportunity to engage and listen to various constituency groups such as transfer students, adult students, veterans,

underrepresented minorities, high school counselors, and many more.

In addition, President Fiorentino implemented the WCU Presidential Shadow program in which he spends a day shadowing a WCU employee because he believes each employee is a valued and important part of ensuring student success. This is a testament his “community of educator’s” leadership philosophy. He has shadowed the Director of New Student Programs at an orientation sessions, the Interim Director of WCU’s Lawrence A. Dowdy Multi-Cultural Center, and a WCU Purchasing Manager to name a few. These are captured in part of his First Friday Video series and highlighted in his [blog](#).

Evaluation of Administrative Units (*Criteria 4 f*)

As examined in Standard VI, Administrative Assessment is guided by WCU’s Institutional Effectiveness Plan. The assessment of administrative unit goals is on a rotating schedule so that each unit goal is assessed at least once over a four year period. This allows units to focus assessment efforts and lead to a more thoughtful process. Annual summary reports allows units to reflect on the year and highlight key accomplishments of their assessment efforts. The summary reports are submitted to the Associate Provost for Accreditation and Assessment and their respective Vice President who in turn can identify shared outcomes across and within divisions. Best practices are shared University wide at annual assessment events.