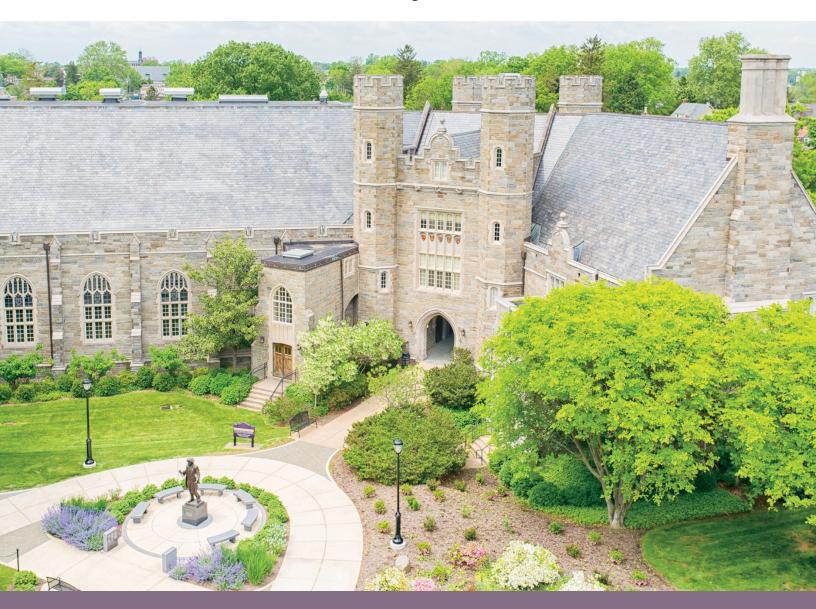# West Chester University
Self-Study DRAFT

I. Institutional Overview

A University Preparing for the Future

West Chester University is on the move and moving fast. As one of the top regional comprehensive public universities in the nation, we now serve more than 17,500 students at the undergraduate and graduate levels and have earned a national reputation for excellence, value, and student success.

Our status as a flagship institution is reflected in our strong performance as documented in a recent analysis of six-year graduation rates among public 4-year universities by the Chronicle of Higher Education. In a list of over 588 institutions, WCU ranked 64th, placing us ahead of much larger and more well-known institutions both inside and outside of the Commonwealth, with a six-year graduation rate of 72.6%. As our reputation for excellence has become more widely known throughout the United States, we have attracted a different caliber of faculty and staff who are recognized for their professional contributions and creative and scholarly activity. This level of excellence has positively impacted the experience of students and produced a learning environment that is dynamic, inclusive, and focused on their success.

As we remain steadfast in our commitment to being a liberal arts institution that highly values teaching, we are also earning respect for our ability to offer

doctoral level education and produce research and creative activity of the highest order. Even as we transform our institution and begin to demonstrate the characteristics of institutions traditionally defined as Doctoral Universities using the Carnegie Basic Classification Methodology, we remain true to our student-centered mission and goals.

Since 2013, WCU has become the largest campus in Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) and the fifth largest institution delivering four-year degrees in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Within the State System, WCU is known for its academic excellence across all of its colleges, the diversity of its student body, and its innovative approaches to higher education administration. Our approach promotes efficiency while relying on shared governance to ensure that every decision is aligned with the institutional mission and strategic priorities. As the institution has grown, added engineering and doctoral programs, expanded its operations in Center City Philadelphia, and re-organized its operations to better support its mission, we have simultaneously worked to assure that student success is at the center of everything that we do.

West Chester University had its origin in West Chester Academy, a private, state-aided preparatory and teacher-training school founded in 1812. The academy became West Chester Normal School in 1871, West Chester State Teachers College in 1927, West Chester State College in 1960, and West Chester University in 1983, when it also became one of 14 public universities in PASSHE. Since the 1960s, West Chester University has offered a broad range of liberal arts and professional degree programs as a Master's I comprehensive institution. More recently, West Chester University has begun offering a biomedical engineering program and has added doctoral programs, including four such programs since our last self-study:

- The Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)

- The Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.)

- The Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.)

- The Doctor of Public Administration (D.P.A.)

College/School	Program
College of Arts and Humanities	Art + Design, Communication & Media, English, History, Languages & Cultures, Philosophy, Theatre & Dance, Women's & Gender Studies
College of Business and Public Management	Accounting, Criminal Justice, Economics & Finance, Geography & Planning, Management, Marketing, Public Policy & Administration
College of Education and Social Work	Counselor Education, Early & Middle Grades Education, Educational Foundations & Policy Studies, Literacy, Graduate Social Work, Undergraduate Social Work, Special Education
College of Health Sciences	Communication Sciences & Disorders, Health, Kinesiology, Nursing, Nutrition, Sports Medicine
College of the Sciences and Mathematics	Anthropology & Sociology, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Geology & Astronomy, Mathematics, Physics & Engineering, Political Science, Psychology
The University College	Exploratory Studies, Liberal Studies, Professional Studies
The Graduate School	Forty master's degree programs, Four doctoral programs
The Wells School of Music	Applied Music, Music Education, Theory History & Composition

Table 1

In response to the 2013 Strategic Plan, *Building on Excellence,* which called upon the university to "transform itself into a University whose organizational structures are strategically arranged so as to facilitate excellence in teaching and learning," the university embarked on a significant re-organization. The goal of this re- organization, which began in 2015, was to "to more evenly distribute administrative support, administrative complexity, the production of student credit hours, and build on pedagogical and/or disciplinary commonalities."

Currently, the University offers 118 baccalaureate- degrees, 103 master's-degree programs, and 4 doctoral programs through six academic colleges and two schools, as indicated in Table 1 on the prior page. In fall 2018, West Chester University's enrollment was 17,527 students (14,567 undergraduate and 2,960 graduate students), which represents a 20.9% increase since fall 2010 (the enrollment presented in our previous self-study). As allocations from the state continue to decline, the university has offset those funding losses by implementing a strategic enrollment management plan that has realized steady growth at the undergraduate level (constrained by our campus footprint and room capacity), and slightly more aggressive growth in both online and graduate populations. Our graduate student enrollment, for example, has increased by nearly 38% over the last 5 years, including the addition of 4 new doctoral programs. This growth is also reflective of the university's mission to serve the needs of the Commonwealth, and we are grateful that our strong reputation continues to support our ability to meet the needs of greater numbers of students. Nevertheless, the growth has challenged us to think more strategically, and to that end we have engaged in a multi-year plan with Ruffalo Noel

Levitz to create an enrollment plan that will allow us to maximize our ability to serve the region while maintaining a standard of excellence that supports our institutional priorities of student success, diversity and inclusion, and financial strength.

The plan is working, as evidenced by our continued ability to recruit high-quality students, faculty, and staff. The University's top feeder high schools are within a 50- mile radius of WCU. The entering undergraduate class for fall 2018 had a mean combined SAT score of 1,122 and a high school grade point average of 3.43. In fall 2018, West Chester University employed 976 faculty members (729 full-time and 247 part-time). Temporary faculty taught 24% of course credit hours. Of the full-time faculty, 54% are female and more than 15% are minority. Of the permanent tenure and tenure-track faculty, 91.3% hold terminal degrees.

The faculty, athletic coaches, certain technical and professional employees, and all other staff except for managers and executives are unionized. Collective bargaining for all unions takes place at the state level, with no local control over collective bargaining agreements. The unions represented on campus are as follows:

- American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees: AFSCME

- Association of Pennsylvania College and University Faculty: APSCUF

- Office of Professional Employees International Union Healthcare of Pennsylvania: OPEIU

- Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education Officers Association: POA

- Security, Police, and Fire Professionals of America: SPFPA

- State College and University Professionals Association: SCUPA

Our students are thriving, though we are restlessly seeking every opportunity we can to improve their experience and adapt our institution to their changing needs. Currently, we have the highest retention and graduation rates in PASSHE, and rates that exceed many regional public comprehensive universities on most measures. While we are incredibly proud of our 84.7% second fall retention rate, our 67.8% four-year graduation rate, and our 73.3% six-year graduation rate, we continue to seek out ways to better serve our most at-risk students, including our underrepresented minority and first-generation students. Our self-study will tell the story of many initiatives on this front, along with our work to assess their effectiveness and plan for continuous improvement on this most important dimension of student success.

In the pages that follow, we will describe our work to assure that we are meeting all seven of the Standards of Accreditation and all Requirements of Affiliation adopted by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. You'll also see our work to identify measures of our success and learn from our mistakes so that we can identify opportunities for continuous improvement over time. We welcome your feedback so that we can tell our story honestly, celebrating our accomplishments, while reflecting on the path forward to even greater success for our students and our committed community of educators.

Self-Study Timeline

Table 2

November 2018	Steering Committee members attend Self-Study Institute
January 2019	Open Call to Campus Community to Participate
February 2019	Steering Committee Kick-off Meeting
March 2019	Steering Committee and Working Groups Finalized
May 2019	Self-Study Workbook provided to all Working Group members
May 2019	Associate Provost for Accreditation hired
July 1, 2019	Self-Study Design submitted to MSCHE
July 17, 2019	Campus visit by MSCHE liaison
Summer 2019	Revisions & Acceptance of Self-Study Design
September 12, 2019	Launch event for the campus community
October 2019	Mission Days – Feedback from the university community
January 2020	First drafts of self-study completed
May 2020	Self-Study report draft shared with campus community
May-Sept 2020	Self-Study revisions and campus review
Sept-Nov 2020	Self-Study Report draft sent to Team Chair
Sept-Nov 2020	Team Chair's Preliminary Visit
Jan 2021	Self-Study Report finalized based on Team Chair's feedback