2. Responses to Previous Evaluation and Recent Commission Actions

149
150 After the 2011 decennial review, there was one commission action that indicated that the institution
151 should move quickly to adopt a more formal structure to support general education assessment.   A
152 progress report was submitted on April 1, 2013, and a full cycle of general education assessment has
153 since been completed. Action plans have been implemented based on information learned through
154 the assessment process, which will be discussed further in section five of the PRR. The internal
155 recommendations of WCU's 2011 self-study were:

156 • Assess the understanding and implementation of, effectiveness of, and accountability for
157   distributed leadership across divisions. Following this investigation, develop a communication
158   plan to make clear how distributed leadership can best function to serve our students and the
159   University across all divisions.
160 • Refine the budgeting process in order to strengthen the link among planning, assessment, and
161   resource allocation; provide greater flexibility for WCU to move resources across divisions;
162   and address the accumulation of surplus rollover revenue in order to allocate to emerging
163   needs.
164 • Create an institutional assessment structure with specific goals, measures, procedures, and
165   outcomes for all units, as well as a mechanism for communicating results and subsequent
166   actions based on assessment results. Assessment of student learning and student support
167   services would be one component of this effectiveness assessment structure.
168 • Improve academic advising for all students.
169 • Ensure sufficient support for faculty scholarship and teaching.
170

Distributed Leadership Across Divisions

172 At WCU, distributed leadership is defined as a management model in which all faculty and staff are
173 recognized as experts in their own right, with expectations and responsibilities to actively participate
174 in tasks and initiatives across the institution which serve to support the mission of access and student
175 success. Under distributed leadership, everyone is responsible and accountable for leadership within
176 his or her area. Good ideas are generated across the University, and many people cooperate in
177 creating change. Distributed leadership is intended to create an environment where everyone feels
178 free to develop and share new ideas, recognizing that while they all embrace the same institutional
179 mission, they contribute to it in different ways. The goal is to empower everyone to make their job
180 more efficient, meaningful, and effective. While distributed leadership continues to be effective, it
181 has been strengthened since the previous self-study as a result of the development and
182 implementation of the 2013 strategic plan *Building on Excellence*. The plan ensures cohesion across the
183 institution in pursuit of the University's mission. Each of the five themes of the plan was developed
184 to ensure accountability and communication across all divisions. Cabinet level administrators serve as
185 Theme Team co-chairs along with a staff or faculty member: VP for Academic Affairs (Academics),
186 Director of Social Equity (Diversity), VP for Advancement and Sponsored Research (Engagement),
187 VP for Student Affairs (Enrichment), and VP for Finance and Administration (Sustainability). The
188 co-chair approach enhances the campus visibility of the distributed leadership model, as Theme
189 Team members are comprised of administration, faculty, staff, and students from across the

190 institution. These efforts have contributed to the continued success of the strategic plan, including
191 implementation of plan actions as well as achieving plan goals.

192 The VPs, faculty, staff, and students communicate regularly in the development, monitoring, and
193 evaluation of theme objectives and outcome actions. Additionally, outcome actions (which are
194 assigned to individuals across campus to report on or demonstrate achievement of) have been vetted
195 to ensure they have been operationalized in measurable ways. Each of these changes has helped
196 strengthen communication across divisions because Theme Team leaders are not only considering
197 their respective areas but the institution as a whole in the formation and completion of objectives.
198 This is attributable to the fact that many objectives cut across the broad themes of the strategic plan,
199 ensuring that team members consider all divisions in order to achieve strategic plan objectives.
200 Additionally, the operationalization of outcomes has made it much easier for progress to be
201 demonstrated, which allows for more robust discussion of assessment outcomes and implementation
202 of the next logical steps (closing the loop). This is a positive change when compared to past years in
203 which the focus tended to be on narratives about process rather than measureable outcomes. The
204 changes in the infrastructure for the plan as it pertains to membership and operationalization have
205 provided more accountability for the distributed leadership model across the divisions by providing
206 multiple points of measurement in relation to achieving objectives. In summary, the institution has
207 identified and capitalized on potential synergies and found ways to reduce the duplication of effort in
208 order to better serve the students and University constituency.

209

210 Refining the Budgeting Process

211 The most recent decennial self-study highlighted concerns about the University's decentralized
212 budget processes. The resulting refinement of WCU's budget process focused on preserving
213 flexibility and independence while acknowledging the need to redesign how funds are allocated. In
214 fall 2014, an outside consultant was engaged to review the current budget process, share alternative
215 models and recommend a budgeting process that provides greater transparency. Following this visit,
216 a new university-wide committee -- the Budget Review Committee -- was formed to make the
217 budgeting process more transparent. Currently, the following actions have occurred as a result of this
218 process: the establishment of by-laws, committee structure, and a calendar of tasks, election and
219 appointment of members, and tutorials to inform committee members about institutional finances,
220 environment conditions, and historical funding patterns.[1] An implementation plan was also
221 developed to demonstrate how the new budget model will coincide with the timing of strategic plan
222 decisions. The new structure for the budget process is more inclusive of the entire campus
223 community, as the membership is comprised of faculty, staff, managers, and students. Significant
224 responsibilities of this committee include sharing information and seeking input from the wider
225 campus constituency on a regular basis. Further information about the budgeting process will be
226 discussed in section six of this document.

227

228 Creating an Institutional Assessment Structure

229 After the last decennial report, the institution moved quickly to implement a structure for both
230 institutional effectiveness and student learning assessment. The strategic plan *Building on Excellence* is
231 the blueprint of the University's ability to demonstrate institutional effectiveness and is currently in
232 its third year of implementation. Compared to previous plans, there is more intentionality to

monitoring, reporting, and evaluating the plan's activities and outcomes. Capitalizing on existing software already used on campus in the assessment of learning outcomes, the institution now has the ability to obtain reports that document how strategic plan objectives are met and how they align with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education standards.[2] Additionally, reports are able to establish links between planning and budgeting for current and future resource requests related to the strategic plan.[3] All of this information is shared with the University community via the strategic plan website,[4] as well as campus-wide "Big Plan Days"[5] held at the end of each semester. More specific information related to institutional effectiveness will be discussed in section five of this document.

The development of a more formalized assessment structure for student learning outcomes was initiated in fall 2012 out of the Provost's office with oversight from the Faculty Associate for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment. While there were no recommendations resulting from the previous decennial report related to student learning assessment, upon reflection the institution felt more structure was necessary to better understand the state of student learning assessment across the institution. Over the past three years, all academic programs have been evaluated on the quality of their assessment plan through the institution's Assurance of Student Learning (ASL) initiative. The ASL has allowed the institution to communicate to all academic and non-academic programs, regardless of discipline, what the core elements are with regard to ensuring high-quality academic programming and assessment of student learning outcomes. These core elements are evaluated using an institutional rubric, which includes:

- Program learning outcomes that are specific and direct
- Curriculum maps that indicate where outcomes are introduced, practiced, and assessed at the program level
- Use of both direct and indirect assessment measures
- Assessment measures inclusive of rationale for their use
- Criteria for success (i.e. benchmarking) for each assessment measure
- Appropriate reporting of results
- Action plans tied to the results

More specific information as it relates to assessment of student learning will be discussed in section five of this document.

Improving Academic Advising

A campus-wide advising task force was convened in fall 2014. This group was tasked with defining "excellent advising" and identifying ways the institution can best support faculty in meeting that standard of advising. The task force consulted with multiple stakeholders in the drafting of a definition and identifying institutional supports for advising. One of the initial outcomes of this group was the creation of an advising website.[6] The website allows for clear communication across the institution relating to advising expectations (students and faculty); use of advising-related technology; and policies, procedures, and resources. The task force's ongoing work includes incorporating advising training into both new student and new faculty orientation, examining long-term training and assessment solutions, and recommending possible changes to campus-wide advising structures. Included in these efforts are discussion of ways to create a system of measuring

274 and improving the quality of advising on campus. The strategic plan contains several objectives
275 centered on advising that this group uses to guide their work.
276

277 **Ensuring Sufficient Support for Faculty Scholarship and Teaching**

278 In a significant step towards ensuring sufficient support for faculty scholarship and teaching, the
279 Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs has allotted each tenured and tenure-track faculty
280 member $1,500 in professional development funding in each of the last three years. New tenure-
281 track hires receive $6,000 to be used during their first two years of employment. This new base
282 funding is meant to be used for, among other things, attendance at state, regional, and national
283 conferences or the purchase of equipment that enhances scholarly development. Funds are allocated
284 to the Deans to be distributed to their faculty and each respective department and Dean monitors
285 spending of funds. Previously, faculty development funding was dependent upon the capacity of
286 each individual college's budget to provide resources, making for an uneven experience for faculty
287 members since colleges often have varying abilities to produce excess discretionary funds for faculty
288 development. Making this funding part of the base budget has allowed the University to make
289 significant progress in addressing this recommendation.

290 At the same time, the division of Academic Affairs has begun to capture faculty scholarship and
291 creativity through an annual report that is distributed in the fall of each year[7] and allows faculty to
292 report on scholarly and creative work that they publish and present on each year.   This is an
293 important step in creating linkages between the outcomes related to this strategic initiative and the
294 budgeting processes and demonstrates that the investment of these dollars clearly support the goal of
295 enhancing faculty's scholarly development.

296 In addition to providing direct financial support, the Academic Affairs division provides technical
297 assistance by providing release time for a faculty member to direct the Teaching, Learning, and
298 Assessment Center (TLAC), which offers a wide variety of professional development opportunities
299 as well as support for teaching and learning. Over the last several years the TLAC has been provided
300 dedicated space on campus and under the direction of the faculty associate has served as the central
301 point for all issues related to faculty development. The faculty associate has direct oversight of
302 several University-wide committees that promote the professional development of faculty. These
303 committees include New Faculty Orientation, Faculty Mentoring, the University Assessment
304 Advisory Committee, and the Committee for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT).

305 The TLAC website[8] has an array of resources and tips for faculty as it relates to professional
306 development and has used both face-to-face and online technology to provide multiple professional
307 development opportunities over the last several years. On a weekly basis, faculty who subscribe to a
308 listserv receive a 20-minute webinar video on teaching, learning, and assessment- related topics in
309 higher education. There are also a variety of workshops presented in coordination with the Office of
310 Distance Education and other entities on campus throughout the academic year. In both January and
311 May of each year, a daylong professional development workshop is held for the campus community
312 on various topics related to pedagogy and assessment. In May of 2015, over 45 faculty members
313 across campus attended a workshop on Lesson Study, and in January 2016, a workshop on forming
314 meaningful partnerships between Academic and Student Affairs was held and attended by over 65

315 faculty and staff. Annually, over $10,000 in professional development funding is available for faculty
316 projects, which are submitted as proposals reviewed and monitored by CELT.
317
318 The funding for library materials, especially online resources, has been consistently high. In statistics
319 reported in 2015, West Chester University ranked third from the top in the amount of money spent
320 for library materials per student in a comparison of 35 peer institutions reporting nationwide. In the
321 past five years the total number of on-line resources has more than doubled to over 1.7 million
322 books, journal titles, streaming audio albums, and video recordings.
323

324 **Commission Response- Impact of the Doctor of Nursing Practice Program**

325 The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) was the first doctoral program offered at the institution.
326 WCU's DNP program goals and outcomes are congruent with the mission of PASSHE, WCU, the
327 College of Health Sciences, and the Department of Nursing, which include developing applied
328 graduate degrees, especially degrees that can be delivered online, and being responsive to regional
329 needs in areas of employment with high demand. This program supports and strengthens the
330 undergraduate and graduate nursing degrees offered in the Department of Nursing. The DNP
331 program provides graduates with the additional competencies and knowledge needed to practice at
332 the highest level.

333 The Higher Education Modernization Act signed into law by Governor Tom Corbett in summer
334 2012 allows all 14 PASSHE universities to offer applied or professional doctorates. WCU's DNP
335 program is congruent with PASSHE Strategic Initiatives which are grounded in the System's mission,
336 "to be among the nation's leading systems of public universities, recognized for (1) access and
337 affordability of excellent undergraduate and graduate education; and (2) responsiveness to state,
338 regional, and national needs through quality academic programs, research, and service" (PASSHE
339 Strategic Initiatives, October 13, 2010). PASSHE Initiative 1: Transforming Students and the
340 Learning Environment speaks to "the physical spaces in which learning occurs and the means by
341 which information and courses are delivered must adapt and be more flexible" (PASSHE Strategic
342 Initiatives, October 13, 2010).

343 The request to deliver the DNP program stemmed from WCU's mission to provide access and offer
344 high-quality programs for its students and the citizens of southeastern Pennsylvania. The DNP
345 curriculum is designed to provide these graduates with the additional competencies and knowledge
346 needed to advance their practice to the highest level of nursing. The program enables WCU to
347 expand community services, professional networks and collaborations with regional health care and
348 educational entities in order to foster collaborative research, create entrepreneurial endeavors and
349 create new revenue streams, a further reflection of the mission and goals of WCU in serving the
350 regional needs of the surrounding community.

351 Like all academic programs at the institution, the DNP must have a student learning assessment plan
352 on file within the planning and outcome assessment software platform (Nuventive's *TracDat)*. As
353 described later in this document, academic programs are given flexibility in their choice of outcomes,
354 measures, criteria, as well as the rotation for reviewing results and the development of action plans.
355 However, as part of the ASL noted above, all programs must ensure the quality and consistency of
356 their plan through their participation in the ASL process. The quality of each of the respective ASL

357 plans is measured using an institutional rubric (described earlier) designed to evaluate multiple aspects
358 of assessment.

359 The Doctor of Nursing Practice assessment plan was developed using the *Essentials of Doctoral*
360 *Education for Advanced Nursing Practice* published by American Association of Critical Care Nurses in
361 2006 as a framework. The document outlines eight foundational *Essentials* that must be present
362 within programs conferring the Doctor of Nursing Practice degree. The *Essentials* serve as the goals
363 for the program for which relevant learning outcomes can be mapped to those that are achieved
364 throughout the curricula. All program learning outcomes, as a result of their alignment with the
365 *Essentials*, demonstrate an appropriate level of rigor and sophistication that is expected of doctoral
366 students.   Following the development of student learning outcomes, the program chose measures
367 (two for each outcome, one of which had to be a direct measure) to be used in the evaluation of the
368 outcome. According to the AACN, faculty of DNP programs are allowed the academic freedom to
369 create innovative and integrated curricula to meet the competencies outlined in the *Essentials*
370 document so assessment measures are not dictated by a governing body per se. Over the last two
371 years, outcomes data collected have documented the following strengths related to DNP student
372 learning: **TO BE ADDED** Additionally this work has allowed the program to understand the
373 following areas that need to be improved within the curricula in an effort for continuous
374 improvement: **TO BE ADDED**

375