Section 1: Institutional Level Assessment

A. Policies/guidelines and organizational structures in support of assessment

Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. The university’s assessment plan calls for ongoing collection, analysis and dissemination of information on student learning outcomes in every degree program. The five stages of the assessment cycle are reported annually:

1. Determine program goals and objectives
2. Gather direct and indirect evidence of student learning outcomes
3. Interpret the evidence and document levels of student achievement of the goals and objectives
4. Make changes in curriculum and/or instruction for improvement, when necessary
5. “Close the loop” by gathering information on the effectiveness of changes -- or by focusing on different objectives and repeating the process

Two standing committees of the University Senate advise the Provost and Senate on assessment of student learning and related matters: the Assessment Committee and the General Education Committee. Each school has a committee responsible for integrating curriculum development and assessment of student learning outcomes. The university’s assessment website (wcsu.edu/assessment) includes “The Institutional Plan for Implementation of Student Outcomes Assessment”, “Assessment Guidelines for Academic Departments” and “Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about Assessment.”

B. Any existing assessment plans, assessment review processes, and program review processes

All WCSU degree programs have plans for the assessment of student learning outcomes. Assessment data support the university’s Academic Program Review Process, which was approved in 2007-08 by the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum and Academic Standards (CUCAS) and by the Graduate Council. Of the 55 degree programs, 25 are in various stages of accreditation, including 15 currently accredited. All accredited programs require evidence of student learning. Of the 40 non-accredited programs, one has completed the program review process and 18 are scheduled to continue the process in 2011-12. Of the eleven remaining programs, two were recently approved by the Board of Governors for Higher Education (BA in Media Arts, and BA in Musical Theatre), and one involves individualized plans of study, each of which must be approved by CUCAS.

C. Salient activities and accomplishments in current year

(1) The Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) program in Instructional Leadership conducted a comprehensive assessment of its students, and the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program in Secondary Education collected and analyzed data from its initial cohort.

(2) The Division of Student Affairs completed its three year project to have all departments conduct self-studies using the national assessment standards developed by the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS). CAS is nationally recognized for its work in providing assessment standards specifically for departments that fall within the purview of Student Affairs. Each department director has formally presented their respective CAS findings to all of the directors. Every area now has an Action Plan based on their self-study analysis. Several departments worked with the office of Institutional Research and Assessment to design new measurement tools that focus on student learning.

D. Significant progress on assessment issues identified by regional accreditation process

WCSU implemented a comprehensive assessment plan in response to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) 2004 reaccreditation report. The NEASC Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) accepted the university’s most recent Fifth Year Interim Report on November 20, 2008, and commended WCSU for progress made in implementing an assessment plan across academic units. No further actions were considered necessary. The next NEASC accreditation visit is scheduled for Fall 2013. In May 2011 a steering committee was formed in preparation for the Self-Study.