WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

NEASC SELF-STUDY

DRAFT: April 15, 2013
Table of Contents

Introduction to the 2013 Self-Study / 2
Standard I: Mission and Purposes / 4
Standard II: Planning and Evaluation / 9
Standard III: Organization and Governance / 19
Standard IV: The Academic Program / 28
Standard V: Faculty / 55
Standard VI: Students / 71
Standard VII: Library and Other Information Resources / 87
Standard VIII: Physical and Technological Resources / 94
Standard IX: Financial Resources / 106
Standard X: Public Disclosure / 116
Standard XI: Integrity / 121
Appendices and Endnotes / See Supplemental Document
Introduction to the 2013 Self-Study

Since the last NEASC self-study, Connecticut’s higher education system has experienced significant changes. In 2011, the newly configured Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (ConnSCU) was formed to oversee higher education in the state. The agency’s purview extends to Connecticut’s four State Universities (Western, Southern, Central, and Eastern), Connecticut’s twelve community colleges, and Charter Oak University. ConnSCU replaced the Connecticut State University System (CSUS). A Board of Regents has replaced the Board of Trustees.

This transition period has launched myriad analyses and changes in academic policies and procedures, many of which are still in the process of being implemented. Throughout this period, however, something that has not and will not waver is Western Connecticut State University’s commitment to deliver the best education to its students.

Of course, change is a staple of education – from students who grow intellectually as they move through the learning process, to the institution itself, whose programs and courses undergo constant evaluation. In its 110-year history, WCSU has responded to the region’s changing needs, transitioning from normal school to teacher’s college to state university. It has also worked to bring a global awareness and presence to its students.

President James W. Schmotter has led intensive education enhancement at Western Connecticut State University. Since his arrival in 2004, the President has championed a dialogue-rich, transparent partnership between faculty, staff, and students. Under President Schmotter’s direction, the University forged a new Mission and Vision (to be presented in detail in this report).

A list of recent WCSU campus events, together with a glance at campus innovations that are either complete or in progress, reveals an active Institution with an expansive (regional, national, and international) focus. In the last few years, WCSU has:

- Added a new Science Building to the Midtown Campus
- Broken ground on a new Visual and Performing Arts Center on the Westside Campus (scheduled opening: 2014)
- Partnered with the Danbury area to host notable authors and texts via One Book, One Community
- Established the Jane Goddall Center for Excellence in Environmental Studies
- Launched the MFA in Creative and Professional Writing (recent writers who have visited WCSU include Tim O’Brien, Gay Talese, Frank DeFord, Phillip Lopate, and John Perkins)

- Hosted a visit by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

- Continued the President’s Lecture Series (recent guests include Jean M. Twenge, author of *The Narcissism Epidemic*, and Tibetan Prime Minister Lobsang Sangay)

- Planned a Center for Compassion, Creativity and Innovation and voted to make WCSU a Compassionate University

- Responded in many ways to the Sandy Hook tragedy, including hosting a Firearms Control Conference featuring Vice President Joe Biden

- Honored Veterans and all American soldiers by hosting a series of Veteran’s Week campus activities, including a reading of the names of all American soldiers who have died in Iraq and Afghanistan, and opening a campus Veteran’s Lounge

- Hosted the Connecticut Supreme Court, whose justices presided over two cases at WCSU

- Networked with the community to protect Candlewood Lake

- Forged a partnership between WCSU’s Ancell School of Business and Union Bank of Danbury to create an Institute for Financial Literacy (IFL)

- Hosted Former Ambassador to Egypt Frank Wisner, who offered “Perspectives on Israel and Palestine” in a lecture

- Forged a partnership with Charter Cable that allows Communication students and faculty to deliver Election Night broadcasts to the region

Aiding in this progress is Provost / Vice President of Academic Affairs, Jane McBride Gates. Since her recent arrival in 2011, Dr. Gates has enhanced teaching, advising, and assessment at WCSU. Indeed, Dr. Gates has fostered a culture of assessment that is rapidly spreading throughout the Institution. More than ever before, our faculty and staff recognize that assessment at all levels of operation ultimately enhances learning.

In spite of the changes in Connecticut’s higher education governance and pressing economic challenges, WCSU continues to excel. We resolve to continue moving in positive directions, for the sake of our students and the greater Danbury area.
Standard I

Mission and Purposes

Description

The University serves as an accessible, responsive and creative intellectual resource for the people and institutions of Connecticut. We strive to meet the educational needs of a diversified student body through instruction, scholarship, and public service. Western aspires to be a public university of choice for programs of excellence in the liberal arts and the professions by providing full-time and part-time students with the necessary background to be successful in their chosen careers and to be productive members of society. It accomplishes this by emphasizing:

- A strong liberal arts foundation
- Strong skills in communication, problem solving, and critical thinking
- Opportunities for experiential, cooperative, and internship experiences
- A strong background in information technologies
- Interdisciplinary programs
- A strong sense of commitment to public service
- A personalized learning environment

Western Connecticut State University capitalizes on its outstanding faculty and its location in the greater New York metropolitan area to create a diverse university community that—in its range of quality academic programs and in its enriching and supportive student-focused environment—is characteristic of New England’s best small private universities, but with much more affordable costs.

WCSU’s Mission and Vision statements identify its stakeholders, define the university’s strategic priorities (as translated through its strategic planning goals; Strategic Plan, page 2), provide its strategic framework for planning (Strategic Plan) and its basis for institutional evaluation (Strategic Assessment Reports; Economic Impact Report; Annual Report; State of the University Report). (See Appendix: Standard I: Table 1 for specific information on how WCSU lives out its mission and obligations to its stakeholders through its Strategic Goals.)

The University’s Mission and Vision statements are displayed both online (President’s webpage; graduate & undergraduate catalogs; State of the University Report; faculty handbook) and in print within the graduate (2009-2011; page 14) and undergraduate (2010-2012; page 7) catalogs, and the faculty handbook (2012-2013; page 3). The Mission of the University was approved by its governing board, the Connecticut State University System Board of Trustees (BOT, 12-11-1998), and affirmed by the current Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) (House Bill No. 6651; Public Act No. 11-48, Sec. 230).
WCSU’s mission statement is concrete and realistic and defines its educational and other dimensions, including scholarship, research, and public service. The Mission is made tangible through the University’s strategic planning goals, specifically, strategic planning goals 1-5 (refer to Appendix: Standard I: Table 2; Standard 1.1). These strategic planning goals guide and inspire the University toward excellence in scholarship, research and public service. Listed in Table 2 for Standard 1.1 are the many activities and contributions that define WCSU’s educational and other dimensions.

Per House Bill No. 6651; Public Act No. 11-48, Sec. 230 (effective July 1, 2011), the Board of Regents for Higher Education was mandated to develop and implement a plan for maintaining the distinct missions of the Connecticut State University System, the regional community-technical college system, and the Charter Oak State College. In spring 2012, the Board of Regents requested that all four Connecticut State Universities, twelve Community Colleges and Charter Oak send their mission statements to the Board, in order to assure that all mission statements would be reflected in the newly crafted mission statement of the ConnSCU system.

In 2005, WCSU’s vision and strategic planning goals were adopted and internalized by the University community. Growing out of the mission and created from the input of 76 focus groups engaging more than 650 stakeholders, the Vision and strategic planning goals provide the fundamental framework that guides the actions and activities of WCSU.

In March 2012, the University conducted a survey of its faculty and staff (360 respondents; 248 faculty and 112 staff) to better understand how its Mission is lived out through its people. Questions asked help determine the level of communication, understanding and fulfillment of the mission. Further, in the spring of 2012, a smaller scale survey was issued to both students (100 respondents) and faculty (64 respondents) to measure the advances made in delivering quality academic programs that are critical to the University’s Mission. The latter survey was used to identify sources of evidence that could serve as indicators of quality within academic programs.

Lastly, it is important to note that the University Senate Committee on General Education proposed that General Education at WCSU move to a tiered competency-base model, which passed the University Senate in its February 2013 meeting. This move is in keeping with the University’s commitment to provide “excellence in the liberal arts…by providing full-time and part-time students with the necessary background to be successful in their chosen careers and to be productive members of society.”

Appraisal

The University has a history of continued growth in both academic excellence and positive contributions to its community and to the State of Connecticut. Appendix: Standard I: Table 2 highlights a story of significant accomplishments by our faculty, staff and students that enables WCSU to live out its mission in a real and meaningful way to its stakeholders.
The State of the University Report summarizes the broad spectrum of activities, contributions, and impact WCSU has in shaping a vibrant educational environment for its students and communities. Further, each of the four Schools (Ancell; Arts & Sciences; Professional Studies; Visual & Performing Arts) and each of the Departments within the Schools prepares its own Annual Report which addresses its activities in light of WCSU’s Mission Statement. These documents are summarized in the overall University Annual Report.

The University’s Mission and Vision statements are included in many of the outgoing catalogs, documents, and reports that are distributed to the various stakeholders and community. WCSU should begin placing these statements in other widely distributed documents such as the Cupola alumni and friends of WCSU newsletter, its student handbook, and in key community spaces around the university (for example, in its Student Centers and conference rooms).

WCSU has a history of continued growth in both academic excellence and positive contributions to its community and to the State of Connecticut. Appraisal of our Strategic Plan’s goals reveals a faculty who research, present and publish in their academic areas, garner awards and grants, spearhead learning initiatives, and represent the university in many professional organizations. Appraisal of our administration highlights the strong networking that has been built between the school and the region (see Appendix: Standard 1: Table 2: Appraisal of a Mission-Driven Institution).

The University’s growth is in part the result of its long history of administrators, faculty, staff, and students engaged in active service to its community. President Schmotter’s 2012-2013 opening address highlighted this dedicated involvement: “Our university’s service to the community was notable last year: hosting the Connecticut Supreme Court, providing social media expertise for nonprofits; providing space for the Mission of Mercy and the Homeless Connect project; Ives Concert Park partnership with the City of Danbury; research for the Community Health Report Card; storm sheltering last year. We are directly touching the lives of thousands in our community. We should be proud of that.”

Testament that WCSU is doing justice to its Mission and Vision is reflected in faculty, staff and student surveys conducted in 2012. Moreover, the survey results indicate that the mission is well-communicated to the fulltime faculty and that it is well-understood. Approximately 80% of the faculty and staff agree that WCSU and its individual departments should use the Mission and Vision statements as the basis for future planning, student learning, budgeting and enrollment.

It is encouraging that a comparison of the 2012 surveys with similar surveys conducted in 2002 shows significant improvement (greater than 20%) regarding WCSU’s emphasis on a strong liberal arts foundation, emphasis on interdisciplinary programs, commitment to public service and integrity in handling its affairs.

There is a similar pattern of responses to survey questions about the ways in which each department and program area uses its vision, mission, strategic goals to provide a basis for planning, evaluation, and goal-setting. In support of the vision statement, 72.9% of faculty and staff responded that WCSU maintains the affordability and access of a mid-sized public university while creating the quality experience of the best private institutions.
Student respondents to the 2012 faculty/student survey rated the quality of their educational experience as very high. Strong indicators of student success included: preparation of students for success in their careers or graduate school; provision of programs and course options that attract quality students; and provision of an experiential learning environment enabling students to acquire real-world knowledge and skills. (See Appendix: Standard I: Table 3 for highlights from faculty / staff survey, 2012.)

**Projection**

The Mission of the University addresses the institution’s stakeholders, and how WCSU will serve their needs. It will continue to set the University’s priorities and activities. WCSU will continue to serve its stakeholders (students; faculty; people and Connecticut institutions); to build an active and engaged University that lives out its mission through its strategic goals; to offer meaningful activities and contributions that benefit its stakeholders. (See also: Strategic Assessment Reports; Economic Impact Report; Annual Report; State of the University Report.)

WCSU will continue to publish its Mission and Vision in on- and off-line catalogs, documents, and reports where WCSU’s various stakeholders will see it. The University will begin placing its Mission in other published reports and community gathering places to achieve greater exposure of our mission to the stakeholders we serve.

WCSU will continue its strong engagement with its students and faculty, Danbury citizens, and citizens throughout the region and state. Moreover, we will reaffirm our strong commitment to provide excellence in scholarship, research and public service. Our Mission and strategic planning goals will continue to guide us in this area.

WCSU will continue to monitor the acceptability and understanding of its mission for all its stakeholders. We will also monitor the ways our Mission provides direction to the curricula and other university-related activities that together form the basis on which expectations for student learning are developed. The University will continue to gather this information through the four Schools’ annual reports, which includes reports from respective departments, faculty, staff, and student surveys.

While recent survey results show improvement over the last ten years, WCSU will need to better demonstrate the link between its mission and staffing since agreement of faculty and staff regarding this issue is among the lowest scored of the questions. The current fiscal crisis in the State of CT creates a challenge for the University to establish alternative sources for funding, but this will further enhance faculty hiring. We have room to grow, but we are certainly making progress. As our Annual Reports reveal, WCSU faculty are engaged in scholarly contributions to their fields; and as demonstrated by the increasing number of WCSU programs achieving accreditation, the university’s academic programs are achieving high standards of quality.

Second, the survey highlights room for improvement when it comes to WCSU utilizing its location and proximity to the New York metropolitan area. Through its Strategic Plan Assessment (see Goal 2: Location), the University has established a set of recommendations to help it better capitalize on its location.
Institutional Effectiveness

WCSU will continue to implement the recommendations coming out of the six Strategic Assessment Teams, moving forward in its aspiration to become “the institution of choice” in Western Connecticut and our service area. In the words of President Schmotter: “We must be continually and proactively on message in presenting our institutional vision… And we must continually improve all we do to demonstrate the validity of that message—we must walk the talk of high academic performance and quality standards.” With this charge, and with the continued support of WCSU’s administrators, faculty and staff, WCSU will continue to grow and flourish, providing a vibrant educational environment with long-lasting benefits to its stakeholders.
Standard II
Planning and Evaluation

Description

There are four interrelated aspects of WCSU’s planning and evaluation process over the past several years: (1) strategic planning, guided by the “Values and Vision” process; (2) academic planning, comprising accreditation efforts and program review; (3) financial and facilities planning, including the Master Plan, the technology plan, annual Spending Plans and construction of budget models; and (4) the University Planning and Budgeting Committee (UPBC), a standing committee of the University Senate which balances academic and financial concerns.

Since 2005, we have been guided by the Strategic Vision and Plan developed from the “Values and Vision” process, which involved 76 focus groups and more than 650 stakeholders. This Vision has been adopted and internalized by the University community. It appears in operating procedures, departmental annual reports, performance appraisals, and financial planning.

Strategic planning is vital to the continued existence of the University. Strategic planning helps the institution strategize for the challenges of fluctuating finances, state aid, and college-age student demographics in Connecticut. As DATA FIRST tables reveal, the strategic planning process encompasses the academic plan and the financial plan. In 2011 the President formed strategic assessment teams to answer six key questions. The reports of these teams were presented in Spring 2012, together with priorities for decision making in the next strategic planning cycle (2012-2017).

Other University plans include the Facilities Master Plan, the annual Spending Plan, and the Technology Plan. In most cases, the needs and characteristics of graduate programs are not considered separately from those of undergraduate programs.

The Strategic Plan for WCSU typically covers a five-year period. During the period of evaluation, there are two strategic plans covering the periods 2006 to 2011 and 2012 to 2016. The Strategic Plan covering the period from 2006 to 2011 was unanimously endorsed by the University Senate on March 28, 2007 and served as the basis for planning at WCSU.

The development of the Strategic Plan attests to the cooperative nature of planning at WCSU. The process began in 2004 through Values and Visions, a series of personal and group interviews with representatives of all shareholders of the university. Ideas from these interviews were shared with the university community in a meeting and analyzed by the Extended President’s Advisory Committee (EPAC) and the University Planning and Budget Committee (UPBC). Based on issues identified during the interviews, five action teams were established to discuss strategic enrollment management, student success, comparative advantage, summer and intersession activities, and community partnerships, respectively; reports of the action teams were used by the EPAC and UPBC to draft a vision statement for – and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of – the university. A Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC), which included the chairs of the action teams, was then formed. With input from academic and
The University Senate, and people who attended open forums or who submitted comments online, the SPSC drafted the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan has six planning goals: (1) outstanding faculty; (2) location; (3) a diverse university community; (4) a range of quality academic programs; (5) a student-focused environment; and (6) affordable costs.

Six strategic priorities were established for 2011 to 2013: to maintain our outstanding faculty and staff with their strong commitment to students; to capitalize on WCSU’s location; to embrace our diverse university community; to ensure a range of quality academic programs; to foster an enriching and supportive student-focused environment; and to deliver outstanding value to students.

The Strategic Plan is supported by plans encompassing WCSU’s Facilities, Financial Planning and Information Technology. (See also, Appendix: Standard II: Number 1: Summary of Facilities, Financial and Information Technology Plans.)

The University maintains an Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, whose mission “is to improve the quality of information for problem solving, decision making, assessment, strategic planning, facilities planning, and effective management of the University.” This office helped organize CSU Assessment Conferences in 2007 and 2011. Its other duties include: producing faculty workload summaries, processing student evaluations of courses, and analyzing third-week student data from the Banner administrative computing system.

WCSU’s Strategic Plan covers a five-year span. In addition to its annual fiscal and operating planning processes, the university continually assesses progress towards its Strategic Plan. WCSU’s progress towards realizing its Strategic Plan goals is periodically assessed. Priorities are established and plans adjusted based on recent progress and current opportunities and challenges.

The University has a good track record of advancing its goals, in spite of fiscal challenges and other potential hurdles such as changing academic governance at the state level. Many of WCSU’s programs have achieved national accreditation or are proceeding towards national accreditation. These efforts are supported by rigorous planning to meet specific standards for achieving and maintaining accreditation.

WCSU regularly assesses its progress towards its Mission, Vision, and goals. In 2011-12 six Strategic Assessment Teams investigated “to what extent have we adhered to/implemented the goals of the Strategic Plan and how has it driven the progress of the university” by addressing the following questions: How real is the university’s public/private focus? Are we really taking advantage of our location? With the number of budget and contractual constraints we face, are we able to attract and retain outstanding faculty? How real is the university’s student-centered focus? Can we measure advances made in delivering quality academic programs? How can the university rebalance its financial model to achieve continuing success in times of state budget constraints and continue to deliver value to students? These teams reviewed relevant research, organized public conversations and focus groups on each topic, and analyzed data compiled by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (See Appendix: Standard II: Number 2 for more details of the assessment process.)
WCSU’s academic program review process is detailed in the Faculty Handbook. In 2007, it was established that all academic programs were to be reviewed every ten years. In Spring 2012, the scope of ten years was shortened to seven years. This change has been approved by the Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum and Academic Standards (CUCAS), the Graduate Council, the University Planning and Budget Committee (UPBC), the University Senate, and the University President. The President or a designee of the President can award reassigned time to faculty for activities related to program review. By May 1 of each year, the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) announces the programs to be evaluated the following year. Departments that are undergoing program review meet with the Provost/VPAA to discuss the review process and then elect a Departmental Program Review Committee (DPRC). The DPRC can be composed of all faculty members or a subset of faculty in the department. The DPRC conducts and writes an internal review, including an action plan. The internal review is based on the criteria listed in the Faculty Handbook. (See Appendix: Standard II: Number 3 for internal review criteria listed in the Faculty Handbook.) The DPRC recommends appropriate people to serve as external evaluators. The appropriate Dean, in consultation with the Provost/VPAA, selects a maximum of two external evaluators who read the self-study, conduct an on-site visit (if requested to do so), and write a report which is submitted to the appropriate Dean and the DPRC. If necessary, the DPRC revises the action plan based on the comments of the external evaluators and submits the revised plan to the Dean. After writing a summary statement, the Dean submits the self-study to the Provost/VPAA who reviews the material and forwards it to CUCAS (undergraduate programs) or the Graduate Council (graduate programs). These committees review the document and make recommendations to the Provost/VPAA who, in turn, makes recommendations to the DPRC and, if necessary, to the university community.

WCSU uses information gathered from surveys of students, graduates, and employers to assess the success of its education and recent graduates (14). The University used the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) from spring 2008 through 2011 to help assess student involvement in activities shown to enhance learning. After a one-year hiatus, a fifth year of NSSE is underway in Spring 2013. In addition, the University administered the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) for Fall 2009 through 2011 to help assess expectations of beginning students. The Strategic Vision Action Team analyzed the results of the NSSE and BCSSE surveys, the results of WCSU’s Survey of Recent Graduates (2006 - 2010), and labor market outcomes for the Connecticut State University System (2004 - 2009). The team then explored five key areas that needed improvement: readiness to be engaged and academically challenged in college; effectiveness of academic advising; streamlined pathways to degrees; readiness for employment and/or graduate school; and administrative decisions that affect students. Suggestions for how to improve these areas are included in the Team’s Report. (See Appendix: Standard II: Number 4.)

Another vital evaluative arm of the university is its Assessment Committee, which has been a standing committee of the University Senate since 1994. It includes student, faculty, and administrative representation. The Assessment Committee helps to facilitate program, school, and university-wide assessment. It also helps to coordinate assessment efforts with the UPBC and the Student Life Committee. The Assessment Committee is also charged with monitoring the Institutional Assessment Plan (which deals with assessing student learning outcomes) and offers assessment guidelines and suggestions to departments and offices.
WCSU also maintains an Office of Institutional Research that supports the data collection needs of the University’s planning process. In addition to collecting and disseminating admissions data, student performance data, and external information on trends in higher education, WCSU also coordinates the administration of surveys to faculty/staff, students, and recent graduates.

**Appraisal**

In general, the four interrelated aspects of WCSU’s planning and evaluation initiatives are complementary. Especially in recent years, there has been a strong alignment of strategic, academic, financial/facilities, and UPBC activities. However, work remains to be done in several areas. The facilities Master Plan has gone nearly seven years without a major revision. The Spending Plan could be better integrated with the strategic planning process by creating a five-year plan with several alternative scenarios. Data on student progression, retention, and graduation rates could be better utilized by EPAC, UPBC, and/or a campus-wide committee comprised of enrollment management and student affairs professionals. Comparable data on graduate and undergraduate programs has not been reviewed annually by committees with faculty representation.

Planning and evaluation processes are spearheaded by EPAC and the UPBC and involve committees of faculty and administrators across the University. The initial process that began in 2004 was led by a Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC) and quite extensive. It involved stakeholders inside and outside of the University.

In addition, WCSU utilizes other resources to evaluate its progress to advance its strategic plan. These include faculty-staff surveys, student surveys and analysis, and assessment committees.

In a Spring 2012 survey of faculty and staff (F-S Survey), there was strong consensus that WCSU uses its Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan as a basis for future planning, budgeting, and evaluation of programs. There also was strong agreement that the Vision and Mission provide a basis for future planning with accurate and current information. Respondents also agreed that University leadership shows integrity in management of University affairs.

Other results of the F-S Survey are largely gratifying. For instance, most faculty and staff are familiar with the University’s Mission statement (88.7% and 92.9%, respectively) and believe that WCSU emphasizes a personalized learning environment (90.6% and 88.2%, respectively) and interdisciplinary programs (80.2% and 86%, respectively). A high number of faculty and staff think that the University uses its Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan to provide a basis for staffing priorities (74.5% and 64.2%, respectively), establishing budgets (81.2% and 81.1%, respectively), setting technology priorities (77% and 67.7%, respectively), planning (89.8% and 83.1%, respectively), and evaluating its endeavors (80.7% and 78.8%, respectively).

Our network of evaluative and planning processes yields a wealth of fruitful, if at times unsettling, information. For instance, the University must factor a shrinking number of high-school graduating seniors into its projections. In 2007 there were 43,405 Connecticut high school graduates, but in 2012 there were only 41,541 – a decrease of 4.3 percent. The number of graduating seniors is projected to shrink to 38,416 by 2022 – a decline of approximately one percent per year. This trend will unquestionably impact prospective applicants since WCSU
draws students primarily from western Connecticut and eastern New York State. WCSU must also anticipate the continued decrease of state funding. State revenue as a proportion of total revenue shrank from 41.50% in 2007 to 35.15% in 2012 and is projected to reach 34.87% in 2013. In addition, scheduled salary increases and other commitments to the collective bargaining agreements must be considered in planning the University’s future.

One of the Strategic Plan Assessment Teams focused directly on our ability to be a thriving university in face of the region’s changing population and factors. We have incorporated these trends into our Strategic Plan from 2007 to the present; however, some implicit and explicit assumptions concerning enrollment, student preference, state support, and other factors no longer hold true. Using a newly developed five-year modeling tool for our finances, the Rebalancing Committee determined that if recent slowing enrollment and shrinking state support trends continue, the University will experience serious financial challenges. Therefore, it is imperative that we develop academic and support programs that attract more students from underserved populations and communities. For example, Hispanic/Latino/Latina students will comprise an increasing share of college-aged students in the next decade. WCSU will need to rethink its Vision and self-perception in bold and significant ways. It must make itself a regional or national destination campus in several programs. In addition, it must identify and develop its premier programs in concert with its sister schools, so that each of the four state Universities can provide a select number of premier programs that allow for meaningful distinctions among them, beyond their locations. In the new financial model, tuition, fee, and auxiliary revenue become much more important and the student body is much more diverse, both in geographic and ethnic terms.

WCSU’s methodical planning process has been tested by recent fiscal challenges faced by Connecticut public colleges and universities. In 2009, it became evident that the State of Connecticut was experiencing severe financial difficulties. In March 2010, the CSU System Office asked all four universities to submit a budget for FY2012 that included a 5%, 10%, 15% and 20% reduction as the legislature and the CSU System worked through the fiscal challenges. Instead of making arbitrary across-the-board cuts, WCSU reviewed its Strategic Plan, Mission, Vision and programs and engaged the campus community in assessing strategic priorities. Because of its careful approach to the crisis, the University has been able to weather reductions in state funding and maintain or improve student education with only modest increases in tuition. (See also, Appendix: Standard II: Number 5.)

An appraisal of WCSU’s six strategic goals reveals the strengths of planning, as well as some aspects that need bolstering:

**Outstanding Faculty**

Despite the challenges WCSU faces, the University has been able to attract and retain high-quality faculty. A committee comprised of faculty and staff has identified the challenges that that the University faces in attracting outstanding faculty. (See Standard V for evidence of faculty degrees and other qualifications.) WCSU is located in a high-cost-of-living area, while salaries are based on a state-wide university system and are not adjusted for cost of living within a given region or discipline. More specifically: The Cost of Living Index for Fairfield County is 42% greater than the overall U.S. Cost of Living Index and 12% greater than the overall Connecticut
index. While WCSU faculty salaries are 14.4% greater than the national average, there is concern that its premiums do not adequately offset the region’s cost of living factor. Also, since professors in business school disciplines earn approximately 33% more than the average of all disciplines; the Ancell School of Business faces an additional challenge in recruiting. (See the Institutional Effectiveness section of Standard V.)

The University recognizes the importance of this goal and the need to find solutions to the constraints it currently faces in light of the state-wide compensation system and existing collective bargaining agreements. (For more on faculty compensation, see Appendix: Standard II: Number 6).

Location

Many programs within the University, especially those in the visual and performing arts, enhance the teaching and learning environment by taking advantage of the cultural riches of New York City. For example, visits to Broadway theaters, Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, the Museum of Modern Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and art galleries in Soho all benefit WCSU students. We also capitalize on our location by hosting artists, performers and highly qualified speakers from the local area. These include CEOs, social activists, filmmakers, artists, musicians, actors, authors and politicians. Moreover, we take advantage of – and seek opportunities for – integrating global perspectives into curricular and co-curricular activities. For instance, the World Languages and Literature Department has hosted summer programs in Italy and Spain. Moreover, WCSU’s location in the tri-state area makes it ideally suited for career development and placement opportunities. Students profit from University career fairs attended by over 50 local companies from the industry and business sectors. The University also uses the robust co-op and internship programs it has established with Fortune 500 corporations, as well as small- and medium-sized businesses. Companies such as IBM, Boehringer-Ingelheim, Praxair, Sikorsky and Goodrich are among the businesses that host WCSU students. For the Education Department it is an advantage to be 65 miles from New York City to avoid competition from colleges and universities with similar programs.

Diverse University Community

Students at WCSU represent the diverse backgrounds of the City of Danbury and the surrounding service area in western Connecticut, where approximately 18% of the students are members of historically disadvantaged minority groups. In addition to ethnic, cultural, religious and other demographic diversity, WCSU also has a large population of veterans, working adults and other non-traditional students. With this diversity in mind, the University has implemented initiatives to assist military veterans and other students over 25 in adapting to the pressures of campus life. With increased economic instability causing many students to attend community college prior to a four-year university, WCSU has seen an increase in transfer students, comprising approximately 40% of all enrolling students, up from 30% in 2007-08. The institution recognizes that it will have to continue to foster strong relationships with the growing number of non-traditional students in order to retain them.
Quality Programs
Despite challenging fiscal circumstances, WCSU has utilized strategic planning to maintain and expand its areas of excellence. The University offers an Honors Program that incorporates an innovative interdisciplinary approach. In recent years, WCSU has added programs including a B.A. in Musical Theatre and an EdD in Nursing Education. Several of WCSU’s programs have earned national accreditation including those in nursing and teaching. The Ancell School of Business is seeking AACSB accreditation and was accepted into candidacy in Spring 2013. The creation of the School of Visual and Performing Arts was the result of strategic planning, and its new building is under construction. The Theatre Arts Department is seeking accreditation from NAST and NASAD for March of 2014.

Student Centered Focus
A strategic assessment team of faculty and administrators evaluated WCSU’s student-centered focus using information gathered from surveys of recent graduates (SOG), beginning student engagement (BCSSE) and engagement of seniors and first-year students (NSSE). The student focus was conceptualized as encompassing academic readiness, advising, obtaining a degree, obtaining employment and administrative decisions to support these outcomes. Students’ readiness to be engaged and academically challenged in college was indicated by the difference between expectations and actual experiences. The study found that the learning experience at WCSU was equivalent to other CSU schools by senior year; however, the First Year Experience (FYE) was not as successful. To enhance the first-year experience, beginning in Fall 2013, there will be an online FYE component in classes taken by most new students, and students will be awarded certificates of FYE completion.

Affordable Costs
In spite of the fiscal strain that WCSU has faced in recent years, the annual tuition, room and board, and fees have been held to approximately $20,000. This amount is slightly below the national average for public institutions (approximately $21,000) and well below the national average for private institutions ($36,000). Tuition at public institutions also increased at a rate of 5.6% between 2011 and 2012 while WCSU’s tuition increase was 3.8%. Through effective planning, the University has been able to maintain a lower than average tuition even with significant financial pressure and decreased state funds. Part-time tuition per credit hour remains attractive to out-of-state as well as in-state students at both the graduate and undergraduate level.

In response to concerns over the affordability of tuition, WCSU has made a concerted effort to enhance fundraising for student financial assistance. As a result, over the past four years there has been a 16.3% increase in the number of institutional grants (from 80 to 93), and a 33.6% increase in the total amount awarded (from $463,719 to $619,716; see also the attached table from the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment).

Assessment
WCSU maintains assessment and evaluation systems with periodic review of results. These procedures provide a means of organizing and clarifying the data used in decision making.
Accordingly, findings can effectively be incorporated in the strategic planning progress. The widespread involvement of stakeholders, together with the vitality of their discussions provide compelling evidence that WCSU has made substantial progress in establishing evaluation as a priority. Moreover, it is likely that further implementation of the resulting action plans will engage many more stakeholders in developing an ongoing institutional capacity, while making these processes even more transparent at the institutional level.

**Graduation and Retention**

A committee of faculty and administrators has reviewed WCSU’s graduation and retention rates. In the 2003 NEASC report, our graduation rate was 35% and current graduation data show that the rate of graduation for this group of students improved to between 40 and 42%. The strategic assessment team studying rebalancing of finances also recommended that campus processes be reengineered to remove some of the barriers to student progression, and thus increase retention and graduation rates.

WCSU surveys employers on the performance of WCSU co-op and internship students. The University also conducts annual surveys of recent graduates to ascertain their patterns of employment, graduate school activities and their evaluations of WCSU experiences. Fully 73.2% of WCSU baccalaureate recipients in 2010 obtained full-time work or graduate study. Unfortunately, this is down from 91.8% in 2007, reflecting Connecticut’s current economic problems. The percentage of those graduates enrolled in further education declined from 28.7% in 2006 to 9.4% in 2010. Despite these declines, 89% were satisfied with their education at WCSU and about the same proportion would recommend WCSU to a friend.

**Projection**

The University has seen substantial progress toward persistent and incremental development of planning and evaluation in all aspects of the institution, which has been facilitated by regular critiques at each stage of the process. Over the past decade, WCSU has grown physically, programmatically, organizationally, and demographically. In order to keep pace with rapid changes, the interrelated aspects of University planning and evaluation initiatives must be strengthened.

By September 2013, the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs will form a strategic enrollment management committee to examine thoroughly and systematically information on WCSU students and alumni collected over the past decade. This committee will share analyses of data on student progression, retention, and graduation rates with EPAC, UPBC, and other campus groups.

By September 2013, the Vice President for Finance and Administration will oversee the construction of a five-year plan for revenues and expenditures. Funding for continued accreditation efforts will be addressed in this plan, and preliminary results of the re-engineering of campus processes will be examined. As a result, the Spending Plan will be better integrated with the strategic planning process and several alternate scenarios can be explored.
Beginning in mid-2014, the Facilities Master Plan will be revised with the assistance of the Board of Regents and a team of private consultants. A careful review of the plan will ensure that it is properly aligned with strategic priorities.

WCSU will continue to use its planning process to identify weaknesses and threats and leverage its strengths to capitalize on opportunities. For example, the University has learned that it has not effectively leveraged its location. Accordingly, WCSU will seek to better leverage its location and to market its areas of excellence to attract students, including those from nearby New York State. The University Planning and Budget Committee (UPBC) has broad-based campus representation including administration and faculty from each of the academic schools; and members of the faculty senate. The UPBC will continue to play an influential role in tracking and monitoring the University’s progress in fulfilling its goals and objectives, as it is involved in discerning the areas to be improved. With the Strategic Assessment Teams’ current and future work, WCSU will consider the recommendations of the faculty and administrators reviewing each of the strategic plan assessment teams into its planning process.

Demographic trends in the state’s population and anticipated limitations on state funding necessitate that WCSU continue to effectively utilize the capabilities of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and incorporate the findings into the planning process. WCSU’s planning is long-term in scope and methodical. Its strategic planning will continue to involve realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. It plans for and responds to financial and other contingencies, establishes feasible priorities and develops a realistic course of action to achieve identified objectives. Institutional decision-making, particularly in the allocation of resources, is consistent with planning priorities.

The University has already begun to improve the alignment of its fiscal capacity with a sharpened focus on its scope of academic mission and services organized around the predominant goal of student success. Continued improvement will depend on the ability to address the major areas of need identified in WCSU’s previous and future self-study reviews. Their completeness and accuracy will be a major step in the pursuit of University effectiveness to be accomplished during a period of unprecedented fiscal stress.

WCSU will continue to face a difficult environment in which to achieve the six goals articulated in the strategic plan. However, the University has demonstrated the ability to adapt and succeed in spite of the recent challenges. The ability to forecast and foresee unfavorable trends and adjust plans accordingly are skills needed to the university to reach its goals.

The University has experienced a number of concrete changes involved in the development and incorporation of planning and evaluation efforts to effectively establish an integrated system of regular university-wide decision-making. These changes have been underway since the 2007 NEASC update in many areas of functional evaluation, especially non-instructional student support functions. The current cycle of strategic campus-wide planning has created a framework within which specific evaluation findings can be fully pursued through an integrative implementation process at the institution.

One of our key objectives is to provide students with a quality education at an affordable cost. This staple does not change, even in these challenging fiscal times. The University is taking steps
to improve the student experience based on the information gathered from students. Examples of these initiatives include MAPWorks, other enhancements to advising, and the ongoing re-engineering of campus processes from student recruitment to alumni success. We are confident that these efforts will improve students’ ability to be successful while at WCSU and after graduation.

**Institutional Effectiveness**

Structures and processes are in place to ensure the continued vitality of WCSU planning and evaluation. The proposed changes for 2013-14 onward will strengthen the interrelationships of the four main elements of planning and evaluation. Statistical information will be used to a greater extent to enhance the strategic planning and effective management of the University. Involvement of faculty teaching at both the graduate and undergraduate levels will be crucial to the development of a comprehensive approach to strategic enrollment management.
Standard III

Organization and Governance

Description

Higher Education in Connecticut

The State of Connecticut has eighteen public institutions of higher education: the University of Connecticut, including its branches; the Connecticut State Universities (CSU), which include Central, Eastern, Southern, and Western Connecticut State Universities (Western); twelve Community Colleges; and Charter Oak College.

Until recently, a Board of Trustees (BOT) governed Western and its sister CSU campuses. In 2010, the Connecticut Legislature established a Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) to replace the BOT, effective July 1, 2011 (see Appendix: Standard III: 1). The BOR formally replaced the BOT in January 2012 (see Appendix: Standard III: 2).

Board of Regents

The BOR governs seventeen Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (ConnSCU): Charter Oak State College (an on-line college), twelve Community Colleges, and the four CSUs (including Western). The powers and duties of the BOR are prescribed by statutes and further delineated in policies adopted by the BOR. The fifteen voting members of the BOR include nine gubernatorial appointees, four appointed by legislative leadership, and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Student Advisory Committee (SAC) to the BOR. The four non-voting BOR members are Commissioners of State agencies. BOR members and their competencies can be found on the BOR website (see Appendix: Standard III: 3). BOR members are required to adhere to the State of Connecticut's Code of Ethics for Public Officials.

The official duties of the BOR include establishing tuition costs, student fees, and financial aid policies. The BOR reviews and approves new programs and, in conjunction with representatives from the ConnSCU campuses, conducts searches for Presidents of the individual campuses. In addition, the BOR is active in developing and coordinating policies for higher education in the State of Connecticut.

The BOR is charged with reviewing, approving and maintaining the individual missions of the ConnSCU campuses. The BOR requested Vision and Mission statements from all ConnSCU campuses to use when writing their own mission statement.

The BOR meets regularly in accordance with a schedule established and published on their website. Minutes of past meetings and additional information can also be found on the BOR website.

The BOR has a SAC and a Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) (1). One student from each of the ConnSCU campuses serves on the SAC (elected by their respective student government associations (SGA)). The FAC consists of seven faculty members elected by their respective Senates: three from the CSUs (with one alternate), three from the Community Colleges (with one alternate), and one from Charter Oak College (with one alternate).
The first President of the BOR, Dr. Robert A. Kennedy, resigned in October, 2012; Dr. Philip E. Austin, former President of the University of Connecticut, is currently serving as the interim BOR President. A BOR Search Committee is in the process of conducting a search for a new BOR President; a System-wide Advisory Committee consisting of thirty-six ConnSCU representatives is assisting in the search.

Since the BOR is so new, development and insurance of its own effectiveness has not been established.

**Western Connecticut State University**

Dr. James W. Schmotter has been the President and Chief Executive Officer of Western since August 1, 2004. He is the official spokesperson for the University on policy and other University matters and reports directly to the President of the BOR. Seven people report directly to the University President: the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs, The Vice President for Finance and Administration, the Vice President for Student Affairs, the Vice President for Institutional Advancement, the Associate Vice President for Human Resources, the Chief Information Officer (Information Technology & Innovation), and the Chief Diversity Officer in charge of Multicultural Affairs and Affirmative Action. The Faculty Handbook, revised annually, clearly describes the authority, responsibilities and relationships of the BOR and the administration, faculty and staff at Western (see Appendix: Standard III: 3).

A Risk Management Committee and Campus Emergency Team also report to the President to ensure that the institution’s fiduciary responsibility is met.

New administrative hires include an Associate Vice Provost, four new permanent rather than interim Deans and a Director of Grants and Research.

Evaluating and monitoring Western’s effectiveness is a charge given to the BOR in the Connecticut General Statutes. A yearly evaluation of Western’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was conducted by the BOT in the past. Part of this evaluation included an annual survey given to faculty and staff and Western that dealt with organizational and presidential effectiveness. It is expected that the BOR will continue this practice.

**President (Chief Executive Officer):** The President meets weekly with the Vice Presidents and the Associate Vice Presidents during the academic year. The President’s Cabinet (composed of the Vice Presidents, the Academic Deans, the Dean of Students, the Chief Information Officer, the Director of Admissions, the Police Chief, the Director of Athletics, the Director of Affirmative Action and Multicultural Affairs, the Controller and the Director of Development) meets monthly. In addition, the President annually attends at least one faculty meeting of each School within the University, and he meets on an as-needed basis with the leadership of the Collective Bargaining Units within the University. The President also regularly seeks advice through attendance and engagement at many of the University Planning and Budget Committee (UPBC) and University Senate meetings.

The President interacts with students at club events, student performances and athletic events. He meets with the leadership of the SGA, the Pan Hellenic Council and the President’s Athletic Advisory Council, which he established in 2005. All students are invited to attend monthly “Pizza with the President” focus group sessions; between twenty and sixty students usually attend each of these events.
Additionally, the President meets regularly with the Foundation Board, its Budget and Investment Committee, and the Alumni Association Board. He is readily accessible to all campus constituents via e-mail or personal appointments.

Upon arriving at Western, President Schmotter initiated steps that led to the formation of a Strategic Plan, the basis of planning at our University. In 2004-2005, the Values and Visions process (a series of interviews with representative constituents of the university) was accomplished; results were shared with the University community and analyzed by an Extended President’s Advisory Committee and the UPBC. In 2005, five action teams were formed to focus on strategic enrollment management, student success, comparative advantage, summer and intersession activities, and community partnerships, respectively. In 2006, a Strategic Planning Steering Committee (consisting of the co-chairs of the Action Teams) was formed to draft a Strategic Plan. After input from the university community, including discussions at the Student Government Association and the University Senate meetings, the Strategic Plan draft was revised and, on March 28, 2007, was unanimously endorsed by the University Senate. Major university decisions, including budget decisions and university hiring, are guided by the Strategic Plan.

A Faculty-Staff survey was given in Spring 2012 to access the perceptions of faculty and staff in a number of areas. A majority of faculty and staff believe that Western's vision and mission statements and strategic plan are used as a basis for priorities in staffing (74.5% and 64.2%, respectively), enrollment goals (79.6% and 73.3%), and planning for the future (89.8% and 83.1%, respectively) (see Appendix: Standard III: 4).

**Division of Academic Affairs:** The Division of Academic Affairs is headed by a Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) who serves as the Chief Academic and Executive Officer for the University. The Provost/VPAA integrates and coordinates the academic activities of the schools and departments and makes recommendations to the President. She is responsible for academic assessment, coordinating the academic activities of departments and schools within the university, supervising academic personnel, allocating resources, executing Western’s strategic plan, implementing both quality assurance and university policies, serving as a student advocate, and promoting the university to the public. The Provost/VPAA is responsible for overseeing Media Services, Library Services, Institutional Research and Assessment, International Services, Sponsored Research and Administrative Services, the Advisement Center, Enrollment Management (Admissions, Registrar’s Office, Student Financial Services), and External Programs; the latter two (Enrollment Management and External Programs) are under the purview of the Associate VPAA who reports directly to the Provost/VPAA.

The University is divided into four schools and one Division: the Ancell School of Business, the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Professional Studies, the School of Visual and Performing Arts, and the Division of Graduate and External Programs. Each school has its own Dean.

Through the Graduate Division, the University is authorized to award Master of Arts, Master of Science, Master of Fine Arts, Master of Business Administration, Master of Health Education, and two Doctorate in Education degrees. All graduate programs have a Coordinator who reports to their respective School Dean.
Western has three external programs: two undergraduate degree-completing programs (Management and Nursing) and one master's degree (Health Administration) program offered in Waterbury, CT. The Associate VPAA oversees these programs.

**Shared Governance:** Western operates under an effective system of shared governance. Students, faculty, staff and administrators have multiple opportunities to express their opinions and contribute to decisions being made at the University through participation in or by attendance at committees, the University Senate and the SGA. Participation is possible at the BOR level through the SAC, FAC and attendance at BOR meetings.

The faculty at Western are represented by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). The faculty contract guarantees academic freedom and outlines the faculty’s professional rights and responsibilities. The other campus bargaining units include State University Organization of Administrative Faculty, Administrative and Residual, Protective Services, Maintenance and Service Unit, and the Administrative Clerical Bargaining Unit.

Western has a University Senate (as opposed to a Faculty Senate). The University Senate represents all professional employees (except the President); it was established in 1968 and last reorganized in 1991. Senators include one faculty member from each academic department, one librarian, one counselor, two administrators (level I - VII), two representatives from the Deans and Vice Presidents (only one of whom is a voting member), and one representative of the SGA. All senators serve a two-year term and are either elected by their departments or serve on a rotational basis. Changes in policies at the university level are required to go through the Senate. In addition, the Senate serves as a forum for discussion of issues relating to the university. All Senate meetings are open meetings, and all professional employees at Western can raise issues or express concerns and opinions at the Senate. Senate resolutions that are passed are forwarded to the President of the University for approval. The Senate has two procedural committees (the Agenda and the Nominations and Election Committees) and seventeen standing committees. Committee membership is mixed (administrators, faculty and students), and most people serving on committees are elected to their positions. Through many of these committees (such as the Academic Leave Committee, the Assessment Committee, the Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum and Academic Standards (CUCAS), the Graduate Council, the Promotion and Tenure Committee, the Terminations and Appeals Committee, and the UPBC), faculty, staff and students participate in shared governance (see Appendix: Standard III: 5).

The University President, Provost/VPAA, and other Vice Presidents attend Senate on a regular basis. These administrative personnel provide information for and/or engage in discussion with Senators on activities and issues important to our University. They also use Senate to provide input and direction on like issues. The administration has sought Senate’s help and guidance in forming key committees such as search committees, a Transfer and Articulation Policy (TAP) initiated by the BOR, and Distance Learning.

Western’s representatives to the BOR’s FAC and SAC are either Western Senators or they attend the University Senate meetings on a regular basis. These representatives inform Senate of activities and issues occurring at the level of the BOR. They also serve as Western’s voice to the BOR.
In February 1988, the University Senate established the position of Ombudsman in response to a recommendation of then President Dr. Roach. The Ombudsman is an AAUP member who is elected for a two-year term and can represent AAUP faculty, Administrative Faculty, and/or students.

Students participate in shared governance through the SGA, their representative on the University Senate, service on eleven of the standing committees of the Senate, participation on some departmental committees, and their representative on the SAC. Students residing on campus also express their needs and concerns through the Residence Hall Council. A Vice President for Student Affairs and a Dean of Student Affairs are available to assist and guide students.

**Curriculum and Programs:** The CSU-AAUP (Connecticut State University - American Association of University Professors) Collective Bargaining Agreement stipulates that the faculty within a department control the courses and curriculum of that department. Each school has its own curriculum committee, and there are two University-wide curriculum committees: CUCAS for undergraduate curriculum and the Graduate Council for graduate curriculum. At the May 2012 University Senate meeting, a resolution was passed making it easier for departments to make minor curriculum changes. For example, a change in the title of the course will now go directly from the department to the Provost/VPAA, thus bypassing the UPBC, the School Program Review Committee and the UPBC (see Appendix: Standard III: 6).

Many departments at Western offer distance education courses. Currently, a policy statement for such courses does not exist, but the Distance Education Committee is developing a statement for submission to the University Senate for discussion.

The program review process is detailed in the Faculty Handbook. In 2007, it was established that all academic programs were to be reviewed every ten years. In Spring 2012, the time period of ten years was shortened to seven years; this change has been approved by CUCAS, the Graduate Council, the UPBC, the University Senate, and the President of Western (see Appendix: Standard III: 7). The President or a designee of the President can award reassigned time to faculty for activities related to program review.

By May 1 of each year, the Provost/VPAA will announce which programs will be evaluated the following year. Departments that are undergoing program review meet with the Provost/VPAA to discuss the review process and then elect a Departmental Program Review Committee (DPRC); the DPRC can be composed of all faculty members or a subset of faculty in the department. The DPRC conducts and writes an internal review, including an action plan, based on the criteria listed in the Faculty Handbook. The DPRC recommends appropriate people to serve as external evaluators. The respective Dean, in consultation with the Provost/VPAA, selects a maximum of two external evaluators who read the self-study, conduct an on-site visit (if so requested), and write a report which is submitted to the respective Dean and the DPRC. If necessary, the DPRC revises their action plan based on the comments of the external evaluators and submits the revised plan to the Dean. After writing a summary statement, the Dean submits the self-study to the Provost/VPAA who reviews the material and forwards it to CUCAS (undergraduate programs) or the Graduate Council (graduate programs). These committees review the document and make recommendations to the Provost/VPAA who, in turn, makes recommendations to the DPRC and, if necessary, to the university community.

Program discontinuance can be initiated by a department (or departments if the program is interdisciplinary), CUCAS (undergraduate programs), the Graduate Council (graduate programs), the University Senate or the University President. If initiated by the department(s) or the President, the
request for discontinuance must be submitted in writing to CUCAS or the Graduate Council. CUCAS or the Graduate Council review the request and assess the effect of program discontinuance in terms of student impact, accreditation, certification, licensure, faculty positions, budget issues, and other programs. CUCAS or the Graduate Council sends its recommendation to the University Senate which, in turn, considers the issue. Within sixty days of the submission of the written request for program discontinuance, the University Senate sends its recommendation to the University President who, in turn, informs the University Senate and the BOR of his decision (see Appendix: Standard III: 8).

Programs that trend toward lowering enrollments can be evaluated according to procedures outlined in section 5.18 (Programmatic Adjustment and Redeployment) of the CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement. This evaluation can be initiated by the President alone or by the President and the Curriculum Committee.

**Appraisal**

**Board of Regents**

BOR meetings are open meetings; this enables employees of ConnSCU to participate in shared governance at the BOR level. In addition, the BOR President routinely sends newsletters to ConnSCU employees. These newsletters help keep professional employees updated on BOR activities and key events important to our University.

There is currently no mechanism through which the efficacy of the BOR is assessed. This includes internal and external assessment. It is expected that this issue will be addressed in the near future.

**Western Connecticut State University**

A complete overview of academic governance at Western is outlined above (in Description) and in the Faculty Handbook. The implementation of a Provost model in 2006 was a major structural change designed to support the Strategic Plan and to strengthen leadership on the academic side. It was imperative to place a greater focus on academics to undertake major transformation in ways to conduct teaching and learning, in the way it relates to external communities, and in the ways vice presidents relate to academic affairs. The Provost is the number two officer in the University. As chief academic officer, the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs has demonstrated leadership in major initiatives such as accountability and assessment, student retention, early alert and intervention processes, automation of forms, prioritization of school goals and budget reallocation, integration of learning and technology with Smartboard in classrooms, and course redesign.

Shared governance works well at Western. Administrators and faculty engage and work together effectively for the benefit of our students and our University. Two members of the University Senate and the NEASC Standard III team attended a conference on shared governance held by the AAUP in October, 2011; both members were astonished at how smoothly the administration and faculty at Western work together in comparison to many other schools which we learned about at that conference. As an example of collegiality and shared governance between the Administration and the faculty, the President of Western signed all resolutions the University Senate sent him in the 2011-2012 academic year and all but one resolution sent to him in 2010-2011; these resolutions were varied and included (but not restricted to)
new and revised policies and procedures, the formation of review committees, the election of Western representatives to the BOR, and the approval of curricular matters.

In Spring 2012, President Schmotter invoked article 5.18 on “Programmatic Adjustment and Redeployment of Resources” of the CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement. This article allows for assessment of programs with low enrollments. Two ad hoc committees were formed according to Article 5.18 guidelines in order to assess two low-enrolled graduate programs.

The May 2012 University Senate-approved changes in the approval process for minor curriculum changes should ease process hurdles for departments. In addition, this change will allow curriculum and budget committees more time to spend on major issues.

Program review will now occur every seven years rather than every ten years for both our graduate and undergraduate programs (see Appendix: Standard III: 7). This change will allow the University to identify program strengths and weaknesses sooner and to make the appropriate improvements in a shorter timeframe.

Western does not currently have a clear, written policy for distance education. However, the Distance Education Committee is working on a draft policy.

**Projection**

**Board of Regents**

Western will continue to be affected by the replacement of the BOT by the BOR. Communication between our campus and the BOR is critical. Regular updates have been provided by the BOR, our Provost, our Administration, and Collective Bargaining Units; these updates are expected to continue. In addition, Western’s representatives to the BOR’s Faculty Advisory Committee and Student Advisory Committee will continue to regularly inform Senate of BOR activities and to serve as Western’s voice to the BOR.

It is also expected that a mechanism to assess the efficacy of the BOR will be developed. Such a mechanism will provide for accountability of the BOR to the ConnSCU campuses and to the State of Connecticut.

**Western Connecticut State University**

Shared governance at Western works well and is expected to continue in the future. The relationship between the administration, faculty and staff is positive and interactive, and through our University Senate and its committees, it is anticipated that a cooperative atmosphere will be retained.

New administrative hires are expected to generate new ideas and initiatives at Western. The Associate Vice Provost will enhance the ability of the Provost Office to lead academic pursuits at Western. Having four new permanent rather than interim Deans should also assist in academic advancement. The hiring of a new Director of Grants and Research is indicative of the efforts made by Western’s current leadership to help the institution generate more private funding and will stimulate scholarship among faculty, administrators, and University staff.
In Spring 2012, faculty and staff were asked to complete a survey on the effectiveness of our institutional performance; a copy of this survey and its results are attached (see Appendix: Standard III: Table 2). Overall, the findings of this survey indicated that Western’s strategic plan and its organization and governance system work well, that the University manages its affairs with integrity, and that procedures were communicated clearly and are consistent with our mission, vision, goals and objectives. It is expected that the University will continue to strive to accomplish its stated goals and will continue to use its strategic plan as a guide. Further, it is expected that integrity and transparency in organization and governance will also continue.

Assessment of graduate programs should identify strengths and weaknesses in these programs. Western can use this information to better serve the needs of the citizens of Connecticut.

The curriculum changes approved by the University Senate in its May 2012 meeting will shorten the approval process for minor changes in courses. This should encourage academic departments to keep information about their programs current. In addition, it will permit the curriculum committees to devote more time to more significant curricular issues. This process is currently under revision for all curricular and programmatic issues, etc.

The Distance Education Committee plans to submit a Policy Statement for Distance Education to the University Senate.

Western will continue to deal with several challenges in the coming years, including balancing declining state funding with the University’s financial obligations. Articulation of our needs by our Administrators to the BOR is crucial. A second challenge relates to student retention. Implementation of the TAP initiative by the BOR should help address this issue. Recruitment of quality students is a third challenge. Our Admissions Department is implementing an alternate admission route to attract students who are highly motivated and who excelled academically in high school but are currently not being admitted to Western due to low SAT scores.

**Institutional Effectiveness**

Western frequently reviews the effectiveness of its organizational structure. Restructuring and personnel requests are placed regularly on the Vice Presidents meeting agenda. As new jobs occur we rank them and check their classification. Restructuring of offices, for example, the Division of Graduate and External Programs are reviewed by the Vice Presidents.

To better serve the departments and their students, a Theatre Department was created through a split of the Communications Department, and a Writing, Linguistics and Creative Process Department was created by splitting with the English Department. In addition, a new school, Visual and Performing Arts, was created and bylaws were developed.

The transparency in Western’s governance process has ensured a spirit of collaboration. This collaboration is evidenced by the inclusive nature through which the strategic plan was developed (Standard II) and with which the curriculum process was revised.

Each school has its own curriculum committee, and there are two University-wide curriculum committees: CUCAS for undergraduate curriculum and the Graduate Council for graduate curriculum. Departments and curriculum committees will continue to ensure that current and relevant information is at
the core of their academic offerings; curriculum committees will oversee the process of implementing new courses and major curricular changes. Whenever possible, streamlining for efficiency will be implemented but never at the risk of thorough program vetting.

The program review process is detailed in the Faculty Handbook. The recent (Spring 2012) decision to review programs every seven years instead of every ten years will ensure that all curriculum offerings at the University are current and operating at optimal level. Programs may also be recommended for discontinuance. A department (or departments if the program is interdisciplinary), CUCAS (undergraduate programs), the Graduate Council (graduate programs), the University Senate or the University President can initiate the process of program discontinuance.

In face of economic challenges, structural changes at the system level and disruptive innovation, Western Connecticut State University fulfills its mission. We take pride in the shared governance model.
Standard IV
The Academic Program

Description

A quality academic program is at the heart of Western Connecticut State University's Mission and the Vision Statement that guides our Strategic Plan (see Appendix: Standard IV: 1). The institution offers degree programs that embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with its stated mission and is based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education.

The University is comprised of four academic schools, with 39 undergraduate degree programs and 65 majors offered by the School of Arts and Sciences; the School of Professional Studies; the Ancell School of Business; and the recently created School of Visual and Performing Arts (established in 2006). In order to achieve WCSU’s Mission, undergraduate academic programs require students to complete a broad range of General Education courses (discussed in detail, below) and more extensive in-depth study within their chosen major.

The Division of Graduate Studies offers 17 degree programs and 5 certifications. During the fiscal year ending June 30, 2012, WCSU conferred over 1,000 degrees. In Fall 2012, 6,200 students were pursuing degrees ranging from the Associate’s to the Ed.D. (A precise breakdown follows below, under “Summary: Enrollment and Degrees.”)

Planning, implementation, and assessment of academic programs are accomplished through a shared governance process between administration and faculty. Programs and curricular changes are initiated at the department level based on documented needs and best practices in the field. Faculty are involved at all levels of academic oversight. Three University Senate standing committees are charged with ensuring that academic programs are consistent with WCSU’s Mission (see Appendix: Standard IV: 2). The faculty ensure curricular quality at the departmental level and assesses student learning. Proposals are processed through the appropriate school and the University Senate for approval. In the case of graduate programs, curricular proposals are further reviewed by the graduate council.

Each program of study has established a formal “program sheet,” available to students, documenting a recommended and coherent route through courses that constitute the program. These program sheets are utilized in the process of academic advisement to guide students efficiently through the requirements of their major programs. The BA in Communication serves as a typical example. A collection of program sheets for all academic programs is available online.

The Provost collaborates with the President in setting academic priorities and provides leadership for the academic deans and the faculty. The University Senate serves as the ultimate forum for sharing information and raising issues of concern to the faculty. Through periodic program review, faculty examine programs of study in contrast to those of peer institutions and in light of
local community needs and past experiences at WCSU to develop agendas for change that informs program-level strategic and comprehensive planning.

**Undergraduate** and **graduate** admission policies are described for students on the university website. WCSU admits undergraduate students who have graduated high school with a cumulative grade point average of “B-” or higher, and a variety of courses in fields such as English, mathematics and social sciences. Some programs have special criteria. For example, the Department of Music requires an audition for admission to any of its degree programs. (Other programs with special criteria include Nursing and Education.)

In order to remain in good academic standing and be granted a diploma from the university, undergraduate students must maintain a cumulative average of at least 2.0. Some programs, including those in Music and Education, have additional retention policies, such as minimum GPA for graduation (see Appendix: Standard IV: 3).

**Summary: Enrollment and Degrees**

In the DATA FIRST tables, fiscal year (FY) 2010 is used as the base year for most comparisons, and FY 2013 is used as the current year. In the case of headcount enrollment, the data are used from the official third week census: Fall 2009 data for FY 2010, and Fall 2012 data for FY 2013.

During the fiscal year ending June 30, 2012, WCSU conferred 1,101 degrees: 22 Associate’s; 912 Bachelor’s; 155 Master’s; and 12 professional doctorates (EdD). Of the 6,200 students enrolled in Fall 2012, 84.4 percent were pursuing Bachelor’s degrees, 0.8% Associate’s, 7% Masters, 0.8% EdD and 7% nonmatriculants. The breakdown of full-time equivalent (FTE) students followed a similar pattern, with 91% attributable to Baccalaureate students.

**Headcount by Undergraduate Major**

The total undergraduate population decreased by 4.6% between Fall 2009 and Fall 2012 (from 5,869 to 5,552). Nonmatriculants decreased by 7.5% (from 348 to 322), while Associate degree candidates increased by 38.2% (from 34 to 47) and Baccalaureate candidates decreased by 4.7% (from 5,487 to 5,230). (For a more specific breakdown of programs and enrolled students, see Appendix: Standard 4: 4.)

**Headcount by Graduate Major**

After two years of large decreases – from 748 to 622 to 592 – the graduate student population rebounded to 601 in Fall 2012; however, the decrease from 2009 to 2012 was 19.7%. The doctoral level experienced a decrease of 21.2%, similar to the decrease of 25.8% in teacher certification and other non-degree studies, and the decrease of 26.7% in Master’s level headcounts. The remainder of this section will focus on specific Master’s degree programs.

In terms of headcount enrollment, the top two graduate programs continue to be the MS Counselor Education (87) and the MS Education (84), although both have experienced decreases (13% and 47.2%, respectively). In contrast, the MSN Nursing has increased by 81.3% (from 32 to 58). Except for the 21.7% increase in MHA Health Care Administration (from 23 to 28), the other twelve Master’s programs have experienced enrollment declines. The MBA Business
Administration and the MFA Creative and Professional Writing experienced small decreases (11.1% and 15.2%, respectively), compared to the 60.5% decrease in MA History and the 56.5% decrease in MFA Visual Arts. In addition, MA Biological Sciences decreased by 71.4% and is not accepting any new candidates. (For a breakdown of “Credit Hours Generated by Department or Comparable Academic Unit,” see Appendix: Standard IV: 5.)

**Programs: Goals, Progress, Standards, Governance**

Programs are continually monitoring goals and progress and the extent of student learning and achievement. These efforts are summarized annually in the department annual reports (10). (Further appraisal of the work of the university in assessing its goals and progress is provided in sections 4.48 to 4.54.)

The Strategic Plan Assessment Team assesses WCSU’s quality standards on a university-wide basis. The 2012 report highlighted the university's change from assessing quality standards using an inputs model (emphasizing faculty, faculty qualifications, instructional resources, facilities, technology and quality of students) to an output model (emphasizing transformed learning, with a focus on assessment of student learning outcomes).

Consistency in quality across University programs is systematically achieved through shared governance and the efforts of the departments, the school, the Program Review Committees (PRC), CUCAS, the Graduate Council, and the General Education Committee. Program Review Committees examine and when necessary suggest revisions of a program's mission, goals, and/or objectives to ensure congruence with the University's mission. Department Program Review Committees (DPRCs) conduct their work over three years and often all of the department’s full-time faculty work on the review process. DPRCs identify program goals and needs over the next seven years and delineate action plans for achieving the goals of quality academic programs. The DPRCs make recommendations for external evaluation, which may or may not include on-site visitation, to the appropriate Dean.

Fulfillment of General Education requirements involves students successfully completing courses in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, math, computer science, and exercise science. Expectations for student learning and achievement are set by departments. Undergraduate students progress from introductory to advanced content in their major. Students are also exposed to a broad range of disciplines and methods of inquiry as they fulfill their General Education requirements.

Since the last accreditation visit, WCSU has added a number of graduate programs. Students at the graduate level are held to academic standards emphasizing greater mastery of the knowledge and skills of their discipline and receiving more exposure to professional development opportunities.

When courses are offered to both undergraduate and graduate students, student learning expectations are more rigorous at the graduate level. Examples include HIS 206 and 598 (History 1914-1939); HIS 318 and 536 (The Civil War); and HIS 212 and 507 (History 1945-present).

A policy for standards for faculty who teach graduate-level courses was approved in 2009.
A listing of required courses and goals for all undergraduate and graduate programs is published on the University website and in the appropriate catalogs. Each student is given an official program sheet that includes a listing of all prerequisites and graduation requirements in the major. Specific academic skills and knowledge to be acquired are listed in the university catalogs by program as student learning outcomes. For example, whereas the English (Literature) program emphasizes in-depth study of significant works in English, American and Western literature and development of critical thinking and writing skills, the newly-developed Musical Theater program offers a variety of experiential learning opportunities in musical theater that develop domain-specific knowledge, analytical skills, technical proficiency, career preparation and creativity.

WCSU’s Banner Web system features a Curriculum Advising and Program Planning (CAPP) program, allowing faculty advisors and students to assess student progress towards their major degree program requirements at any time. In addition, the University is in the process of adopting MAP-Works, an early alert and early intervention tool.

Advising students is the responsibility of faculty within a student's major, while undeclared students receive advising from the Academic Advisement Center. Career-preparation requirements are clearly described to students at the beginning of their WCSU studies. (The university’s Education Department offers fine examples of the manner in which career-preparation requirements are described to students.)

The WCSU undergraduate curriculum is designed to provide breadth and depth of knowledge in a given field, as well as a general education component that offers diverse learning opportunities. The graduate programs are designed to strengthen the academic and professional abilities of students by increasing their knowledge of specific subjects and improving their capacity for independent study. (For more on the design and depth of WCSU programs, see Appendix: Standard IV: 6).

A wide range of instructional methods is utilized including lectures, class discussions, student independent studies, internships, service learning, and cooperative learning, teaching and research assistantships, experiential learning and field studies, recitals, rehearsals, master classes, demonstrations, public performances, theatrical productions, exhibitions, critiques, group projects, and technology-enhanced instruction (see Standards VII and VIII for additional information on technology). Student instruction in information literacy is a priority, as made clear in the Principles of the University Mission. Teaching students information literacy skills is the responsibility of faculty, who build a variety of learning opportunities into their courses.

Support for faculty in enhancing information literacy is provided by the Information Technology and Innovation Department (IT), which provides training and follow-up help for faculty at all levels of programs and systems use. Moreover, the Instructional Technology Center, a collaborative effort of Academic Affairs and Information Technology & Innovation (IT, formerly University Computing), assists faculty in learning new technology and/or making better use of classroom-related technology, and the Student Technology Training Center provides
assistance and training for students in the use of university software and technology. It also offers program and technology assistance.

In addition, the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) offers a variety of faculty-led peer training sessions in the use of various classroom and educational technologies. CELT has been charged within the newly revised Online Policy with providing training opportunities and support to faculty.

At the undergraduate level, college-ready skills in the English language are assessed before a student begins classes via high school transcripts and placement exams. Development of college-level skills is emphasized via writing intensive (WI) courses and through an introductory course in Communication which all students take as part of their general education requirements.

The WI courses have specific criteria that emphasize the production of texts that have undergone careful analysis, research, critique, review, and revision. Most Writing courses are offered by the Writing Department.

English language skills are also promoted through a variety of challenging writing and speaking assignments across all departments and in many courses. Undergraduate and graduate capstone projects in many departments usually require substantial writing and speaking expectations, such as completing a thesis, an original research project, or a public presentation.

All undergraduate and graduate degree programs have been approved by the Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education and all academic program options with program sheets undergo review every seven year. This review begins with a faculty-led self-study and involves a departmental program review committee and an external evaluation. (For more on the review process, see Appendix: Standard IV: 7).

Academic planning is coordinated by the Office of Academic Affairs, with the Provost, working with the deans and faculty. Existing programs are reviewed by departments, schools, and governance committees. Standing committees of the University Senate, review programs for assessment of student learning.

The Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum and Academic Standards (CUCAS) is charged with reviewing undergraduate programs; the Graduate Council is responsible for review of graduate programs.

Programs with external accreditation are reviewed by their accrediting bodies. In addition to accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, the Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education, and the Connecticut State Department of Education, several graduate and undergraduate programs (e.g., Administration and Supervision, Chemistry, Counseling, Music, Nursing, Social Work, and Education) are accredited nationally and reviewed by discipline-related agencies.

A 2012 faculty survey indicated that 62.5% of faculty and staff agreed that “WCSU provides sufficient resources to improve programs and instruction” – in spite of the fact that Connecticut’s fiscal crisis and budget constraints have impacted WCSU significantly in recent years (for instance: TK20 expenditures, money spent on accreditation, faculty development grants, CELT grants, and more).
WCSU has made many changes to courses and processes over the past 10 years. While few fell within the boundaries of “substantive change” which required Commission communication and approval, two that did were the creation of the EdD in Instructional Leadership, the EdD in Nursing and the Media Production Program. The first accredited by NCATE in Fall 2009 and described in more detail in the Graduate Degree section and the second begun in Fall 2012.

Procedures for discontinuance of undergraduate and graduate programs are in place and have been reviewed (Painting, for example).

WCSU offers students alternate education sites. The Waterbury campus is on the grounds of Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC) (35). The online Learning course management system provided by Blackboard, as provided in the state contract for the ConnSCU system is used as a course delivery platform. (For more on this issue, see Appendix: Standard IV: 8.)

**Appraisal**

WCSU is proud of the quality of undergraduate and graduate academic programs. Current challenges include the University’s commitment to full implementation of the Strategic Plan; the state budget crisis, changes in the state’s higher education governance; and changing state demographics.

As state aid to the Institution declines, efficient and effective resource allocation grows more challenging and more crucial. Examination of the Data First forms shows a total undergraduate population decrease of 4.6% between Fall 2009 and Fall 2012 (from 5,869 to 5,552). Nonmatriculants decreased by 7.5% (from 348 to 322), while Associate degree candidates increased by 38.2% (from 34 to 47) and Baccalaureate candidates decreased by 4.7% (from 5,487 to 5,230). Between FY 2010 and FY 2012 enrollments in the individual schools have fluctuated between -7% and +2%. While the university and individual schools did not show significant change, some individual programs have changed significantly (see Appendix, Table 2). The 2012 report of the WCSU Strategic Plan Assessment team concluded that: "Using a newly developed five-year modeling tool for WCSU’s finances, the Rebalancing Committee determined that if recent enrollment, state support and other trends continue, WCSU will experience serious financial challenges. It will face successive years of significant deficits, forcing staff and service reductions. These, in themselves, will prevent any further realization of the strategic plan’s vision of providing the best of a private liberal arts education at a public-education price point."

If a program has too few students the department may have trouble offering necessary classes. WCSU policy has been that classes with fewer than 12 students are subject to cancellation (see Appendix, Table 3). However, low enrollment in a program does not necessarily mean that resources are being wasted or that a student’s progress is impeded. While there was only one BS Elementary Education and Political Science major in FY 2012, there were 52 Political Science majors and 270 Elementary Education majors. Since all the courses taken by that one student are also taken by the other Political Science and Elementary Education students, the University can efficiently provide for some low-enrollment programs.

Advising is an area that can be improved, as indicated by the results of an electronic survey sent to all students in the spring 2012 semester by the Strategic Plan Assessment team (38). Of
respondents to this survey (mainly undergraduates), 24% identified better advisement as the major vehicle for providing better academic programs at WCSU.

The Academic Program Review Process recently became a focus of the University. In the Spring 2011 semester an Ad Hoc Graduate committee conducted an initial review of each graduate program. WCSU's Provost reviewed the committee recommendations for each graduate program and requested that all programs be reviewed on a five-year cycle, rather than on the former 10-year cycle. Guidelines approved by the University Senate in April 2012 established that all programs will be reviewed on a seven-year cycle.

Connecticut has been drastically reducing its support of higher education. Constant budget reductions place a strain on resource planning, which is coordinated through Finance and Administration and described in detail in Standard IX. Nevertheless, WCSU has significantly increased support of student learning, as reflected in number of funded faculty lines. In Fiscal Year 2003 (the time of the last comprehensive accreditations visit), WCSU had a total of 191 funded faculty lines. In FY13 (the current budget year) 232 faculty lines are fully funded in the approved budget. This represents a 21% gain of 41 funded faculty lines in the 10-year period since the last self-study.

A reflection of WCSU’s commitment to enhance programs, in spite of fiscal strains, is the level of new program funding. The University has committed significant resources to developing new programs, especially at the graduate level, and supporting efforts to upgrade existing programs to meet relevant national accreditation standards and workforce needs. WCSU spent an average of $158,000 per year for direct accreditation expenses for FY03 to FY12, for a total of $1,586,214 over this 10-year period. These numbers include the expense for fees paid to the accrediting body, work by consultants and faculty on accreditation reports, travel expense, etc. It does not include program costs or staff enhancements that were incurred to meet accreditation standards. If these were included, the total would be far greater.

**Projection**

The academic program is the strength of WCSU but it must continue to evolve dynamically and flexibly to address issues of student graduation rates, student retention, and student attainment of desired competencies. Subsequent sections in Standard IV will address the academic programs or processes which are being evaluated and revised, including:

- A reassessment of the general education program, ensuring that it is unique to the needs and resources of WCSU and is also effectively aligned with the needs of students transferring from other state institutions of higher education by fall 2013.

- A revised First Year Experience (FYE) program that includes and meets the needs of all incoming freshman. Deans currently working with faculty and plan to submit recommendations in fall 2013. Arts and Sciences faculty will pilot 3 areas in fall 2013: 1. University Navigation Skills: Extended Orientation (FYE: University Success Factors) 2. Core Academic Competencies completed in the first year and 3. Orientation to Major: Introductory course in major or a specific seminar.
Effective oversight of academic advising, addressing student concerns that advising not be a pro forma process and faculty concerns that students commit to and complete the advising process every semester to facilitate effective academic planning by ???

More effective design and implementation of the program sheets used by students to assess their graduation requirements and progress effective ???

Greater access to all course syllabi by students and faculty and the continued improvement of syllabi to clearly state learning outcomes, demonstrate the academic content of courses, and provide clear assessment criteria upon completion of process re-engineering kicked off the latter part of March.

**Undergraduate Degree Programs**

**Description**

In order to achieve WCSU's Mission, academic programs require students to complete a broad range of General Education courses and in-depth study within their majors. Students must complete their major’s course work at the intermediate and advanced levels. Programs have published appropriate rationales which demonstrate clarity and order. Most offer adequate space for students to take unrestricted electives, though state and accreditation requirements in some majors leave little room for elective courses (e.g., elementary education). All undergraduate program sheets are available online.

**General Education**

WCSU has taken steps to enhance its General Education program. We have an excellent balance of liberal arts knowledge such as critical thinking and professional workforce skills. We offer our students a holistic learning experience that we believe is more expansive and wider reaching than the offerings of community colleges.

The General Education Task Force developed a definition of “The Educated Person” based upon the essential learning outcomes for college students enumerated in the AAC&U LEAP initiative. The General Education Committee adopted this definition, which was approved by the Senate, and used it to develop objectives for the existing General Education program. However, the definition needs greater attention and publication in order to be fully effective.

General Education is based on a distributed requirement model the purpose of which is to expose students to the broad spectrum of human knowledge and mode of inquiry. Students must take a number of credits from prescribed areas based on disciplinary boundaries. A student’s General Education accounts for 42 credits of the degree program. These credit hours are drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: 3 credits in Oral Communication skills, 15 credits in Humanities, 12 credits in Social and Behavioral Sciences, 10 credits in Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Computer Science, 2 credits in Exercise Science. These prepare students for life-long learning. Course credit is documented by way of the standard Carnegie credit hour metric, regardless of venue (classroom, distance education, summer, intersession, accelerated, etc.) and is generally expected to be completed (but is not required) prior to undertaking major program course work.
In Spring 2012, the ConnSCU Board of Regents for Higher Education approved a new transfer articulation policy. First, it calls for common general education competencies, in alignment with NEASC Standards and with AAC&U LEAP competencies across all Connecticut state universities, community colleges, and the Charter Oak College. To ensure that students transferring from the community colleges to any of the CSU’s can do so smoothly, the new policy requires establishment of common “pathways” to graduation for each major. WCSU is utilizing this opportunity to revise curricular practices with respect to general education, majors, and assessment.

Expectations for catalog descriptions have been developed. These include the expectation that all departments will have clearly defined student learning outcomes for their programs which are necessary for program and course development, clear and organized instruction, and proper assessment.

The Major

Major programs provide graduates with breadth and depth of knowledge in their chosen field. Majors at WCSU, including options, requires between 33 and 70 credits of concentrated study within a specific area. Students are asked to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of their major and its connections to the world. In order to help students synthesize their coursework and experiences and demonstrate in-depth knowledge, most majors offer a capstone course or other learning experience. For many majors this may be a senior seminar or research seminar. For example, education majors participate in a student teaching experience in their last semester which counts for 12 academic credits.

Appraisal

The E-Series data show 84% of programs indicated that they had developed student learning outcomes and 75% indicated that the outcomes were available in a location easily available to students such as on the university’s Website, in the catalog, on course outlines, or in syllabi. On websites and in catalog entries for the sample of departments, 75% have published student learning outcomes; 81% have a mission statement or departmental objectives which are in alignment with the university’s mission; and 81% have objectives based on national standards. (For a list of accredited programs, see Appendix: Standard IV: 9.)

A sample of program sheets reveals that most programs allow students 17 to 51 credits of unrestricted electives. In some cases, such as Elementary Education with a major in Anthropology, a requirement of over 90 credits of specified work beyond general education requirements leaves little or no room for free electives; this is due to the need for these students to develop both a breadth and depth of knowledge in education as well as in their chosen areas of concentration. All the sampled programs had made at least minor updates within the past 10 years. The format of program sheets hasn’t changed in over 20 years and includes outdated data resulting in confusion to students and faculty. It is recommended that program sheets be redesigned for clarity. (More on the program review process is found in Appendix: Standard IV: 10.)
In recent months, changes instituted at the Board of Regents served General Education is moving to a competency model to clarify and be more consistent with the university’s mission. A systematic assessment of the general education program is in progress.

The self-study survey of syllabi for academic year 2011-2012 conducted by Standard IV self-study committee indicated that 83% of syllabi showed alignment between the content listed on the official course outline. 28% of the courses listed learning outcomes on both the course outline and the syllabi; 48% of syllabi contained learning outcomes that were clearly connected to the content; and 100% of the syllabi were in alignment with WCSU’s Mission. The self-study assessment found that many of the course outlines had not seen any significant changes in some years. In some programs course outlines had been recently updated within a department but the current updates were not on file with the university. Moreover, the content listed on syllabi was not always in alignment with the content on the course outlines.

Student surveys were examined to determine student satisfaction with their WCSU experience. Eighty percent of seniors surveyed between Spring 2008 and Spring 2011 evaluated their experience at WCSU as excellent or good, and 75% stated that they would probably or definitely go to WCSU if they could start all over again (WCSU NSSE Surveys); these numbers are similar to those from the other Connecticut State Universities (76%) but are below the average of universities in the same Carnegie Class (83%). When first-year students are surveyed, 76.5% rate their experience at WCSU as excellent or good, and 72% would definitely or probably go to WCSU again if they were to start all over; these numbers fall below those of the other CSU’s (76%) and also below the average for universities in the same Carnegie Class (85%).

Student attitudes toward the general education program at WCSU mirror those toward the university: 81% of seniors felt that WCSU had contributed to their acquisition of a broad general education which is similar to the attitudes of seniors at other Connecticut State Universities (CSUs) and slightly lower than other universities in the same Carnegie Class (Appendix, Table 1). Meanwhile, 77% of first-year students agreed with this statement which is slightly lower than the average of 81% for the other CSUs and similar Carnegie Class universities.

Faculty perceptions mirror those of the students: 92.8% believed that WCSU provides a strong Liberal Arts foundation to students; 88.6% felt that students developed strong skills in communication, problem solving and critical thinking; and 75.9% felt that WCSU emphasizes a strong background in information technologies. Only 53.1% said WCSU provides an effective first-year experience for incoming freshmen; 65.2% felt that mathematics and writing placement procedures are transparent and easy to understand for faculty advisors. The results of these surveys informed these changes: Design of Math Emporium, conversion from distribution to competency based programs; renewed emphasis on FYE.

Retention

Currently WCSU has a 73.2% retention rate of first-time, full-time undergraduates, while nationally the rate at comparable institutions is 78.2%.

To address concerns with respect to the first year student perceptions, success, and retention WCSU is examining a number of possibilities including student success factors in existing 100 level courses and learning communities. The faculty bolstered the First Year Experience and
strengthened first-time student retention. In February 2013, WCSU faculty endorsed a tiered competency approach to general education. A number of FYE enhancements have been drafted and are currently being piloted (see “Projection,” below). Additionally, the Process Reengineering Committee recommended elimination of policies and practices that impede retention and graduation rates.

**Projection**

As a thorough appraisal of the undergraduate program reveals, a number of issues need attention. Steps are being taken to ensure all programs identify and publish their objectives and learning outcomes as detailed in the summary of this section.

**Retention**

The General Education Committee will develop a complete proposal of a redesigned competency-based general education curriculum during the summer of 2013. The proposal (and likely a few variations) will be vetted by the full faculty in the fall of 2013, and implementation will take place in fall 2014. Alongside these efforts a new first year experience will be created. WCSU has piloted several small versions of an FYE, and the lessons learned from those pilots are central to the new design.

In the first FYE pilot, a small group of students took part in a college skills seminar developed by the psychology department. Among the topics in this course were basic academic skills like time-management, study skills, critical reading skills as well as some essential college navigation skills such as registration processes and schedule planning. Results of this pilot suggested that while some of the topics were a benefit to the students, one size does not fit all. Several students felt it was too basic and others needed more time on study skills.

In the second FYE pilot, faculty developed a larger program that was based on reconfiguring Freshmen undergraduate classes to include three of five academic skills (information literacy, critical thinking, research, writing, and ethics) and at least two university success factors (co-curricular involvement, support services, organizational skills, technology skills, working in groups). Students were to take three FYE courses in their first year. This program had a minor positive impact on retention if students enrolled in one of these courses, but there was no added benefit if they enrolled in two. There were no measures of the success of the academic piece (no assessment) and no student ever completed three.

WCSU has tried variations on learning communities in two separate initiatives. In both cases, students expressed some frustration with this model (it was too much like high school, they couldn’t change any classes) and in the second iteration, Explorers, the impact on retention appears to have been negative. However, in the Explorers program students did express a desire for more information on things like registration processes, planning their education, finding advisors and finding support.

In each of these pilot studies, one hindrance has been the inability to test it university-wide, due to budget constraints. So, the current proposal is based on lessons-learned, best practices, the one cohort model at WCSU that seems to benefit retention, and sustainability in terms of budget. The details are as follows:
1. University 101: University navigation skills are essential to supporting progress toward degree, learning how to navigate basic registration processes and learning how to get the support needed throughout a student’s career at WCSU. Many students take a first semester writing course, so this is a natural location that does not impact budget or scheduling. UN1101 will be largely developed by the student services side of the house, with guidance from faculty. Essential to the success of this embedded experience are the following: a. points must be attached to the assignments, b. some of the content will be based on the writing placement (more advanced students will be able to opt out of some of the study habits, for example), c. assignments will require students to meet with people around campus (advisors, career center, tutors, and so on) so that they familiarize themselves with their resources.

2. Under the new model of tiered competencies, first year competencies will be identified and assessed. These competencies will likely be writing tier 1 & tier 2, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, critical and analytic thinking. These will be defined by the General Education Committee in the new curriculum. Clear definitions of learning outcomes will be included and assessed.

Summary of Action Steps

In order to address these issues, WCSU will take the following actions:

- Syllabi will be in compliance with requirements and expectations by September 2013.
- Program review procedures were adopted in 2012 and as a result a schedule of course outline review has been written.
- In order to comply with state articulation requirements and to facilitate assessment and curriculum development, a tiered-competency based General Education program is being proposed and considered by the faculty. If this process moves forward, it will be developed by September 2013 and implemented by September 2014.
- A new freshman experience program with clearly stated outcomes and University 101 course will be developed by September 2013 and implemented by September 2014 (see above).

Graduate Degree Programs

Description

The Graduate Mission Statement guides Graduate Studies at WCSU (53). Seventeen graduate programs are offered, including the recently developed and jointly offered (with SCSU) Doctorate in Education (EdD), which launched in Fall 2012.

Expectations of graduate programs regularly exceed those of undergraduate offerings in the same departments. Courses are more theoretical and are presented at more advanced levels, often in accordance with the requirements of accrediting bodies. The MA in Counseling, for example, fulfills Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP) requirements. Fulltime faculty in the Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership program are granted
reassigned time for research in their field. Campus-wide, graduate faculty are expected to conduct research and produce scholarship that informs their graduate teaching. WCSU librarians work with departments and faculty to ensure sufficient library holdings and electronic databases for graduate programs.

The Division of Graduate Studies oversees Graduate Admissions, supports Graduate Council and reports to the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Division maintains a website containing comprehensive information about graduate admissions, degree programs, and courses. The Graduate Catalog (available in print and online) also contains this information. A Graduate Open House is held every April. The Division also supports recruitment efforts for the Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership and the Master of Arts in Teaching.

The Graduate Council, a standing committee of the Senate, recommends graduate policy, approves programs, and maintains academic standards. (For more on graduate teaching and faculty, see Appendix: Standard IV: 11.)

Graduate Admissions and the departments follow standards published in the Graduate Catalog in admitting graduate students. Requirements concerning undergraduate GPA, major subject area, writing ability, and special prerequisites in the discipline are upheld.

Rationale for graduate degrees are stated in the Graduate Catalog, on university and department web pages, and in course outlines and syllabi. Adherence to their stated standards and learning objectives, individual graduate programs are designed to advance students substantially beyond the requirements of corresponding undergraduate programs (see also Appendix: Standard IV: 12).

All graduate programs at WCSU require at least one of the following: a comprehensive examination, a capstone course, or another culminating experience in which students demonstrate successful learning. For example, the MBA emphasizes diverse skills in business research; science courses require lab work; and the MA in History has a required research course. Master’s programs also ensure the development of research skills at an appropriate level. The EdD in Instructional Leadership program develops students’ research skills sequentially, culminating in a dissertation. Most of the graduate degrees prepare students for career preparation and professional practice. The two MFA programs instruct students in professional practice as well as in creative genres and methods. The Ed.D.in Instructional Leadership instructs students in the methods employed by instructional leaders and researchers in the field (see also, Appendix: Standard IV: 13).

Student learning outcomes have been defined for all graduate degrees. They are listed in the Graduate Catalog, course outlines, syllabi, department handbooks, and are available online. Accrediting bodies have judged that learning outcomes in some departments, by far have met their standards as evidenced by specialized accreditation approval. 42% (8) of a total of 17 graduate programs are accredited by specialized bodies. In others, course and program requirements match or exceed the expectations found in graduate programs at comparable institutions. For example, the MFA in Writing reported

Program coordinators maintain contact with alumni/ae of graduate programs. The EdD in Instructional Leadership and MFA in Writing programs in particular make use of graduates as
instructors and visiting lecturers for future cohorts. The Counselor Education program tracks the licensure for its graduates. Such indicators measure the success of degree recipients in subsequent licensure, certification, and career advancement.

In 2010 the Graduate Division established general guidelines for departments to determine the qualifications for faculty teaching at the graduate level, and many departments have developed and now enforce their own special guidelines. Departments expect that graduate faculty will be productive scholars. The Ancell School of Business, for example, adheres to the AQ (academically qualified) and PQ (professionally qualified) designations recommended by AACSB.

Appraisal

While the growth of graduate programs at WCSU is indicative of positive development, this growth has placed additional pressure on university resources. Since the opening of the Science Building in 2006, laboratories have been adequate for graduate-level research in Biology and in Earth and Planetary Sciences, but these programs are constrained by budget and space limitations.

Most departments have adequate full-time faculty for graduate instruction. Exceptions include the Biology graduate program, which is currently not admitting MA students, and the Finance department, which is conducting searches for new tenure-track faculty. Some of the most successful programs, such as Counselor Education, Nursing, and MHA need additional resources. Economic conditions over the past several years adversely affected decisions to recruit and employ needed faculty. Programs had to limit expansion. Due to its shortage of faculty, Counselor Education has a multi-year applicant waiting list.

Holders of graduate degrees have succeeded in the workforce and in doctoral studies. Graduates of the MFA in Creative and Professional Writing, for example, have published books and been featured in anthologies and journals. Others have accepted positions as communications executives, speechwriters and advertising consultants at major companies; still others have found success as playwrights, screenwriters, and teachers. Three recent MAs in English and History have completed their Ph.D. study and have accepted academic positions. MBA graduates have gained positions of high responsibility in businesses around the world. EdD, MS, and MA recipients in Education have in many cases advanced. MS in Music Education recipients constitute half of the public school music teachers in Connecticut. MFA in Visual Arts graduates have obtained teaching positions and have given individual shows in prestigious Manhattan galleries. These graduate success stories should be more widely disseminated and a more systematic collection of data on graduates needs to be implemented and data analyzed.

Projection

Since 2011 the University has examined the future of graduate education at WCSU, determining the place of graduate learning in the Strategic Plan, the relative size of the graduate student population within the institution, and the future configuration of the Division of Graduate Studies. The significance of graduate education is growing in the light of changing demographics. United States Census researchers have projected the continued growth of the working-adult population and the decline of the high school-age population in the Northeast.
from 2011 to 2021. WCSU’s Marketing Committee has begun to promote graduate programs in cost-effective social media. In response to a report from the Ad Hoc Graduate Studies Committee comprised of faculty, the Division of Graduate Studies was restructured in 2011, elimination of the position of Dean of Graduate Studies and transference of responsibilities and duties to the Associate VPAA, to insure greater focus and intentional strategic planning.

During academic year 2013-2014 the University will continue to address issues of scarce faculty lines and other resources in its programs.

**Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit**

**Description**

WCSU is authorized by the ConnSCU Board of Regents to confer the undergraduate degrees (BA, BS, BBA, and BM in a variety of academic and professional disciplines), and the MA, MAT, MS, MHA, MBA, MFA, MSN and the EdD at the graduate level. All programs follow Connecticut’s Office of Financial and Academic Affairs for Higher Education Connecticut State Office of Finance and Academic Affairs for Higher Education’s official Program Inventory and are in compliance with the Rules and Regulations for Licensure and Accreditation of Institutions and Programs of Higher Education outlined by the state of ConnSCU Board of Regents for Higher Education. The five certificate programs offered are appropriately named for their specialization (The Certificate for Intermediate Administration and Supervision, the Advanced Certificate Program in Interdisciplinary Gerontological Studies, the new Online Applied Behavior Analysis Graduate Study Certificate, Clinical Mental Health Counseling, and School Counseling).

A review of undergraduate programs reveal that 100% of the programs meet the minimum of 120 credits and a number of majors require additional credits for graduation. Programs exceeding 125 credits include: Elementary Biology (126), Music: Jazz and Classical Voice (127), Elementary Education: English, English Writing, and History/SS (128), Medical Technology (129), and Music Education (131). All graduate degree programs require at least 30 credits.

All courses required for graduation are listed on the program sheets. Departments establish course rotation plans in order to guarantee that courses will be available for students to graduate in four years if they attend school full-time. This information along with good advising helps students plan their course needs for graduation.

The university has an established governance process for oversight of degree programs and courses, approval of new courses and programs, and changes to existing courses and programs. Specific roles and responsibilities are clearly articulated by the university, published in the Faculty Handbook.

The Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs has overall responsibility for the entire area of academic affairs and the total instructional program of the University, as well as enrollment management. The school deans oversee and assess the curricula and quality of instruction and the assignment of duties to personnel within each school.

In Academic Year 2011-2012, 145 undergraduate and graduate program and course changes were logged in the WCSU Curriculum Development SharePoint. The process of governance
became bottlenecked with proposals, creating an impetus for change in curricula review. As a result a redesign of SharePoint was commissioned and was carried out effectively.

In Fall 2012, WCSU and Southern Connecticut State University began jointly offering the EdD in Nursing Education. This EdD has been licensed by the ConnSCU Board of Regents and approved by NEASC.

The evaluation of student achievement is based on successful course completion and meeting graduation requirements. The award of degree credits is appropriate to the degree level to which they are applied. Graduate candidates must take all course work at the graduate level, and advanced undergraduate candidates may take graduate level courses on a limited basis with permission from their department.

The course syllabus is a critical instrument for sharing clearly stated learning outcomes. In 2011 a syllabi template was developed and deceminated university-wide. Departments ensure that assessment of learning objectives and award of course credit are consistently applied across the discipline.

WCSU policy stipulates that Writing and Mathematics skills are assessed after a student is admitted, but before s/he begins classes. A student who needs remedial work in one or both areas must arrange to complete it during the summer or at another institution before completing 24 credits at WCSU. Faculty across the CSU and community college systems are now meeting to establish clear guidelines and processes for how such support will be offered in college courses for students who need it.

Students are not permitted to enroll in an advanced course until completion of basic courses. For example, Students in Nursing, Medical Technology, and in the Sciences requiring CHE 110 and 120 are required to take the Chemistry Placement Exam. Students registering for PHY 110 or 120 must take the Physics Placement Exam.

In the Summer of 2011 all courses were reviewed to be in alignment with the NEASC Policy on Credits and Degrees. The university has adopted the NEASC Commission and Federal definition of the credit hour (one hour is equal to one hour of classroom time and two hours of student work outside of class). All academic units of WCSU adhere to this definition of a student credit hour.

While the credit-hour issue has been addressed, the self-study review of sample WCSU syllabi indicated that while all syllabi list class dates and times, some syllabi do not clearly articulate out-of-class assignments and activities.

WCSU provides students with a variety of opportunities to go beyond the classroom such as Study Abroad and Service Learning. The appropriate level of academic content is built into all such experiences. For example, the Department of World Languages and Literature facilitate faculty-led Short Courses Abroad in Italy (Spring 2012) and Spain (Summer 2012). Candidates may also participate in the International Student Exchange Program (ISEP) and may qualify for Scholarship for Study Abroad. The EdD in Instructional Leadership offers optional coursework leading to the Intermediate Supervisor and Administrator endorsement (#092) including a clearly defined two-semester administrative internship at a school and district office location. The Master of Arts in Teaching program requires 20 hours of service learning in an urban school as
part of ED 571 Urban Education Experience. Evaluation of service learning focuses on knowledge, skills, and dispositions aligned with the Connecticut’s Common Core of Teaching.

The university participates in the College Board Advanced Placement Program and awards college credit to entering undergraduate students with qualifying scores. Transfer credit for experiential learning may be accepted from Connecticut’s Charter Oak College, after the appropriate department chair assesses the appropriateness and relevance of the course. Students may earn credit through the College Level Exam Program (CLEP).

Undergraduates whose GPA falls below a 2.0 are placed on academic probation. Students, who withdraw from the university in good academic standing, may apply for re-admission. Students who were academically dismissed, however, need to attain probationary status before the University will consider re-admitting them for full-time status. WCSU has a Fresh Start Policy that provides eligible students who initially struggled academically to have a second chance at graduating with a GPA unaffected by the below-average grades of their initial enrollment (see Appendix: Standard IV: 14).

The degrees awarded reflect distinctions achieved by students (Cum Laude, Magna Cum Laude, and Summa Cum Laude). Student achievement is also recognized through the Dean’s list completion of the prestigious and competitive-entry Honors Program.

Faculty members are responsible for the academic integrity of the award of grades (Collective Bargaining Agreement, 4.2.2.2, p. 13). There is an established and published system in place for students to appeal a grade in the case of palpable injustice: students may use the appeals process when they believe there is evidence to show that a) a final grade was determined by methods and criteria different from those used for determining final grades for others in the same class or b) the evaluation was made as the result of bias or caprice.

Identifying plagiarism is an individual faculty member's responsibility. The university provides the SafeAssign online tool to assist in this process; however, the program can only be used with the Blackboard course management system. The library also has dedicated an online page called “Plagiarism (and how to avoid it).”

The Academic Honesty Policy is clearly listed in both printed and online versions of the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. A review of a sample of course syllabi, conducted for the Self-Study, found that 63% of the syllabi included a description of or link to the Academic Honesty Policy.

Distance education and online learning were recently reviewed by the Senate Distance Education Committee to ensure compliance with NEASC guidelines. In 2012 a Distance Education Policy was submitted to the Senate by the Distance Education Committee.

Online learning programs are subject to the approval of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, CUCAS and Graduate Council. WCSU adheres to the policy that all courses of the same prefix and number are equivalent, regardless of mode of delivery, online or on ground, or period of delivery. It is the responsibility of the faculty to ensure that the rigor of programs and quality of instruction are maintained within their courses. Assessments of student learning are equivalent to those employed in traditional instructional modalities and faculty
regularly meet with Information Technology & Innovation staff to discuss assessment issues and share best practice strategies.

Faculty members desiring to adapt a traditional course into an online course follow the Online Course Approval Process, which involves submission of a request by a faculty member, review and approval by the appropriate Dean, followed by approval by the Provost. New online courses may also be designed and offered by following regular course development policies as well as the university’s online course policies.

WCSU offers programs and courses for abbreviated or concentrated time periods during Spring and Winter Intersessions, three 5-week summer sessions, and through online learning. Such courses are designed to offer equivalent experiences to on-ground, face-to-face courses and the process and mechanisms for achieving equivalency must be described in the application process in order for faculty to offer courses through online education. Some hybrid courses, comprising regularly scheduled classroom time with both face-to-face meetings and online learning, are offered. All face-to-face meetings for a hybrid course are announced prior to registration. The online component is delivered via the University’s online course management system, currently Blackboard Learn. Hybrid courses, a mixing of electronic and at least 70% on-campus are designed to assure that all students have access to appropriate services. (For more on student preparation for taking online courses, see Appendix: Standard IV: 15.)

Instruction in all courses, whether campus-based or online, is reviewed by the same criteria set forth in the AAUP-CBA, the Faculty Handbook and Departmental Bylaws. Fulltime faculty design and implement online courses offered by WCSU. Review of online courses includes evaluation of teaching effectiveness and student satisfaction.

WCSU strives to ensure that students enrolled in distance learning courses have sufficient opportunities to interact with faculty regarding course content and related academic matters. For example, the EdD program has a Wiki where candidates can sign up for office hours. Faculty must clarify in their syllabi and course policies the nature of planned interaction, feedback timelines (like grading or email turnaround), as well as appropriate modes of communication (e-mail, phone, fax, chat, or discussion board). Faculty must ensure clear responses to students, within a student-friendly timeframe, e.g., 24 hours. Complete and detailed feedback is provided via the discussion board, individual email, or other appropriate means. Learning outcomes are appropriate to the rigor and breadth of degree or certificate program.

Certificate programs are approved through the governance process and are held to the same standards as other academic programs. WCSU offers a limited number of certificates based on online courses offered for credit, and the level of academic quality of these are consistent with the degree programs. For example, the new online Applied Behavior analysis has been approved by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board®, Inc.. The Advanced Certificate Program in Interdisciplinary Gerontological Studies is the first of its kind within the CSU system and within the western region of Connecticut and northeast region of New York. This program is a collaborative effort by five of WCSU's academic departments (Nursing, Health Promotion and Exercise Sciences, Management, Social Work, and Psychology).

According to the Board of Regents Transfer and Articulation Policy (TAP), transfer associate degrees will be common to all of the Connecticut Community Colleges and will include at least
30 credits of transferrable general education, liberal arts core or liberal education program courses that address the core competencies. The remaining credits will be articulated with degree programs at the respective Connecticut State Universities and Charter Oak State College. The TAP Framework was designed by a representative group of faculty members from all 17 campuses who were constituted in April 2012 and completed remarkable work in the one year. WCSU is currently participating in the second phase of the articulation process to establish pathways to majors across all departments with the community college and CSU institutions.

Potential transfer students may access and examine admission information our home page. All equivalent courses for the Connecticut community colleges can be easily identified.

The Connecticut State Colleges and Universities offers a Transfer Compact for Dual Admission to students who are planning to enroll at one of the four CSUs after completing an Associate's degree at one of Connecticut's 12 community colleges. The university is actively involved in the TAP process to ensure a smoother path of access for all students within the CSUs and Connecticut community college system.

Undergraduate students complete at least one-fourth of their program at WCSU (30 credits), including advanced work in the major, with the exception of students transferring under articulation agreements. The university will accept a maximum of 75 semester hours from a two-year institution and up to 90 semester hours from a four-year school for undergraduate transfers.

Graduate credit transfer is accepted on a limited basis to preserve the integrity of the degree awarded. All transfer credits must represent satisfactory work (a grade of “B” or better) at the institution where the work was completed and must be in accordance with a planned program of study. Transfer credits older than ten years are not accepted toward any graduate program. (For more on graduate credit transfer, see Appendix: Standard IV: 16.)

**Appraisal**

The “orientation to online learning” course is in development and has not been offered to WCSU students as required by the university Online Policy.

The self-study indicated that there are inconsistencies among departments in design and implementation of online courses and in their oversight.

Due to fiscal constraints, WESTCONNect Office Hours and Staffed Computer Centers’ operating hours are shortened; more support is needed in these areas. The library’s operating hours are broader during the Fall and Spring semesters, but abbreviated during the summer.

In the case of Education candidates, where the Educational Unit is made up of faculty from three different schools and over 16 departments, better articulation needs to be configured across department lines in order to improve candidate advisement.

Faculty make inconsistent use of plagiarism programs and the training provided by MIS and Library personnel.

Listings of upcoming course offerings are often published and made available to students by departments, although this is not done consistently.
Projection

WCSU is undertaking a number of steps to address the issues identified in the Appraisal section.

The University is currently evaluating program rotation plans and low enrollment courses for viability; initial findings are due by the end of 2013.

In order to deal with the bottlenecks in curricula review, a new curriculum approval process was adopted by CUCAS in Spring 2012. The new process shifts authority to approve identified curricular changes to the departments and expedites those proposals that require State approval.

The self-study process will be the vehicle for further publicizing the importance of quality syllabus design with faculty (for example, in setting clear expectations for students regarding out-of-class work to meet credit hour standards). The university has addressed compliance with the credit-hour requirements by developing and circulating to all faculty (in Spring and Fall 2012) guidelines for syllabus language that specifies to students that courses will require at least two hours of work outside of class for each hour spent in class. Student learning assessment criteria will be clearly stated in all syllabi by Fall 2013.

A major effort is underway in the Office of Academic Affairs to synchronize the print and online catalogs by entering new programs and program revisions in September of each year, beginning in Fall 2013, and publishing the print catalog annually. A process to assure that all documents are current and a clear process exists for uploading all revisions in a timely fashion will be established by Spring 2014.

In 2012 a fully revised and updated WCSU Online Policy from the Distance Education Committee, a Senate standing committee, was curriculum committees and adopted by the Senate in 2013. The requirements of this policy will be further disseminated to all fulltime and part-time faculty during the 2013-2014 academic year.

In 2013 the university began a review of policies at like universities for an identification process that provides safeguards or authentication that a candidate who registers for a course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the program and receives the academic credit. This process is expected to produce concrete recommendations at the end of 2013.

By the start of 2014, WCSU will ensure that the “T” on transfer students’ program sheets will identify the grade earned for each transfer course. This process will be completed by the Registrar.

Assessment of Student Learning

Description

Since 2001, faculty and Student Affairs professionals have been charged with the responsibility of identifying what and how students learn within the individual academic programs and through experiences outside the classroom. The University’s assessment plan calls for ongoing collection, analysis and dissemination of information on student learning outcomes in every degree program, to assist faculty in meeting the university’s goals.
WCSU has provided guidelines to help academic departments and their Chairs implement an effective assessment policy in compliance with NEASC standards. These standards focus on course, program, and institutional levels. (For the five stages of the assessment cycle, see Appendix: Standard IV: 17.)

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. Additionally, each school has a committee responsible for integrating curriculum development and assessment of student learning outcomes. The University has worked consistently and successfully to implement assessment of student learning outcomes across the curriculum as stipulated by the NEASC reaccreditation report of March 2004. Beginning in 2004-05, each academic dean was charged with the responsibility of:

- reviewing the assessment status of all programs in the school or division
- providing copies of the NEASC statements on evidence to all department chairs
- asking departments which were already successful in assessing learning outcomes to agree on a common format for reporting assessment results
- conferring with the chairs of departments judged to be in need of assessment and explaining the procedures
- ensuring annual reporting of assessment findings, including changes in instruction and curricula

Evidence of the degree to which WCSU students achieve student learning outcomes is compiled by the office of Institutional Research and Assessment and made available to departments, Deans, and the Provost.

The WCSU mission emphasizes preparing our students to be productive members of society. We meet the educational needs of a diverse student body by providing programs of excellence in the liberal arts and by providing students with the necessary background to be successful in their chosen careers. Academic departments are required annually to provide evidence of program learning outcomes that articulate the fulfillment of the institutional mission.

WCSU’s Assessment Plan calls for ongoing collection, analysis, and dissemination of information on student learning outcomes in every degree program, together with annual reporting of the status of program assessment. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs requires departments to submit plans for the assessment of student learning outcomes. All new program proposals submitted to governance review are also required to include assessment plans. The university wide Assessment Committee develops guidelines, reviews plans, and issues reports of good practices in several departments. The Assessment Update for each degree program is now an integral part of the annual report of each school, department, and division. Administrative implementation of policy on learning outcomes assessment begins with the Academic Dean, is carried out by department Chairs, is reported to the Dean, and finally goes to the Academic Vice President, with a copy to the Assessment Committee for policy review (100).

In 2011 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.

The University's assessment plan provides for gathering direct and indirect evidence of student learning outcomes (SLO’s) and for interpreting the evidence and documenting levels of student achievement by program. This information is a critical part of the periodic review of academic programs.

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. Programs that do not have, or aspire to, national accreditation must conduct regular formal program reviews. Of the 56 degree programs, 24 are in various stages of acquiring national accreditation, including 14 that are currently accredited. All accredited programs require evidence of student learning. Of the 32 programs not seeking accreditation, one has completed the university required program review process and 5 are scheduled to continue the newly approved process in 2012-13. Of the 26 remaining programs, three were recently approved by the state of Connecticut (BOG/BOR; BA in Media Arts, and BA in Musical Theatre, and Ed.D in Nursing Education), and one involves individualized plans of study, each of which must be approved by CUCAS.

Each degree program at WCSU, graduate and undergraduate, is designed so that students learn the critical skills in their major or graduate degree program via a systematic and sequential learning experience tailored to the specific needs of the program. In class discussions and feedback; tests, quizzes and exams; writing assignment feedback; critical evaluations of performance and creative activity and other forms of feedback from instructors and peers is designed to provide students with regular and constructive information to help them improve their learning.

A diversity of approaches to the assessment of student learning outcomes is utilized at WCSU. Some examples include:

The Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences uses the nationally-normed ACT major Field Test in Biology to assess students’ skills in relation to student performance at peer institutions. This tool is an embedded component of two senior-level capstone courses required of graduating majors.

In the Ancell School of Business, the departments of Marketing and Management have implemented assessment instruments that require students to apply knowledge of key concepts from discipline-specific areas of study that measure achievement at the conclusion of the program.

The Department of World Languages and Literature assesses student performance at the “novice,” “intermediate,” and “advanced” levels of language comprehension. In corresponding
courses, rubrics are applied to student projects that clearly characterize the level of learning students have achieved.

The Department of Social Work has an extensive capstone assessment that is based on nine core competencies that speak to the range of profession-specific skills required for graduates to achieve success in the field.

WCSU utilizes a variety of methods, including external review of programs, to ensure that its methods of understanding student learning are trustworthy and provide useful information for continued improvement of programs and services for students.

**Appraisal**

Many WCSU programs are doing an excellent job of preparing our students for work and educational experiences after earning the undergraduate degree. For instance, the following departments and programs reflect the institution’s mission in preparing students for effective citizenship, further study, and future employment:

The Music-Bachelor of Arts aims to prepare students for careers in music and arts-related professions. However, a supplemental goal of the department is to create an appreciation of the arts on behalf of the student and appreciate the arts in relation to society. The Music department also emphasizes the importance of exploring other academic interests throughout the University. This is best evidenced by their extensive general education requirements.

The Communication Department offers degrees in communicative processes and media arts and production. The program helps all undergraduate students improve their ability to engage in and evaluate the communication process, an essential aspect of fulfilling the University’s mission.

The Health Promotion Studies Bachelor of Science provides students with a comprehensive approach to health and fitness education. Students are encouraged to examine the connection between individuals, careers, family, and community.

The History Department “introduces students to the framework of American, European and world history.” This student learning outcome helps to foster students’ understanding of the world around them. Moreover, the Self-Study team identified several departments and programs with exemplary assessment policies which illustrate the systematic involvement of WCSU faculty in using assessment results to improve student learning:

The Department of Music provides a clear definition of each degree, the objectives and student learning outcomes for each, an alignment of the courses to the outcomes, and a student guide that clearly explicates each of the degrees, the requirements and the assessment criteria. The Department of Music leads the School of Visual and Performing Arts as an example through its full accreditation from the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM).

The Department of Psychology administers a general discipline content exam to students at the beginning and end of their PSY 100 course and again at the end of their senior year. The Department assesses Proficiency in Experimental and Statistical Methods in the first week of the
semester following completion of PSY 201 and 204; and they conduct a rubric-based assessment of a sample of capstone projects submitted by students in their senior seminars. Assessment results have had a significant impact on the design of the psychology program leading to increasing the number of required courses, standardizing course outlines, using standardized content from computerized statistical analysis programs across course sections, and using the model goals for Psychology undergraduates developed by the American Psychological Association (APA) in curriculum development. The most recent external review of the Psychology program, conducted in Fall, 2008, highlighted the department’s “commitment to assessment of student learning” as a strength of the program.

The Department of World Languages: The B.A. in Spanish and B.S. in Secondary Education and Elementary Education have included assessment as part of the program since their inception in 2006-07. They identified three levels of language preparation within the student base: true second language learners, heritage Spanish speakers and native speakers. As the program was assessed on a yearly basis, adjustments were made within the curriculum at the 200 course level so that the needs of all three groups could be met within the areas of conversation, critical thinking, composition, and standard Spanish vocabulary. Simultaneously, all students were led to explore cultural, linguistic and literary issues preparatory to the in depth studies of the upper division classes. Spanish has conducted an annual assessment of oral and writing proficiency of Spanish majors developed according to national guidelines established by ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages). In 2012-13 further revisions are being made because assessment at the 300 course level indicated a need for greater structural linguistic development.

The Standard IV self-study committee examined the E-Series Data Forms to assess the clarity and accessibility of statements of student learning outcomes (SLOs) by program. Clearly stated SLOs provide for more effective assessment of learning outcomes. Out of 56 degree programs within the university, 48 submitted E-Series Data Forms and, of those, 40 reported that learning outcomes had been developed for the degree. The manner in which student learning outcomes for each degree were presented was assessed via an examination of the 2010-2012 undergraduate catalog. The results revealed that:

- 45% of programs clearly stated SLOs in the catalog
- 16% embedded their SLOs in the program descriptions
- 13% did not state SLOs, but did describe their program goals
- 22% listed the degree content but did not describe SLOs
- 3% of programs did not describe SLOs, program goals, or degree content

For WCSU's approach to assessment to function effectively programs must have both clearly established goals and clearly described SLOs. These outcomes help determine the effectiveness of the program map and accurately assess student competency at program completion.

E-Series survey results supported observations made at meetings of the Assessment Committee: while only half the programs assessed clearly stated their learning outcomes, 97% of programs described their learning goals, the skill sets they provide, or the content provided to students in their program. The next step is for all programs at WCSU to develop clearly stated SLOs in support of their published program learning goals.
There is a need for those programs lacking curriculum maps to better utilize the WCSU assessment process in order to establish clear statements of student learning outcomes and to determine the best curriculum path to achieve those outcomes.

Projection

Improving our academic assessment process is an ongoing effort. The work continues today with the support of the Provost leading a 12-month initiative facilitated by membership in the New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability. Their efforts will help to strengthen program mapping through the development of clearly stated student learning outcomes on the program and course levels.

The Provost’s 2013-2014 Action Plan stipulates that the Provost will work with the WCSU Assessment Committee and the ConnSCU (statewide) Council of Academic Officers to refine and publicize student learning outcome statements that clearly articulate what students should be able to do, achieve, demonstrate, or know upon graduation. The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment, with faculty assistance, will assemble narratives and tables to identify the places in the curriculum and co-curriculum where students encounter and/or achieve each student learning outcome. The Action Plan further provides that the University’s annual report of assessment of student learning outcomes will be made available to the WCSU Assessment Committee and the Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education for recommendations for improvement. The Provost and academic deans will review departmental updates and make recommendations to department and division chairs. Additionally, the Vice President for Student Affairs will review annual updates for the relevant departments and make recommendations to directors.

Support of the Provost’s Action Plan requires that evidence-based changes be periodically reviewed and evaluated by the University Senate and its constituent committees (General Education, Assessment, UPBC, CUCAS, and Graduate Council) to determine how effectively student learning has improved.

Institutional Effectiveness

The university identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results. WCSU is actively engaged in outcomes assessment for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of its academic programs and organizational units. In the case of academic programs, academic program review is systematically conducted and comparative data from national organization such as NCSSE and VSA are used to benchmark institutional effectiveness. Ultimately, the goal of assessment at WCSU is to evaluate the extent to which academic programs and organizational units are meeting intended outcomes and to use the results of assessment to formulate plans for continuous improvement. To this end, the university makes extensive use of both direct and indirect measures where “direct measures” are typically real-time performance indicators and “indirect” measures are typically findings from surveys and focus group interviews.

In 2011 the President appointed six Strategic Assessment teams to assess WCSU’s Strategic Vision, Plan, and Progress. The 2012 Report of the Public/Private Team noted that "Western provides a culture of learning for the purpose of innovating because we see our students as
creators as well as consumers of knowledge. A WCSU education is the blending of the scientist with the artist and the philosopher with the practitioner to create scholars that are engaged citizens." Evidence of the creation of such innovative scholars and engaged citizens is provided by:

Winning grants such as Fulbright and National Science Foundation awards. Faculty members Christopher Kukk, Anam Govardhan, Oluwole Owoye, Burton Perett, and Darla Shaw have received Fulbright Scholarships while at WCSU. Students Kevin Gaughan, Ashley Hyde, and Stephen Price have been awarded Fulbright Scholarships, and eight students are applying for Fulbright Scholarships in 2012-2013.

The many publications and creations of faculty in various forms such as books, productions, performances, recordings, paintings, and journal articles (summarized in the department annual reports).

The annual publications of various departments highlighting the academic work of students – e.g. Clio from the History department; Black & White, a writing journal edited, written, and published by the Writing Department; Beyond the Margins, a literature and art magazine published by the English Department; and the Journal of Undergraduate Psychology Research.

The success of "town-gown" programs such as the Bridge Program and the 2012 Presidential Election broadcast anchored and reported by WCSU Communications students and faculty.

Volunteerism and civic engagement linking on-campus organizations with nongovernmental organizations such as the Dorothy Day House and the Candlewood Lake Authority.

An Honors Program that fosters innovation through an interdisciplinary approach to learning.

The creation of "think tanks" such as Views from the Center and the Center for Financial Literacy.

A nationally-ranked debate team.

The fact that many of WCSU’s schools receive the highest accreditation in their respective fields.

Further evidence of WCSU’s success in preparing students to excel within their discipline is provided at the annual Western Research Day (WRD). Held each May WRD gives the University the opportunity to highlight students’ discipline-specific capstone projects. Students from many programs present their projects to faculty, staff, and the invited public via outstanding presentations and poster sessions.

This self-study also identified a vibrant culture of assessment at WCSU, with faculty engaged on many levels in designing assessment programs and “closing the loop” by using assessment data to modify learning programs. This represents a marked shift from the 2003 self-study and indicates steady progress from the 2006 WCSU progress report on assessment.

The 2013 NEASC Self-Study has identified several areas in which WCSU can improve the academic process to better support the university's Mission and Strategic Plan. An improved process for revising and publicizing the academic standards of our programs is a priority; student learning outcomes must be more clearly articulated and better integrated into all programs and
courses; the WCSU general education program must evolve to reflect changing state standards and national best practices; and a comprehensive and effective academic plan for first-year students is critical. The Provost’s Action Plan will address and improve many of these academic and assessment issues.

The Board of Regents Transfer Articulation Policy instigated a need to examine programs and revise the General Education curriculum. WCSU will take this opportunity to streamline the program and course approval process in a way that maintains transparency. Already a simpler, more transparent system for revising courses and outlines has been adopted (106). In addition, we expect to update and change the format of all program sheets; and we will create clear expectations for the publication of programmatic and student learning objectives during 2012-13 and 2013-14. Benchmarked student learning outcomes will be adopted in all programs, reflecting generally accepted higher education goals that are appropriate to the Vision and the Mission of the University.

A revision of the First Year Experience will enhance students’ initial learning and social experience at the University and lay out a clearer road to attaining learning success.

Additionally, WCSU is engaged in a vigorous discussion of the nature of the general education curriculum and is considering proposals to move from a course-based checklist to a learning-outcomes-based model which is more flexible and easier to assess. The General Education Committee is currently developing and evaluating alternative proposals to guide the implementation of the new system. The proposed general education curriculum will be considered by the entire university, faculty, and students in 2013. Considerable input and engagement is expected.

The WCSU Strategic Planning Teams and the University Planning and Budgeting Committee (UPBC) will make recommendations for improvement of student learning. These recommendations will be reviewed by the Vice President for Finance and Administration and his staff as they prepare the annual Spending Plan for submission to the Board of Regents. Recommendations may include changes in priorities, program offerings, and the allocation or reallocation of resources.

As a consequence of the self-study, strategic planning, and effective university governance, an ongoing and integrated commitment to achieving student learning outcomes will be increasingly reflected in the campus community’s actions.
Standard V
Faculty

Description

Number and Distribution

Fulltime and part-time faculty categories are clearly defined in the 2007-2011 CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement (Articles 1.6.1 and 1.6.2). Fulltime faculty members are contractually obligated to teach courses, advise students, assess students, develop curricula, conduct research/engage in creative activity, participate in professional development activity, and participate in shared governance, all of which contribute to the systematic understanding and implementation of effective teaching/learning processes. The function of part-time faculty members is primarily to teach courses, as well as for specialized functions, such as applied music study and other curricular experiences specific to professional degree programs, such as student teacher observation/evaluation. These functions are in keeping with the University’s mission of meeting the educational needs of a diversified student body through instruction, scholarship and public service.

WCSU maintains a sufficient number of fulltime and part-time faculty members to achieve its mission and purposes. As shown in the DATA FIRST tables, WCSU employed 228 fulltime and 273 part-time instructional faculty members in the fall of 2012. Fulltime/part-time faculty composition is governed by the 2007-2011 CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement (Article 10.8), which specifies that the no more than 20% of a university’s faculty can be part-time (with a 1% exception per year between academic years 2007-2011) (see Appendix: Standard 5: 1).

The total number of fulltime faculty remained stable in 2010 (228), 2011 (225), and 2012 (228), but will fall to 215 positions for Fall 2013 due to decreased enrollment and budgetary considerations. Ten of the 26 academic departments had ten or more fulltime faculty in Fall 2012. Nursing had 21, followed by Education (17), Social Sciences (15), Mathematics (13), Music (13), Psychology (12), History (12), Biology (11), Communication (10), and Management (10). Six of the 10 departments experienced increases in faculty, and the four that remained the same were Mathematics, Music, Biology, and Management.

In the remaining 16 departments, numbers of fulltime faculty ranged from 3 to 9. Three departments experienced decreases: Writing (2), English (1), and the Division of Justice and Law Administration (1). Four departments experienced increases of one faculty member each: Chemistry, Philosophy, Theatre Arts, and Art. The other nine departments had the same number of fulltime faculty in 2012 as in 2009.

Qualifications, Recruitment, and Appointment

WCSU maintains a faculty of fulltime and part-time educators, scholars, artists, and performers whose aggregate qualifications provide its student body with a wealth of teaching experience, scholarship and creativity based on years of scholarly preparation, research, performance, and teaching. Faculty roles are clearly articulated in the collective bargaining agreement and the
faculty handbook, including the criteria for evaluation (see Appendix: Standard 5: 2). Faculty qualifications are monitored by academic departments and Human Resources and meet or exceed expectations for degrees held in appropriate disciplines to insure quality instruction, research, and professional development. A complete listing of fulltime faculty, including degrees earned, is included in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs (see Appendix: Standard 5: 3). Many departments display complete listings of their full and part-time faculty on their websites. Excellent examples of this are found in Nursing, Justice and Law Administration, Music, History, Theatre Arts, and Biology. There is a clear distinction between full and part-time faculty in all publications, both in print and on the web.

A database listing WCSU faculty and its credentials is available at ???.

Fulltime faculty members are recruited and appointed according to documented procedures outlined in the CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement, Articles 4.4-4.15, and the WCSU Faculty Handbook (4). When a new faculty position is made available to a department, the department elects members to a search committee. These members are given a training session with the Executive Assistant to the President/Chief Diversity Officer to insure that the search committee operates in accordance with University policies and legal responsibilities (see Appendix: Standard 5: 4).

Once a suitable candidate is identified through the search process, the nature and terms of the initial appointment are articulated through a Letter of Appointment, which is tendered by the President, in accordance with the policies outlined in the CSU-AAUP Contract, Articles 4.7-4.10.

**Evaluation, Advancement, Retention**

The Faculty Handbook and the Collective Bargaining Agreement specify faculty responsibilities, recruitment, appointment, evaluation, promotion, and tenure. Renewal, promotion and tenure evaluation procedures are defined and enumerated in the Faculty Handbook and in the CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement (see Appendix: Standard 5: 2). The documents also detail a grievance procedure and the AAUP provides a grievance officer to assist in this process (see Appendix: Standard 5: 5).

Departments elect tenured faculty to departmental evaluation committees each year. These committees conduct annual evaluation of untenured faculty and periodic professional assessments of tenured faculty. Evaluations are structured by the Faculty Handbook, per the Collective Bargaining Agreement (see Appendix: Standard 5: 2). They include load credit activity (teaching, advising, departmental administration, or other activities carrying load credit), scholarship or other creative activities appropriate to the field, service, and professional activity/development. Part-time faculty are evaluated at the Department level only. Department Chairs determine the method and frequency of part-time faculty evaluation.

**Salary and Rank Classifications, Benefits**

WCSU has clear, published definitions of faculty classification as defined in the CSU/AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article 5.3.
Salary at the time of initial appointment is determined based on the candidate’s prior experience and expertise according to the WCSU New Faculty Hire Salary Chart (see Appendix: Standard 5: 6), which correlates to the salary structure as defined in the CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article 12. Future increases in salary are determined by a set formula as defined in the CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement. Compensation for Summer school and intersession is articulated in Article 11. WCSU employees are eligible for a variety of fringe benefits, including health care and several retirement plan options (see Appendix: Standard 5: 7).

**Assignments and Workloads**

Faculty workloads are established and reviewed each semester by the Department Chair and Dean in consultation with each fulltime and adjunct faculty member in accordance with workload formulas set by the CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement and in specialized side-letter agreements as appropriate (Article 10; pp. 64-75). Twelve (12) workload credits per academic semester constitute a fulltime faculty teaching assignment (24 per year). Overloads must be alleviated within three semesters of their accrual; however, a maximum of nine (9) workload credits may be re-assigned in any one semester to address a previously accrued overload. The minimum allowable workload for a fulltime faculty member is three (3) credits. Faculty assignments for graduate courses are in accordance with policies published in the Faculty Handbook (see Appendix: Standard 5: 8).

Fulltime faculty members may receive credits of reassigned time for research and curriculum development as well as administrative and professional duties. Criteria and policies governing reassigned time are articulated in the CSU-AAUP Contract, Articles 10.6.4, 10.6.5 and 10.10. All independent coursework by students including Student Developed Studies generate workload credit of one-ninth (0.11) credit per student credit hour. Graduate Thesis Direction generates one (1) workload credit per student enrolled. Additional provisions for specialized instruction are articulated in Article 10 of the Contract as well as in individual side-letter agreements (see Appendix: Standard 5: 9).

Part-time faculty members may be assigned a workload not in excess of eight (8) workload credits per semester if they are teaching two courses or six (6) credits per semester if teaching two or more courses. Part-time faculty members teach between 3 and 8 credits per semester, with a median of 4.5.

Adjustments to full and part-time workloads are made periodically in response to changes in curricula and/or course schedules. The CSU-AAUP Contract provides for faculty re-training to help the institution respond to changes in program and curricular offerings (see Appendix: Standard 5: 10).

There are a limited number of Graduate Assistants who support faculty in such areas as Visual Art, English, History, Music, and Writing, among others. The application process includes the submission of an application, resume, letter of interest and letters of reference (see Appendix: Standard 5: 11).
Graduate Assistants receive stipends of varying amounts depending on their assigned workload, which may include teaching (supervised), classroom management, assessment assistance, and tutoring in the Writing Center. Graduate Assistants are monitored and evaluated for their performance by the graduate faculty and/or Graduate Coordinator in the respective departments.

**Academic Organization and Governance Policy and Procedure**

Academic organization and governance policy and procedure as related to the composition and variety of faculty appointments is derived from the CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement and is articulated in the contract and in the Faculty Handbook. The core element of the WCSU Governance structure is the University Senate, which is comprised of an elected member of each academic department, as well as other members of the University community, including staff members, library faculty, coaches, students, and administrators.

All University-wide committees have membership allocated to the four schools and school-wide committees have membership allocated to divisions within each school (see Appendix: Standard 5: 12). Thirty faculty members are elected by their departments to serve on the University Senate, and faculty are elected and/or appointed to serve on 27 Senate standing committees and centers, as well as committees for each school. Department Chairs are full-time faculty elected members by their respective departments and serve terms according to departmental bylaws, typically ranging from 2 to 5 years.

**Content and Methods of Instruction**

Faculty at WCSU are responsible for the development and oversight of all curricular elements, including course content, methods of delivery, assessment, and adherence to professional standards. The role of faculty in curriculum development and implementation is clearly defined in the 2007-2011 CSU-AAUP Handbook, Article 5.17, which states that “The department shall have responsibility for the content and development of courses, curriculum and programs of study within its discipline, research and service within its area, and for evaluation of the performance of all department members, subject to all other provisions of this Agreement.” Faculty responsibilities and procedures for curriculum and program development are also articulated in the Faculty Handbook (see Appendix: Standard 5: 13).

Course content is expected to conform to the outline for each course, which has been approved by the Department, appropriate School committee and the Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum and Academic Standards (CUCAS) or the Graduate Council. Department Chairs are responsible for ensuring that course syllabi reflect the approved outline and contain relative assessment criteria specific to the discipline. Recent changes to the curriculum and program review policies and procedures have made the process easier to understand and much more palatable to faculty members, resulting in a significant number of non-substantive changes moving forward in the past academic year (2012-2013).

Program assessment has been ongoing at the base unit level, with many programs holding discipline-specific accreditation (Chemistry, Counseling, Education, Nursing, Social Work, and Music) (see Appendix: Standard 5: 14).
**Professional Development**

WCSU provides resources for continued professional development of full and part-time faculty members through faculty development funds to enhance teaching (see Appendix: Standard 5: 15); CSU/AAUP Research Grants to support individual faculty projects and enhance the educational mission, visibility, and research stature of the Connecticut State University units of the ConnSCU; reassigned load credit for research to contribute to the body of research, creative or pedagogical knowledge of the applicant's discipline; sabbatical leaves to support scholarly and creative endeavors that strengthen the professional competence or enrich the teaching or equivalent professional responsibilities of faculty members; Summer curriculum related activities grants for curriculum development of courses and programs; and faculty retraining grants (see Appendix: Standard 5: 16).

**Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibility**

The commitment to academic freedom is expressed in the 2007-2011 CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement (see Appendix: Standard 5: 17). It is defined as extending to research, writing without threat of censorship, classroom teaching, grading, and provides a process for the investigation and resolution of complaints of violations. The AAUP leadership assigns an Academic Freedom Officer to assist faculty in this area. The Academic Freedom Officer reports five formal filings over the last few years and several issues that were resolved without a formal filing. One case in 2012 has gone to a system panel for review.

Professional rights and responsibilities are articulated in the 2007-2011 CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement. Faculty are expected to promote the truth as they see it, develop and improve scholarly competence, exercise critical self-discipline, and practice intellectual honesty. They should encourage free pursuit of knowledge in students, hold students in respect, and foster the same sense of intellectual honesty in students as in faculty. All faculty must understand and adhere to the ethical guidelines of employees of the State of Connecticut, as well as the Connecticut University Sexual Harassment Policy (see Appendix: Standard 5: 18).

**Teaching**

Faculty employ a variety of techniques and delivery systems in meeting the mission and purposes of the University while meeting academic program goals and course objectives. Instructional techniques include traditional lecture courses as well as those supported by online resources such as Blackboard Learn. Faculty access Blackboard Learn via the Banner web portal. In addition, specialized instruction in small classroom and studio courses occurs in many areas such as Nursing, Education, Social Work, and in all programs within the School of Visual and Performing Arts (Art, Music, Theatre). Examples include nursing clinical experiences, applied music lessons and ensembles, studio art courses, theatre productions, and student teaching. Many upper division courses within the Ancell School of Business are delivered through seminar-style experiences, as are the majority of courses in the honors program. Courses at the graduate level are typically delivered through seminars as well as through online systems and one-on-one thesis direction. Assessment of instructional techniques occurs during individual program review as well as in discipline-specific accreditation review (see Appendix: Standard 5: 14).
The majority of classrooms are equipped with, at minimum, internet-connected instructor stations, projectors, and sound reproduction equipment. Twenty-five classrooms and labs have multiple (from 10-30) student workstations, including many with specialized software according to discipline. Each School has a technology committee whose chair is a member of the University-wide Information Technology Committee (ITC), a standing committee of the University Senate. Faculty members provide workshops on software and multimedia applications for their peers. These workshops were initiated by the School of Arts and Sciences Technology Steering Committee. (see Appendix: Standard 5: 19).

Students are encouraged to engage in scholarly and creative activity, which enhances the institution’s mission and purposes as well as the student’s capability to achieve his or her aspirations. Scholarly and creative activity is assessed at the program level, primarily through capstone course and/or experiences. Scholarly activity for students in the Honors Program, for example, is facilitated in part through course enhancement, allowing students to receive additional credit hours in their core major courses through research and/or creative work. Students in the arts typically present their capstone projects on stage or in portfolios/exhibitions and are assessed according to the professional and/or accreditation standards specific to each discipline.

Scholarly and creative activities at the graduate level are essential elements of all programs and are assessed according to established professional standards according to the discipline. Students in the MFA in Visual Arts, for example, are required to submit their work to a juried panel for critique prior to inclusion in the Annual MFA Thesis Exhibition. MFA in Creative Writing students submit their work to an outstanding panel of faculty and guest mentors for assessment and critique. Student research in the EdD in instructional leadership program focuses on an area of specialized research in instructional leadership, culminating in a directed dissertation project, which is adjudicated by WCSU graduate faculty. WCSU undergraduate and graduate students have the opportunity to present their research and/or creative work for inclusion in the WestConn Research Day (WRD) (see Appendix: Standard 5: 20).

Typically, students are taught by a variety of faculty with different viewpoints (see Appendix: Standard 5: 21). When feasible, multiple sections of the same class are distributed among more than one faculty member. Where a specialization is important, one faculty member may teach multiple sections. WCSU’s location allows for the hiring of part-time faculty from the New York City metropolitan area to provide specialized instruction, providing for a diversity of viewpoints in virtually all programs within the institution, with an emphasis on the arts, business, science, and technology.

The University supports a Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), which holds workshops and demonstrations to enable faculty to share teaching methods and techniques (see Appendix: Standard 5: 22). Experimental methods are presented at these events, and faculty who choose to utilize these methods are invited back to report to colleagues about the results of implementation. In addition to CELT-sponsored Friday Afternoon forums for the sharing of teaching ideas, Information Technology and Innovation provides training in Blackboard (Vista and Learn), course management systems (see Appendix: Standard 5: 23).
**Advising and Academic Integrity**

Academic advising by faculty is essential to student success. To operationalize this statement, advising is considered a part of a faculty member’s workload under the 2007-2011 CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement (see Appendix: Standard 5: 24). Each student with a chosen major is assigned an academic advisor upon matriculation, with undeclared students assigned to the Academic Advisement Center. The Advisement Center advises undeclared students and provides assistance and information resources to all students and faculty. The Academic Advisement Center Website contains information for undeclared students as well as for general advising resources for all undergraduate and graduate students (see Appendix: Standard 5: 25). Support for advising is also available at the Academic Advising Central website (see Appendix: Standard 5: 26). Since 2007 a Director of Faculty Advising assists advising efforts across the University.

Advisors and students utilize Banner as a tool in the advising process, both for course selection and for unofficial degree audits. Courses are listed via BannerWeb at the OpenClose web portal (see Appendix: Standard 5: 27). Unofficial degree audits, used primarily for advising, are available in Banner using the Current Degree Evaluation (CAPP). Advisors use Banner for early attendance recording (first three weeks of each semester), entering grades, and accessing its Curriculum, Advising and Program Planning feature to track student progress. In Spring 2013, the University added MAP-Works, a program, which asks students to complete a survey and tracks survey answers, mid-term grades and GPAs. This data will help identify at-risk students. Faculty volunteers are piloting the program (see Appendix: Standard 5: 28).

Departments utilize individual advising, group advising, and combinations of these two as appropriate to the disciplines. Undergraduate education students in the School of Professional Studies are assigned two advisors, from Education/Educational Psychology and the School of Arts and Sciences, for their academic major. In some departments, hard-copy program sheets are still maintained in departmental offices and are updated manually each advising session. Many departments use a standard advising checklist for their programs that is stored on a shared computer drive to allow access to student advising records by all department faculty members, making it possible for the student to receive effective advising if their primary advisor is unavailable.

Advising at the graduate level is facilitated primarily by Graduate Coordinators in consultation with graduate faculty in each discipline. As is the case with undergraduates, advisors utilize Banner in nearly all aspects of the advising process Program sheets for all degree programs are available on the website (see Appendix: Standard 5: 29).

The WCSU faculty commitment to academic integrity is reflected in its mission and purposes and throughout the Faculty Handbook and Collective Bargaining Agreement. The Mission and statement on fulfilling the Mission were developed with participation of all stakeholders in the University, including and especially the faculty.

Academic integrity includes the principles of empowering students, facilitating quality learning, fostering dynamic curricula, cultivating a rich and diverse cultural environment, and developing a strong partnership with the greater community. There must also be a strong commitment to continuous improvement. The Faculty and Student Handbooks and Catalog articulate a clear
policy of academic honesty, what constitutes violations of the policy, and the steps taken to determine that the policy has been violated, with procedures for appeals (see Appendix: Standard 5: 30).

**Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activity**

The active pursuit of scholarship, research, and creative activity is essential to the mission and purposes of the institution, which articulate that effective and excellent teaching and learning require that faculty be active, engaged, scholars and practitioners in their disciplines. All faculty are expected to pursue scholarship, research or creative activity appropriate to the discipline and degrees offered. These expectations are articulated in the 2007-2011 CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement (see Appendix: Standard 5: 31). Scholarship, research, and/or creative activity are assessed regularly as part of the faculty member’s continuing appointment evaluation, promotion/tenure evaluation, and professional assessment. As mentioned previously, student scholarship and creative work are integral parts of the student experience at WCSU and are supported by the equally important scholarly and creative pursuits of the faculty.

Faculty members are eligible to receive CSU-AAUP Research Grants funds of up to $5,000 in support of their scholarship or research/creative endeavor. CSU-AAUP grant guidelines stipulate that grant monies will support projects that have a direct benefit to the students and the institution, as well as to the discipline in general. Additionally, faculty members are eligible for sabbatic leaves as well as for reassigned time for research (see Appendix: Standard 5: 16). Outside grants for scholarship, research and creative activity are supported through the Office of Sponsored Research and Administrative Services (see Appendix: Standard 5: 32).

All research involving human subjects by students, faculty, or any other person or group conducting research at the University or with University participants are approved by the Institutional Review Board. IRB membership is taken from the faculty, campus Health, and Danbury Hospital. All researchers must undergo human subjects training. The University contracts with an organization to provide this training to faculty and students. The University also has an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee responsible for reviewing protocols that call for the use of vertebrate animals in research (see Appendix: Standard 5: 33).

The same commitment to academic freedom that exists for curricular offerings is also in place for scholarship, research and creative activities and is expressed in the 2007-2011 CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article 4.2, pp. 12-15.

**Appraisal**

**Number and Distribution**

The number and distribution of faculty allows the institution to fulfill its mission and purposes, in some cases in exemplary fashion, while in others, only at the threshold level. Due to fluctuating economic conditions, hiring freezes combined with untimely retirements in many departments, pockets of imbalance have been created between full and part-time faculty. In many cases, such as the Division of Justice and Law Administration and the Department of Art, high fulltime faculty to student ratios require a significant time commitment from fulltime faculty to advise students and provide service to the department and university.
Although the CSU-AAUP Contract mandates that part-time instruction be limited to 21% of total teaching load, many departments exceed this, while others fall well below. In some cases that require part-time faculty members for specialized instruction, such as in the department within the School of Visual and Performing Arts and the School of Professional Studies, extensive use of part-time faculty members is not only justified, but provides students with the opportunity to study with highly skilled practitioners.

Due to the variety of methods of delivering instructional programs, the number and distribution of faculty does not often correlate to the number of majors within a specific program. WCSU’s outstanding Nursing program, for example, requires sufficient fulltime faculty to maintain small class sizes and offer clinical and lab experiences as do programs in Music, Biology, Chemistry, and other specialized programs. Many programs with large enrollment, such as Justice and Law Administration, Communication, and Marketing, have grown at such a rapid rate that the institution has not been able to add fulltime faculty fast enough to meet demand. In such cases, the use of specialized part-time faculty allows the institution flexibility to meet fluctuations in student demand.

In this regard, WCSU’s pool of part-time faculty are a tremendous asset. Many WCSU part-time faculty have been teaching at WCSU for 10 or more years. This longevity gives students a sense of faculty consistency, although as contingent faculty they are not guaranteed future employment and generally do not participate in governance or in the day-to-day work of their specific departments.

**Qualifications, Recruitment, and Appointment**

WCSU maintains an outstanding cohort of full and part-time faculty, many of whom are regional, national and/or international leaders in their respective disciplines. Examples of this include:

- Kevin Gutzman (History); Author (*James Madison and the Making of America; The Politically Incorrect Guide to the Constitution*).
- James Greene (Music); Renowned jazz musician and composer.
- Casey Jordan (JLA); Criminologist (appearances on ABC News 20/20, NBC Today Show, Good Morning America, CNN, CBS Early Show, among others).
- Marjorie Portnow (Art); Paintings are exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (NYC).
- Wynn Gadkar-Wilcox; Author (*Allegories of the Vietnamese Past*).
- Julio Agustin Matos Jr. (Theatre); Broadway Casts of Chicago, Fosse, Steel Pier.

Over the past three years, the number of fulltime faculty members with Doctorates averaged 175 and the number with Master’s degrees, 44. In addition, three members hold professional licenses. Part-time faculty members typically hold master’s degrees and/or have significant professional experience in specialized areas.

Recruitment of new faculty is orderly and effective. Eighty-two percent of the faculty reported that their departments used WCSU’s Vision, Mission, and goals in setting priorities for staffing. WCSU’s strategic location near New York City and Boston offers a clear advantage for the recruitment of outstanding faculty as articulated in the Strategic Plan (Goals 1 & 5). The location...
in the tri-state area is also often a potential liability when recruiting faculty. As indicated in a recent analysis of the Strategic Plan, the high cost of living in this area weighs heavily in some program areas, especially in the Ancell School of Business. In other areas, such as Visual and Performing Arts, the location near New York City has proven to be a significant advantage in attracting faculty with exemplary qualifications.

**Evaluation, Advancement, Retention**

The combination of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, the Faculty Handbook, the evaluation process, and the bylaws of the various committees and centers make for a transparent set of procedures for University activities. Faculty evaluation follows a clear set of guidelines. The Promotion and Tenure Committee (P&T) holds several open sessions for candidates and members of departmental evaluation committees to make clear how to present material for consideration. These meetings are well attended.

The record of awarding of tenure and promotions is consistent with selecting quality faculty in well-run searches. Between FY 2010 and FY 2013, the number of tenured fulltime faculty remained virtually unchanged, rising from 152 to 157, falling to 151 and then rising to 152. However, the composition of the tenured population changed: the number of Associate Professors decreased by 10.2% while the number of Assistant Professors increased by 25% and the number of Full Professors increased by 3.2%. In any given year, there may be departures of 12 to 14 Assistant Professors, and retirements of 3 to 9 Full and Associate Professors.

In FY 2012, the tenured faculty was 67% of the total (151 or 225 fulltime faculty). Of the 228 fulltime faculty, 43.4% were Full Professors, 24.1% were Associate Professors, 29.4% were Assistant Professors, and 3.1% were Instructors. The number of Full Professors increased by 2.1% over four years, compared to an 8.1% increase in Assistant Professors and a 6.8% decrease in Associate Professors.

The data show gender parity among fulltime faculty, but not at rank. Full Professors are c. 60% male (a 2006 study reported only 24% of Full Professors nationally were women). Fifty-six percent of Associate Professors were women at WCSU; and 60% of Assistant Professors were women. As the current faculty moves toward tenure and promotions, we should achieve gender equity in the next 10 years (information from Data First, Standard V, “Rank, Gender, Salary”). Racial distribution is about 82% White, 4% Black, 4% Hispanic, and 9% Other, which includes Asian, American Indian, and Pacific Islanders (Workforce Analysis, Form 33A). We used 2011 data on part-time faculty (adjuncts) as the best approximation of current patterns. There were 330 part-time faculty, of whom 40.6% were women. Between 2009 and 2011 the number of women decreased by 12.2% while the number of men decreased by 6.2%.

Security/consistency increases with rank at WCSU. Full Professors are tenured at 99%, Associates at 86%, and Assistants at 17%. Special appointments are employed for one–year periods and often stay for two (the maximum in a six-year period).

**Salary and Rank Classifications, Benefits**

Faculty at WCSU enjoy the benefit of a strong collective bargaining agreement that provides both security and stability. Salaries are an important aspect in acquiring and keeping the best faculty as Fairfield County is an expensive area in which to live. Compensation for faculty is
within the norm for the area – more than area public institutions of the same category; less than some private institutions. There is high retention at WCSU, which may be attributed at least in part to generous compensation and a collegial institutional environment (see Appendix: Standard 5: 35). As mentioned previously, the cost of living in Fairfield County is a factor in recruitment and retention of faculty in certain areas, especially within the Ancell School of Business (see Appendix: Standard 5: 34).

Salaries have remained flat over the past several years due to negotiated concessions as a result of the budget crisis in the state of Connecticut. Salary increases in the range of 4% are scheduled to be implemented in the Fall of 2013. Mean salaries for Full Professors increased by 2.5% over the four years previous to the salary freeze (from $96,766 to $99,160), compared to 3% for Associate Professors (from $75,443 to $77,681) and 4.8% for Assistant Professors (from $62,230 to $65,195). There were no fulltime faculty at the rank of Instructor in 2009, but there were seven in 2011 and 2012. The average salary for Instructors was $60,710. No adjustments to these comparisons were made for inflation. The average part-time faculty member earned $6,161 in 2011. While the contract provides security and stability, it also allows for little or no flexibility for performance-based salary increases.

The March-April 2012 issues of *Academe* provide “The Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Professions.” Eleven Category IIA public and private Connecticut institutions were compared, along with one nearby SUNY IIA college. Full Professor and Assistant Professor salaries were compared. WCSU ranked fifth of twelve in both categories (see Appendix: Standard 5: 36).

**Assignments and Workloads**

As is the case with salary and benefits, the CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement provides faculty with clear parameters for workload assignments within their departments, so there is very little room for variance within the established system. As a result, WCSU remains primarily a teaching institution where research expectations are tempered with the demands of teaching and advising, which correlates to its mission and purposes.

Evaluation of workload credit is weighted toward teaching, which is the primary mission of the University. Responses to the Spring 2012 Faculty-Staff Survey indicate faculty agree that the four-course-per-semester (or equivalent) teaching load is acceptable for providing time for quality teaching, advising, and evaluating students; however, less than half of the faculty agreed that the workload allowed adequate time for research and scholarship. The latter raises three possible questions about this aspect of the workload:

- Are expectations for creative activity too high across the University?
- Are expectations too high in some departments (but not others)?
- Is this perception the result of personal expectations among half the faculty? (That is, are some faculty expecting too much of themselves without pressure from the University or their departments?)

The four courses (12-credit) per semester workload is typical for a teaching university, so it is likely that one, or some combination, of the above is causing 51.4 percent of the faculty to disagree with the idea that current workload assignments allow adequate time to participate in
scholarship and research. Part-time faculty are not required to advise students or serve on committees although some do, leaving the majority of this important work to fulltime faculty.

**Teaching**

The Spring 2012 Faculty-Staff Survey reveals that three quarters to nearly 90% of the faculty agree that WCSU emphasizes its mission and purposes in setting priorities for staffing, establishing a budget, technology, enrollment goals, planning for the future, and self-evaluation. There have been improvements in technology throughout the institution over the past five years that have enhanced its ability to deliver course content through a variety of means. There remain, however, areas within some departments that hold to traditional delivery systems, e.g., lecture/demonstration. Many departments have yet to implement and utilize Blackboard Learn in their mainstream curricula. Other areas utilize technology to enhance traditional forms of delivery and/or assessment. For example, the Department of Education and Education Psychology utilizes the TK20 system to serve as a repository of assessment data, much of which is collected and analyzed using traditional assessment tools (written exams, essays, etc.) The Department of Music employs digital video technology to record performance examinations (juries). While the technology enhances the assessment process, the content of the course remains traditional, based on the fundamentals of the discipline.

Technology in the classrooms and labs has been facilitated through the University Information Technology Committee (ITC), which operates as a conduit between the faculty, Information Technology & Innovation, and the Chief Information Officer. This has proven to be effective and has resulted in the majority of classrooms being equipped with technology applicable to the general student population and/or to specific program areas.

Opportunities for students to engage in scholarly and creative activity at the undergraduate level vary from department to department and are dependent upon the curricular requirements according to specific disciplines. In the areas that require capstone courses, student scholarship and creative work appears to be ongoing and in many cases outstanding, with significant support and encouragement from faculty members. WestConn Research Day has proven to be an effective forum for undergraduate and graduate scholarship and creative activity, as have portfolio exhibitions in the BA and MFA in Visual Arts programs.

While the University supports a Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), participation in CELT workshops remains a challenge, as does participation in training in Blackboard (Vista and Learn) course management systems. Participation is primarily by fulltime faculty, and as a result, many part-time faculty members have yet to implement Blackboard or other technological innovations.

**Academic Organization and Governance Policy and Procedure**

University citizenship in the form of contributing service is a priority where shared governance is practiced. WCSU faculty devote considerable effort and time to centers, committees, and other units of service at all levels of the University and the greater Danbury area. Taking the 2011-12 University Senate membership and committee roster as an example of service to the University, we see a high percentage of participation. There were 194 positions listed (combining membership in committees, centers, etc.), with 23 vacancies (“TBA”). Some faculty serve on
multiple committees, resulting in 118 people serving in various capacities. This does not include the many school committees and departmental sub-committees in which faculty members contribute service to the institution.

**Advising and Academic Integrity**

Advising at WCSU is considered a critical process for student success and is articulated as such in the Strategic Plan:

*Improve and enrich the advising experience so that both faculty and students value advising as an integral part of life at a university.* (Goal 5.5)

and;

*Support and promote quality academic advising as an attribute of outstanding faculty, especially as related to ensuring student success.* (Goal 1.4)

Academic advising continues to be a prominent issue at WCSU; there is much departmental discussion, mentoring of new faculty, and continued emphasis on improving advising, the techniques and mechanics of advising, and educating students to be effective advisees. The CAPP (degree evaluation program in Banner) is updated as needed so that Banner can produce accurate reports to students and advisors, however, it is extremely difficult to keep the system 100% accurate, resulting in cases of inaccurate degree evaluation. The MAP-Works system is new to the University and currently in the implementation phase. The expectation is that this program will contribute to more intensive advising for WCSU at-risk students, as it has at other universities.

Issues related to academic integrity, especially with regard to academic honesty as defined by the institution continue to provide challenges to students, faculty and the administration. Although WCSU’s Academic Honesty Policy is published both in hard copy and online, many students and faculty members, especially part-time faculty members, remain confused about the policy (30). The policy for grade appeals is also presented clearly, yet many students and faculty have difficulty following the procedures in a timely manner.

**Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activity**

WCSU Faculty are actively engaged in significant and relevant scholarship, research and creative activity. Faculty publications, exhibitions, recordings, performances, conference papers and other creative activity are reported to the Provost and President annually by department. Many faculty have secured grants from outside organizations to support their research. External grants in 2011-12 ranged from $2,000 in Social Work to $97,654 in Chemistry and $189,135 in Biology. Departmental annual reports are available electronically and grants summaries are available from the Office of Sponsored Research.

Although the institution rigorously supports scholarship, research, and creative activity, many of these efforts are not known publically, or even within the institution. Until recently, the University conducted a Faculty Recognition event and published a list of creative activity across the University. The Faculty Development and Recognition Committee is considering new and
innovative ways to recognize WCSU’s outstanding level of faculty scholarship and creative work.

Projection

WCSU Faculty members are supported by a very strong collective bargaining agreement that remains in effect through 2016. The collective bargaining agreement and its provisions for salary, benefits, evaluation, academic freedom, professional development, and shared governance have established an atmosphere of stability and trust, even in a less than optimal economic climate.

As the institution moves forward, it is critical that it continue to utilize its Strategic Plan and its mission and purposes to guide the decision making process. WCSU’s commitment to support faculty is clearly articulated in its Strategic Plan where Goal 1 states that the institution will “Retain and attract outstanding faculty who excel in their subject area and discipline and are committed to excellence in teaching, ensuring student success and fostering a diverse academic community” (see Appendix: Standard 5: 21). Many of the initiatives of Goal 1 are already in place, or are currently being implemented. These include:

- Define the qualifications and characteristics that typify outstanding faculty for WCSU and determine how to assess those credentials in candidates. Include excellence in subject area and discipline, commitment to excellence in teaching, excellence in scholarship and creative activities, commitment to student success, and commitment to fostering a diverse academic community.
- Clearly communicate in recruitment materials and emphasize in the recruitment process the preferred characteristics and qualifications for WCSU as defined above. Establish the preferred qualifications as employment objectives where appropriate.
- Schedule courses so that our class sizes fit the recommendations of disciplinary and/or accrediting bodies.
- Provide quality facilities and technological infrastructure.
- Hire fulltime faculty adequate to the needs of the students and their programs of choice. Develop objective criteria for determining appropriate numbers of faculty (adjunct credits, overload credits, etc).

There are numerous sub-goals within Goal 1 that articulate a variety of initiatives to enhance excellence in teaching, scholarship and student success that have yet to be implemented, but would enhance the institution’s ability to improve its ability to attract and retain outstanding faculty. These include:

- (Provide) flexibility in the total compensation package to attract and retain strong faculty, including exploring third-party supplements of negotiated faculty salaries, (e.g.: University Foundation, endowed chairs, etc.).
- (Provide) adequate office space and clerical, secretarial, and technical support for all faculty, fulltime and part-time.
- Reduced load in first year for new faculty.
- Research/creative activities “start-up” funds for new faculty.
The implementation of the majority of these initiatives is dependent upon the CSU-AAUP Bargaining Agreement, such as providing for flexibility in the total compensation package. In this case, it may be difficult to elicit change until 2015 when contract negotiations begin.

In terms of teaching and advising, faculty will continue to emphasize quality instruction and advising as the primary avenue to fulfilling the University’s mission and purposes, with a focus on meeting the initiatives identified in the Strategic Plan. These initiatives include:

- **Explore additional support for students in reading and developmental math.** This is already taking shape as the “Math Emporium,” scheduled for implementation in Fall of 2013. (Goal 5.3)

- **All programs eligible for accreditation will develop a plan to achieve this quality standard; those without accrediting bodies will engage in program review involving outside experts in their discipline.** Accreditation and re-accreditation in those programs that are eligible requires periodic evaluation of instructional methods and learning outcomes. WCSU’s recently revised Academic Program Review process (see Appendix: Standard 5: 14) mirrors many best practices of discipline-specific accrediting organizations, thereby providing all programs with a feedback loop that will inform innovation and changes in instructional methodology. (Goal 4.3.A)

- **(Provide) opportunities for faculty members to explore new modes of course delivery, teaching tools, and classroom management.** This has begun with the implementation of the Math Emporium as well as with the continued improvement of support for Banner Learn. (Goal 1.3.10)

- **Offer new training programs for advisors that include input from student, staff, faculty and professional associations, recognizing the different types of advisement that are necessary for fostering student success.** The implementation of MAP-Works has potential to assist with identifying at-risk students and providing more effective advising. In addition, periodic training for faculty advisors remains an essential, if elusive goal. (Goal 1.4.E)

- **Assess effectiveness of academic advisement; develop and apply advisement assessment tools.** To date, a process for evaluating the effective of academic advisement has not been established. This remains a priority for increasing student success and retention.

**Institutional Effectiveness**

Short and mid-term support for faculty is evaluated by Department Chairs and Deans in consultation with faculty members and is directly related to the Strategic Plan and the mission and purposes of the institution, school and department. For example, a recent re-assessment of the Strategic Plan resulted in a committee report regarding the recruitment and retention of faculty as related to current levels of budget and contractual constraints (34).

In the broadest sense, WCSU, as a member of ConnSCU, periodically evaluates the sufficiency and support for the faculty during contract negotiations related to the CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement. As a result of the recent concession negotiation between the State of Connecticut and the State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition (SEBAC), the 2007-2011 Collective Bargaining Agreement was mutually extended by the parties through August of 2016.
Negotiations for a new agreement should commence in the Fall of 2015. The majority of processes and procedures that directly affect support of faculty are articulated in the contract.

Formal program review, as articulated in the faculty handbook, provides specific review criteria relative to mission and purposes, student learning outcomes, resources (including sufficiency and support for faculty), viability and public disclosure/integrity. As a part of the formal review process, all departments are required to submit an evaluation of the above as well as projections for the future (see Appendix: Standard 5: 14).

Programs in Chemistry, Counseling, Education, Music, Nursing and Social Work participate in periodic re-accreditation review and are subject to the accreditation standards relative to faculty support, teaching, advising, scholarship and service specific to each department’s mission and purposes. The departments of Art and Theatre are in the final stages of initial accreditation review through the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) and the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST). The Ancell School of Business is completing its self-study for accreditation through the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB).

The effectiveness of individual faculty members in teaching, advising, scholarship, service, and professional development is evaluated in annual non-tenured faculty evaluation and professional assessment of tenured faculty. The results of faculty evaluation, professional assessment, program review and accreditation review all are used in the planning process and can be seen throughout the institutions Strategic Plan. The use of periodic evaluation in WCSU’s planning process engages all constituencies of the University and members of the outside community and is especially evident in the Strategic Assessment Reports (see Appendix: Standard 5: 37).
Standard VI

Students

Description

Western Connecticut State University’s mission is “to meet the educational needs of a diversified student body through instruction, scholarship and public service.” It seeks to do so by capitalizing on outstanding faculty, a premium location and by creating quality academic programs and a rich student-focused environment. Several departments work hard to provide our students with an outstanding academic experience. Admissions, Student Financial Services, Advising, Registrar’s Office and Academic Support Services report to the Provost. Other departments report to the Vice President for Student Affairs. Communication across each of the offices as well as across the three departments is essential for the delivery of integrated services in support of our students achieving success. Academic Affairs and Student Affairs set a strong tone for the departments.

Collaboration happens at the university-wide level with such programs as new student orientation, working with “at risk” students and the development of strong student-support systems. Collaboration happens at the department level in such areas as the Career Development Center, Residence Life working with the Honors Program to create and manage a special Honors Housing option and the dean of students working with individual faculty and academic deans to respond to the needs of “at risk” students.

Fall Semester Admissions

Admissions counselors meet with prospective students, parents and guidance counselors in the Admissions Office and at various high school visits, open houses and college fairs. Admissions criteria and requirements are published in both print and electronic versions. In addition, information is sent to high schools and community colleges in the states of Connecticut, New York and New Jersey. The Admissions Office and faculty both individually and through the Enrollment Management Committee continually address the qualifications of the incoming class as they relate to standards. The university administers placement tests in Mathematics, Writing, Chemistry and foreign language.

As shown in the DATA FIRST tables, WCSU became slightly more selective in first-time freshman admissions, accepting only 59% of those who applied in 2012, compared to 62.4%, 63.4% and 62.2% in the prior three years (see Appendix: Standard VI: 1). WCSU uses SAT Composite Score (Critical Reading plus Mathematics) as one indicator of the quality of first-time students. (This measure decreased by 1.8% between 2009 and 2012.)

In the area of transfer admissions, applications increased by 1.4%, acceptances increased by 4.5%, and enrolled students decreased by 2.9% between 2009 and 2012 (see Appendix: Standard VI: 2).
**Fall Census Data**

WCSU classifies enrolled students as first-, second-, third- or fourth-year according to the number of credits completed at the time of the fall semester third week census (less than 30, 30-59.5, 60-89.5, and 90 or more, respectively). Over the last four years, the FTE of first-year students decreased by 22.8%, compared to a negligible decrease (0.3%) for second-year, an increase of 7.3% for third-year, and an increase of 13.7% for fourth-year. The FTE of unclassified non-matriculated students increased by 24.5%.

Over the same period, undergraduate FTE decreased by 3.7%, graduate FTE decreased by 36.1%, and total FTE decreased by 5.9%. Total FTE peaked in 2010 and then declined by 3.4% and 4.3% in the two succeeding years.

**Financial Aid, Debt, and Developmental Courses**

WCSU describes the students it seeks to serve on its official website. There are separate guidelines for first-time freshmen, transfers, and graduate students.

Annual expenditures for student financial aid total approximately $43.1 million. Three-quarters of the aid comes from federal sources, including $26 million in loans and $6.3 million in grants. State aid comprises $5.3 million, private aid $4.7 million, and institutional aid $620,000.

Student aid from all sources increased by 11.4% from FY 2010 to FY 2012. Although private grants and scholarships decreased between 2010 and 2011, the three-year comparison yielded an increase of 12.6% (see Appendix: Standard VI: 3).

Approximately 88% of undergraduate students and 86% of graduate students graduate with debt. This debt increased sharply between 2011 and 2012 (from 53% and 28%, respectively). The average debt for students leaving with bachelors’ degrees increased by 27.3% over three years (from $26,000 to $33,095), but remained relatively unchanged for students leaving with Masters’ degrees (from $22,000 to $25,000 to $21,000) (see Appendix: Standard VI: 4).

Developmental courses are defined as courses which do not count toward the credits needed for graduation. In Fall 2009, the percentage of students in developmental courses was 36.7 in Mathematics and 6.0 in Writing (English). In Fall 2010, the percentages were 22.6 and 7.2, respectively. In Fall 2011 and Fall 2012 no remedial coursework was offered by WCSU as a direct result of a State mandate for colleges and universities not to offer remedial education.

SERIES-S tables reveal the one-year retention rate at 69% for the first-time full-time (FTFT) cohort matriculating in Fall 2011 (596 of 870). The six-year graduation rate was 42% for the FTFT cohort matriculating in Fall 2006. Enrollment management goals are 75 percent and 50 percent, respectively.
Student Affairs

During academic year 2005-2006, the Division of Student Affairs revised its mission and vision statements to build on the university-wide Values & Visions work initiated by the university president in the previous year. The revised mission statement’s goal was to create a seamless learning environment and become a more student-centered, service-oriented campus. The revised vision statement hoped to increase student retention, to emphasize the role of leadership in transforming lives and to focus on working closer with Academic Affairs. To that end, the Academic Vice President and the Vice President for Student Affairs sought greater collaboration on many levels. These included expansion of the Student Concern Team (threat assessment) to include faculty and academic deans; the development of the Hancock Student Leadership Program; and the agreement between the two vice presidents to have the Dean of Students join the Provost’s regular meetings with the academic deans.

Admissions, Orientation, Financial Aid

Creating a true living-learning community requires the collaboration across all offices that are involved with the recruitment, admission and orientation of new students and continues throughout a student’s time at Western Connecticut State University. Under the direction of the Provost, the Admissions Office is responsible for the recruitment and admission of freshmen and transfer students. The Admissions Office is also responsible for internal transfer of students and re-entry of undergraduates who left the university. This department also admits international and ISEP (incoming study abroad) students.

Underprepared students and students with special needs are supported throughout their educational program through several departments at the university. The Educational Achievement and Access Program (EAP), a joint program of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, provides underprepared students with the opportunity and support they need to obtain a college education. This consists of a challenging five-week residential summer program which includes academic classes, skills development programs and continued support throughout the academic year. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the university is fully committed to meeting its responsibilities to admit and provide reasonable accommodations and appropriate services to qualified students who have a disability.

All first time and transfer students are invited to attend an Orientation to the university. Students entering in the fall are encouraged to attend a one-day program in June which focuses on getting students registered, meeting other students and faculty and getting student IDs and taking care of other details that will help them enter seamlessly into university life. Additionally, a four-day Orientation in the fall focuses on getting students connected on a broader level. It includes social activities and addresses a wide range of transitional issues relevant to their first semester needs. Orientation for students entering in January is less extensive but still attempts to help students make a smooth transition to university life. The orientation programs are a collaborative effort of academic and student affairs and other administrative units of the university. A standing Orientation Committee chaired by the Dean of Students oversees these efforts.

Student financial aid is administered through the Office of Student Financial Services which is responsible for managing all federal, state and institutional grants, loans and scholarships as well
as the University Student Employment Program. The Office also is responsible for certifying the Veteran’s Educational Benefits Program. Additional support for veterans comes through the Vice President for Student Affairs Office (see Appendix: Standard VI: 5).

All new first year students are pre-registered for their first semester by the Registrar’s Office while all transfer students register themselves in consultation with advisors/summer advisors working out of the Registrar’s Office (see Appendix: Standard VI: 6).

All students admitted to the university are provided with academic advising. Students who have not declared a major are advised through the Academic Advising Center while students who have declared their major work with a full-time faculty advisor from their respective major department. Although not directly linked with the Academic Advising program, the Career Development Center (CDC) provides a wide range of programs to approximately 2,400 students annually. The CDC assists students with career planning and job searches. The Center hosts workshops on job search strategies, conducts a cooperative education program to provide students with experience related to major or career interests, an annual career fair, an etiquette dinner and other events (see Appendix: Standard VI: 7).

**Student Support Services**

WCSU students capitalize on a wide range of support services. The Dean of Arts & Sciences oversees a Math Clinic, a Writing Lab and a Tutoring Resource Center. These facilities provide one-on-one and group tutoring (see Appendix: Standard VI: 8). There is also a Computer Science Clinic located on the Westside campus for students needing assistance in computer science courses.

The Office of AccessAbility Services coordinates and provides accommodations and support services to students with all types of disabilities that impact their educational experience. The efforts of this office complement WCSU’s overall commitment to diversity. Each semester, the office works with approximately 400 students with documented disabilities in order to provide reasonable accommodations, advocacy, academic coaching, assistive technology, writing assistance, and support for foreign language alternatives (where appropriate). Professional development workshops and individual consultations are provided to faculty and staff. Topics range from disability laws to best practices for creating an accessible and inclusive classroom environment (see Appendix: Standard VI: 9). Programs are publicized in admissions materials, at open houses, and university orientations, including a specialized orientation program for incoming students with disabilities and their parents.

AccessAbility Services moved to new office space in Higgins Annex 017 during the fall of 2010 in an effort to better accommodate the growth of its programs and services. Permanent staffing includes a full-time coordinator, a secretary, three part-time university assistant positions to provide individual academic coaching, accommodation coordination and writing assistance.

WCSU recognizes the need to help students with needs that extend beyond practical concerns. To that end, the university strives to offer services that address students’ physical, mental and spiritual concerns. WCSU provides primary health care (Health Service), mental health care (Counseling Center) and Substance Abuse Prevention Services (CHOICES Program). CHOICES works closely with Judicial Affairs, other campus departments and the broader Danbury community to identify at-risk students and
provide assessment, screening and intervention services. The university also provides spiritual support for students through an Office of Campus Ministries.

**Residence Life**

The university houses approximately one third of its full-time undergraduate students in on-campus housing. There are three residence halls on the Midtown campus and three apartment style residence halls on the Westside campus. The combined residence halls can accommodate 1,675 students (see Appendix: Standard VI: 10).

Although residence halls provide the primary source of activities and programs for residential students, the Student Center on the Midtown campus and the Campus Center on the Westside campus serve as hubs of campus life for both residential and commuter students. Student Center and Campus Center staffs are responsible for the administration and operation of the buildings as well as the auxiliary services (see Appendix: Standard VI: 11).

The Department of Residence Life, along with the Campus and Student Center (CSC) staff, work closely with the University Police Department to create safe living and safe learning environments across the two campuses. The fully certified Police Department is responsible for maintaining a safe and secure environment on campus and to educate the community in campus safety. University Police provides 24-hour coverage to both campuses through the use of vehicle, foot and bicycle patrol units.

With the opening of the Westside Campus Center in Fall 2007, the functions of the previous Student Center/Student Life Office were divided into separate areas under the direction of a Director for Student Centers Operations and an Associate Director for Student Life/Student Activities (see Appendix: Standard VI: 12).

**Athletics, Student Life, Leadership, Campus Governance**

The Department of Athletics reports directly to the Vice President for Student Affairs. The Student Life/Recreation Office reports to the Dean of Students. These departments provide opportunities for intercollegiate competition, club sports, recreation, intramurals and fitness centers on both campuses. Students participate in fourteen varsity sports, five club sports and a variety of intramurals throughout the year. Approximately three hundred athletes participate in varsity sports annually (see Appendix: Standard VI: 13). The freshman-to-sophomore retention rate for male and female athletes (80% and 85%, respectively) exceeds the rate for non-athletes (66% for males, 72% for females).

In addition to participation in campus activities and organizations, students have many opportunities to serve in leadership positions and campus governance. These include the Student Government Association (SGA), Inter Residence Hall Association (IRHA), and Greek Council. Each of these organizations serves as the governing body of its respective area. Other student leadership include the select Hancock Student Leadership Program and the Student Athletic Advisory Committee. The Student Life Office also provides leadership training, as do the Residence Life Office (resident assistant, academic resource mentor), Information Technology & Innovation (student employees), and the Campus Center/Student Center (student employees) (see Appendix: Standard VI: 14).
The Division of Student Affairs and other student-centered departments continue to attract outstanding and qualified professional staff. Western Connecticut State University and the State University System have developed certain institutional values and expectations. All members of the university are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with these values and expectations. The Office of Judicial Affairs is responsible for administering the student discipline system. All Western Connecticut State University students are expected to adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in the Student Code of Conduct and Statement of Judicial Procedures (see Appendix: Standard VI: 15).

Following the violence at Virginia Tech and other universities around the country, WCSU organized a risk assessment committee comprised of both academic and non-academic staff. Formed in 2007, the Student Concern Team (SCT) is charged with responding to faculty and staff concerns regarding student behavior and offer programs and workshops designed to heighten awareness of behavior that may signal serious problems.

One of the most important steps in on-going assessment of Student Affairs services was initiated in academic year 2005-2006 using the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS). The results have been used for service improvement, the development of action plans and, in some cases, the development of learning outcomes. Every department within Student Affairs completed a self-study using the CAS Standards.

Work continues on the strategic goals that emerged from the President’s “Values and Vision” process begun in 2004. The Vice President for Student Affairs chaired the team that reviewed one of the goals focusing on the creation of an enriching and supportive student-focused environment, one that fosters a holistic approach to intellectual and social growth and prepares students to be productive citizens of the State of Connecticut (see Appendix: Standard VI: 16).

**Appraisal**

The past few years have been challenging to higher education in general and certainly to the State of Connecticut and its state universities. Generally speaking, there has been support for programs and services within Standard 6, yet the economic climate of the state and at the national level remain a concern in terms of potential impact on WCSU’s ability to meet the needs of students.

Enrollment at the university grew and then began to decline since the 2007-2008 fifth year report. The high point in fulltime undergraduate enrollment was Fall 2010 with 4,905 students. The university uses SAT Composite Score (Critical Reading plus Mathematics) as one indicator of the quality of first-time students. In Fall 2011, the university stopped providing remedial courses for those students who don’t place in the necessary level for math and English (see Appendix: Standard VI: 17).

Additional efforts to support enrollment include introduction of an SAT-optional program, social media marketing, direct-mail advertising, fall and spring open houses, Accepted Student Day, bus trips from urban centers, a student shadow program, two high school counselor lunches and campus tours throughout the year. The SAT-optional program is an internal Admissions option
which allows Admissions to look at students in the top 30% of their class with a B+ average and consistent high school performance and offer university acceptance without the minimum SAT requirement.

On average thirty-five students are enrolled in the EAP program annually. Retention rates have been increasing with the past few cohorts. Academic success data are also encouraging. At the end of the Fall 2009 semester, sixty-four percent of the 2009 cohort maintained a GPA of 2.0 or higher (see Appendix: Standard VI: 18).

In its May 8, 2012 preliminary report to the campus community, the team exploring the university’s strategic goal of being an affordable public university with the characteristics of New England’s best small private universities found that WCSU is on the path of fostering student scholars who are also engaged citizens (see Appendix: Standard VI: 19). While academic teaching and performance is largely responsible for moving the university closer to fulfilling this goal, the team pointed out that WCSU’s extensive extra-curricular activities and programs also contributed. Two areas highlighted in the report are the Career Development Center and the Office of Residence Life.

Helping students to get connected with others is a fundamental goal of the Division of Student Affairs. More than half of the graduating seniors participating in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in 2011 indicated that their participation in co-curricular activities contributed to their total educational experience (see Appendix: Standard VI: 20).

In its Spring 2012 preliminary report to the campus community, the team exploring the university’s strategic goal concerning the University’s student-centered focus recommended that the university continue to promote Residence Life programming, Clubs’ Carnival (part of Welcome Week for all new students in the fall) and other events that enhance student engagement (see Appendix: Standard VI: 21).

The team also found that only 52% of seniors indicated that their primary source of academic advising during the current academic year was their actual academic advisor. To address this issue, the team made several recommendations which focused on creating a stronger relationship between the student and his/her advisor.

Six-year graduation rates have improved since the last NEASC report. According to Worksheet 10 of the FY13 Spending Plan, 43.5% of the Fall 2004 first-time fulltime cohort received bachelor’s degrees within six years, compared to 33.3% of the corresponding Fall 1999 cohort. Although there was a recent small decline in the six-year graduation rate (40.1% for the Fall 2005 cohort), we are encouraged by improvements in four-year rates for the 2006 and 2007 cohorts. The team recommended that the university implement a First Year Experience Program as well as develop learning communities/cohorts (see Appendix: Standard VI: 22). Student Affairs remains committed to working with Academic Affairs programs like the Explorer Program. We have found that students completing the first year with at least 24 credits and a GPA of 2.0 are much more likely to persist to graduation than their counterparts. Therefore, any efforts to improve these two measures of academic progress will likely result in improved graduation rates (see Appendix: Standard VI: 23).
Students entering colleges and universities today face challenges of a new intensity or altogether previously unseen. These issues may be academic in nature; they may involve physical or mental health concerns; they might be interpersonal, family-related, financial or a combination of several of the aforementioned. Ultimately, students are simply bringing more “baggage” to school; therefore, the development of “at-risk” support programs is crucial. The exploration team recommended increasing resources in such support areas as counseling; reviewing university processes that concern student needs, and providing consistent information across the university. Such improvements will advance the university’s goal of creating a true student-centered focus.

Despite the above concerns, there is much good news: 89% of recent graduates report being satisfied or very satisfied with their experience at WCSU and 89% would recommend WCSU to a prospective student (see Appendix: Standard VI: 24).

Over the past few years the Orientation Committee focused on refining the process of getting students connected to the university on both an academic and non-academic level. All fulltime students have been pre-registered for the fall prior to their June orientation arrival. At the orientation, students meet within their departments to learn more details about their programs. Students also have an opportunity to make appropriate adjustments to their schedules.

Additionally, a new program, “Voices of Students,” introduces incoming students to a wide range of scenarios they may experience on campus and serves as an introduction to a series of information sessions, workshops and speakers provided over the course of the fall semester. Together, these sessions make students aware of information and programs at a developmentally appropriate time. Parent programs were also introduced to the June and Welcome Week meetings to provide parents with information, student services and available programs. Parents have responded very favorably to all these programs.

As enrollment increased over the years leading up to 2010-2011, funding levels of federal, state and institutional money remained constant (see Appendix: Standard VI: 25). More recent years have seen a reduction which can be attributed to the state of Connecticut’s current financial situation. Staffing has remained below the current NAASFAA-Staffing Predictor Model which should be 10 FTE. (WCSU is currently at 5 FTE.) These deficits continue to pose a challenge to providing adequate service to our students.

The Registrar’s Office recently implemented Ad Astra Scheduling module optimizes class assignments and better utilizes classroom space with the intent to more evenly distribute the classes and increase student enrollment in various sections. A bonus for students is their continued ability to register for classes electronically once they have obtained a Personal Identification Number (PIN) from their advisers (see Appendix: Standard VI: 26).

A permanent office for the Academic Advising Center was established in Higgins Hall in 2003 and is staffed with three full-time professional advisors, a full-time director, a full-time secretary and several part-time workers. The center has expanded services to include change of major counseling and has added computers for students to self-register. A new “General Education Requirements” flyer provides students with a simple, easily accessible summary of all such information. The center also provides online testing and follow-up sessions to review results. Facebook and Twitter accounts have been established in an effort to get more students involved.
with academic advising. To meet the need of students taking only evening classes, the center offers evening advisement by appointment.

The Career Development Center (CDC) evaluates the quality and effectiveness of its services through a number of surveys and instruments including student and employer evaluations. Students and employers generally rate CDC programs and service very positively. Helping with assessment learning outcomes has also been a goal of the CDC. The Center has assisted the Ancell School of Business in assessing business students who were involved in Co-op Programs.

WCSU’s academic support services provide a wide range of services to students. These services have sought out ways to reach out to serve a wider student audience. The Strategic Vision Assessment Team for “How Real is the University’s Student-Center Focus” supports these kinds of efforts and has recommended that the centers seek to educate the university community about support systems and provide timely interventions for “at-risk” students (see Appendix: Standard VI: 27).

A new coordinator to work with students with disabilities was hired in August 2012. She discovered that current practices, policies and procedures are not up-to-date with best practices outlined in Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) Program Standards and Performance (see Appendix: Standard VI: 28). Additionally, as is common with many university offices that serve students with disabilities, WCSU harbors a growing population of students with psychological disabilities and students on the autism spectrum. A university assistant currently provides mental health related counseling to these students; however, such services would be more appropriately centered in the Counseling Office (see Appendix: Standard VI: 29). Related issues concern auditory confidentiality, office space, and physical safety of students and staff, especially in light of recent incidents at other schools and colleges. Also, the number of exams proctored in the office simultaneously is limited due to limited space in the office conference room.

Opening in the Fall 2009 semester, the veterans’ lounge in the Midtown Student Center has become a key location for vets to come together. Attendance in the lounge has been steadily growing with continued support from external groups and the university. Each semester a welcome mailing goes out to all veterans informing them about services, resources and a list of the key offices on campus with location, liaison, and telephone information. This single correspondence has played a major part in enhancing connections to the vets (see Appendix: Standard VI: 30).

A number of issues have impacted the Office of Residence Life’s operations. Facilities need renovation, as do the programs offered and their delivery method; including staff training, the budget for which has actually decreased over the last ten years. Academic year 2012-2013 marked the first time that part-time matriculated students were allowed to live in on-campus housing. Unfortunately, there was little interest. The other major issue facing the department is its cost structure. As changes are considered, Residence Life needs to address the question of whether or not its price point is getting too expensive for WCSU students. Although the Residence Life Office is facing a number of challenging issues, they have implemented a number of new systems to enhance operations. The development of Unimatrix to cover for what
is missing in Banner; ARM program focusing on academic coaching and development of a newsletter; using Facebook and Twitter for several years to enhance communication to students and potential residents.

Over the past several years, Campus and Student Centers/Auxiliary Services have expanded to include the opening of the new Westside Campus Center, the expansion of hours and services at The Daily Grind, management of the university box office. Campus and Student Centers/Auxiliary Services also acts as liaison between the bookstore, food service, vending and shuttle service. In Fall 2011, the department resumed responsibility for testing services after having relinquished them to Academic Affairs for several years. Connections with the bookstore, food services and shuttle services have improved and resulted in higher levels of satisfaction among students. Operations such as the box office, conference services and fiscal management of student activities funds have also improved.

One of the accomplishments of the department is its leadership in the development of an assessment program that has been built into student leadership training using Blackboard. Other accomplishments include expansion of services in the Bookstore including expansion of used textbook buybacks and sales, exposure on Facebook, web orders and assistance with meeting HEOA requirements. Dining service has also improved services with an expanded website that includes menus; greater theme nights; collaboration with campus activities such as the Health Fair; and expansion of services for students with dietary needs (see Appendix: Standard VI: 31).

The shuttle service has been one of the main challenges. Previously, there was no direct day-to-day liaison between the service provider and students. With the CSC taking over contact of the shuttle, student complaints have declined, new initiatives such as GPS have been explored and ridership is strong.

The primary activity of Campus Ministries revolves around two organizations – the Newman Center/Newman Club and the Protestant Campus Ministries. The Jewish Student Organization has had difficulty garnering enough student support to be active. Bi-weekly Newman Dinners serve as a major attraction to students of all faiths. Students gather for a free meal and meet and talk with other attending students, faculty and staff. The Newman Club (funded by SGA) and Newman Center provide regular services and programs that meet the needs of the campus. Protestant Campus Ministries has also had an ongoing Wednesday evening program that has been very active.

In recent years, physical and mental health services (including substance abuse services) have focused on assessing student learning outcomes and on wellness options. Of all students participating in the Fall 2011 Health Fair, 86% indicated that they were considering a lifestyle change. Recreation, Health Service, the Counseling Center, CHOICES and other organizations have worked collaboratively to provide “Student Health 101” to all undergraduate students as part of their wellness outreach. Departments will continue to collaborate to educate and bring wellness programming to the student body and target populations identified through needs assessments, focus groups and the nationally normed Core survey (see Appendix: Standard VI: 32).

In the Counseling Center, case-loads remain high and have grown significantly over the past few years not only in terms of number of students seeking support but also in the increasing
intensity and multiplicity of issues students face. A total of almost 1,800 student sessions were held this past academic year.

Other recent accomplishments include the purchase of the software package, Titanium, which will allow computerization of transactions and records. The implementation of an “on-call” emergency response system on a 24-hour basis is on campus and ready for implementation. With the increase in student needs in recent years, outreach to faculty for consultations and the development of support to Residence Life staff continue to grow. Campus and Student Centers/Auxiliary Services has also built a strong relationship with Danbury Hospital in terms of providing support for students who need prescriptions as well as in creating greater connections for students who are transported to the emergency room for mental health emergencies.

During calendar year 2012, the Police Department actively participated in over fifty personal safety and security educational programs with over 1,100 face to face contacts with students, staff and faculty. The department has also collaborated with the CHOICES Office, Health Service, AccessAbility Services and Residence Life to present community awareness and safety initiatives (see Appendix: Standard VI: 33).

The challenges that face Student Life/Activities revolve around two main themes: staffing and budget. Although the department now includes the merged Recreation and Student Life Departments, there is still no secretarial support. (The position was lost when the office was separated from the CSC Department.) Although the Associate Director for Student Life/Activities is the head of the department, the actual position of Director has been vacant for six years since the separation of the department from the Student Center and Campus Center programs. An additional concern: there is no department budget to speak of which means that the department is not able to fund programs or training beyond the most basic. And still another problem: the department does not oversee the management of the student activities fee as is typical on most college campuses. (This oversight currently is under the management of the Director of Campus and Student Centers.)

Greek Letter Organizations (GLO), with one hundred seventy-five members, have witnessed various cycles of high participation followed by difficult recruiting years. GLO remain a major way in which commuter students “connect” to campus and overall they remain visible and active across campus life. With the creation of the Assistant Dean of Students position in 2006-2007, the GLO have had a real link to university administration.

There has been a commitment across WCSU in the last few years to helping commuter students feel more a part of the university. Recently the SGA recognized and funded the Commuter Student Organization which sponsors multiple programs, holds bi-weekly meetings, established a Commuter Student web and Facebook page and produces the Commuter Student E-Newsletter (see Appendix: Standard VI: 34).

The Athletics Department and head coaches continue to experience difficulties in the recruitment of prospective student athletes who project to be successful in both the classroom and competition. These efforts are economic and financial-aid based. More athletes are choosing to commute rather than live on campus. Long term, this decision presents problems regarding levels of participation. Recreation currently faces two main issues: inadequate funding and lack of available and proper facilities. The lack of funding results in inadequate programming. Facilities
are less than one-third of the recommended square footage for an institution our size (see Appendix: Standard VI: 35).

The SGA has achieved much over the past several years. With the assistance of Information Technology & Innovation, the SGA has created an online election system where students can vote in SGA elections from their own computer. The SGA has re-designed the budget request process, thus allowing clubs more opportunity to better plan events. Also, SGA took the lead in creating stronger campus pride by creating a “WestConn Pride Campaign” and “WestConn Wednesdays” when students are encouraged to wear WCSU shirts and other “WestConn” gear.

Over the last several years the Office of Judicial Affairs has created a University Judicial Board system with three-person panels that are comprised of faculty, administrators, and students. There are currently 30 members of the university community on this board who are available to serve on any hearing board. Board members are thoroughly trained on student rights. Another recent initiative is the Judicial Advocates program. Composed of student volunteers, Judicial Advocates provides support for the accused student and the victim prior to, during and/or following a hearing. Since completing the CAS Standards, the Office of Judicial Affairs has put into place several assessment pieces. Most recently, the office has focused on assessing students who have encountered the judicial process focusing on helping them gain better self-understanding of the judicial process, accepting responsibility for their behavior and learning from past mistakes.

Parent involvement in their student’s education is an area of recent emphasis. We are actively working to connect our parents with university programs and resources. This will not only have an impact on retention efforts, but it will also allow us to assist parents in helping students work toward degree completion, graduation and ultimately a professional career.

**Projection**

In looking at State of Connecticut demographic projections for the next several years, the Admissions Office recognizes a forthcoming decline of graduating seniors. Therefore, enrollment projections will need to be made with caution. The SAT-optional admission program implemented quietly in the Fall 2012 for incoming freshmen will be expanded with the anticipation that it will provide greater access for targeted students who would otherwise be successful at the university. This two-year pilot program is designed to address the changing demographics within the state of Connecticut. The implementation of the program is based on findings regarding the lack of correlation between student success and their standardized test scores, positive correlation between high school GPA and student success indicators, research into the bias of standardized testing against students of diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, and the changing demographics of the state of Connecticut (see Appendix: Standard VI: 36).

The EAP program is interested in providing a seminar that would focus on acclimating students to the university and to various academic and student services. Without expansion of the EAP program, many of the program’s students will have to attend a community college in lieu of a four-year state university. It is highly recommended that the part-time position of the EAP Advisor be expanded to a fulltime position.
Academic support centers need to provide projection updates. Math Clinic hours and tutor availability will continue to be adjusted based on student attendance and usage data. Attendance recording will be improved to more accurately track usage. The Clinic is beginning to make more use of experienced adjunct faculty and graduate students in order to enhance its available services.

The Registrar’s Office wants to further help students achieve their academic goals and complete their degrees. Course sequencing, registration processes, and student progress toward graduation will be evaluated to pinpoint support solutions that will improve graduation rates.

Although Orientation continues to grow and provide a wider range of programs and activities for both students and parents, more can be done to facilitate students’ transition from high school to college. There is great interest in developing an overnight orientation program in the summer for students and running a parallel one-day program for parents. Budget and staffing issues are the primary barriers to expanding in this direction but the Orientation Committee will continue to discuss development of such a program and move it forward as resources allow.

Although enrollments have fallen off recently, the Office of Student Financial Services is still below the current (NAFAA-Staffing Predictor Model) standard of FTE staffing to students. One means of responding to this shortfall is the establishment of additional online information and processes.

The development of a centralized Advising Center has been discussed. Such a center would combine campus tutoring labs, AccessAbility Services, academic support services labs and the Advising Center. The hope is to provide a centralized model for students to access academic support services for efficiencies. A dual-advisement program providing every student with both a faculty advisor and a professional advisor is also being considered. All first-year students would be provided dual-advisement or be included under the Advisement Center regardless of declaration of major (see Appendix: Standard VI: 37).

The Career Development Center (CDC) will continue to stay abreast of technology and social media innovation in order to better network with WCSU students. The CDC will also continue to work on assessment activities and to identify learning outcomes and employment information of students and graduates. The CDC will continue to utilize its on-line career system and new features to provide more access to career services. The CDC will continue to collaborate with academic departments and seek to expand employer development activities. However, with the CDC staff size remaining the same size for over twenty years, while enrollment has increased dramatically and demands for individual student services, special programs, data collection, and employer development increases, this presents a major challenge in the implementation of these initiatives.

Also in development and scheduled to be in place by Fall 2013 are revised policies and procedures, written in consultation with Best Practices as defined by the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) Program Standards and Performance Indicators.
AccessAbility Services is now providing academic related coaching, rather than counseling. The office hopes to increase student retention and success rates by providing one-on-one academic coaching for students with disabilities. Students in need of non-academic related counseling have been referred to the Counseling Center or to outside providers.

Concerning student housing: the university recognizes that decreased occupancy is reflective of the state – and nation’s – unstable economic conditions, as well as increased competition from local entities. In an attempt to halt this decline, we are changing from a one-semester housing contract to an academic-year contract and implementing a campaign to educate students on the hidden costs of living off campus and the positives of living on campus. Instituting the academic-year contract will bring WCSU in compliance with industry best practices and will help manage retention rates. Over the past few years, we have aggressively begun the process of renovating residence halls which have been long overdue for updating. Renovation of one of the oldest dorm facilities, Litchfield Hall, is currently being planned. Expansion of theme housing is also in the works.

For various socio-economic reasons, more students are choosing to commute. Programs and activities will continue to be developed and enhanced in order to ensure that commuter students are fully connected to the university and have opportunities to participate in campus life.

Additionally, plans to expand the GROW program will provide more opportunities for students to address academic, cultural, and community responsibility programming. The recently developed iMATTER program will continue to promote self-growth through education, use of resources, self-advocacy, community and personal involvement in the campus community. As the department moves forward, they are hoping to adopt a housing management system such as Adirondak. The implementation of this software package will allow the department to operate in a manner our students prefer; online and automated.

Campus and Student Center/Auxiliary Services faces many challenges in the coming years. Collaboration among team members has proved that much can be accomplished with minimum resources, inter-departmental cooperation and “can do” attitudes. The overall focus will be on refining student support systems and fostering cooperation among partners in preparation for the opening of the Visual & Performing Arts building on the Westside campus in Fall 2014.

The university’s health and mental health services also faces significant hurdles in the coming years. Health Service anticipates moving toward electronic medication prescriptions that will ease support of students on the Westside campus. The dramatic increase in the number of students arriving at school with personal issues presents the greatest challenge to the Counseling Center. Despite the Counseling Center’s success in meeting students’ needs, there has been somewhat of a revolving door of counselors and directors. This instability is due in part to attrition and lifestyle decisions, but the transitions have been too frequent for the center to “settle in” and build on its various successes. Once all its positions are filled, the Counseling Center can gain greater stability and build on its accomplishments (see Appendix: Standard VI: 38).

The University Police Department plans to continue its outreach to the community and to be active advocates of campus safety. They will continue to improve services and expand those
services in crime prevention, promoting safety and security for all members of the community. These efforts will be preserved in light of the reality of reduced resources.

Student Life/Student Activities hopes that improvement in State budgeting will advance several initiatives. These include funding the positions of director and secretary. Increased staffing would allow management of the Student Activity Fee and greater support for existing and planned programs. The latter include expanding the Center for Student Involvement to create more space for clubs, building a new recreation center on the Midtown campus (which would allow Student Life to expand its intramural and fitness programs) and offering more program series in addition to Western After Hours and Midtown Coffeehouse.

The Greek Letter Organization community goal is to strive to maintain its raised visibility on campus through sponsorship and participation in a variety of campus events, programs and activities. It will also look to implement a Three Stage CAS – Assessing Learning Outcomes measure for its new, continuing and graduating members.

Multicultural student organizations will endeavor to sponsor and support culturally related programs, events and activities. These events will assist in addressing academic, social and personal issues and work to build individual and community-wide cultural awareness and support.

The construction of a Midtown Campus Recreation Center would greatly enhance the function of the Recreation Department and allow it to better serve the university population. A Midtown Campus Recreation Center would provide adequate recreation space for our institution, allow for interdepartmental collaboration and foster new-student interest and retention. In the meantime, once the Visual and Performing Arts building opens on the Westside campus, the Recreation Department hopes to secure space in Higgins Annex and Berkshire Hall to help relieve some of its space availability issues. Recreation will continue to budget creatively and look to partner more with other clubs and organizations on campus to help support programming costs.

The SGA has several projects on its agenda for consideration in the immediate future. These include making their processes more club-friendly. The SGA is also very interested in creating a training program and/or retreat for SGA senators and in redesigning student organization officer training (see Appendix: Standard VI: 39).

Parent engagement efforts are to be encouraged through annual programs and activities such as Orientation, Homecoming and Graduation. Parents will also be invited to special invitational events including the fall and spring Theatre productions and the Annual President’s Lecture Series. A quarterly E-Newsletter is being designed for parents that will feature a targeted informational article, parent feedback and other connections to university resources.

Institutional Effectiveness

Western Connecticut State University regularly assesses the effectiveness of its student services, academic support programs and student achievement using a combination of surveys (BCSSE, NSSE, CORE, EBI, NCAA), the CAS Standards, etc. to allow it to review trends, identify
strengths and weaknesses, and prioritize allocation of resources. Many of the departments included in Standard VI are developing ongoing assessment instruments to evaluate and improve their services. Examples include: the Office of Student Financial Services is seeking to improve customer service to students by using bi-annual Satisfactory Academic Progress evaluations; the Academic Advisement Center utilizes a popular method of assessing student satisfaction via anonymous surveys when students change from Exploratory/Undeclared to an academic major; and several departments in the Division of Student Affairs are developing learning outcomes as a means to evaluate the success of their programs and services.
Standard VII
Library and Other Information Resources

Description
The library faculty and staff of Western Connecticut State University are committed to providing high quality academic library services and to ensuring access to collections in a variety of formats. Information resources are designed to meet the curricular, intellectual, and professional needs of students and faculty and are intended to enhance the learning outcomes and teaching environment of the university. (For text of full Mission statement, see Appendix: Standard VII: 1.)

Similarly, technology services provided through Information Technology & Innovation (IT, formerly University Computing) are essential to fulfilling the university’s mission (see Appendix: Standard VII: 2). Media Services also fulfills the University’s Mission by providing the Western community with professional video production services, media-related equipment and media viewing rooms (see Appendix: Standard VII: 3).

WCSU’s libraries are staffed by professionally qualified librarians and support staff. Library personnel include the Library Director, the Associate Library Director, eleven professional librarians, a technical service technician, and support staff that includes university assistants, clerks and custodians. Western's fulltime professional librarians are faculty members with all faculty rights and responsibilities. Librarians are active in the university’s governance.

The mission of IT is to provide an information technology environment that delivers a seamless learning atmosphere for students and faculty while also meeting administrative needs. The University will be a leader in using technology to enhance teaching and learning to meet the educational needs of a diversified student body, faculty and administration. IT supports the University mission of empowering students, assuring effective teaching, strengthening partnerships with people and institutions while supporting continuous improvement and intellectual integrity.”

Resources and Access
The Haas-Midtown Campus Library, Young Westside Campus Library and other information resource providers at Western offer vital services that support the university’s commitment to providing a strong liberal arts foundation, a strong background in information technologies, and the development of strong skills in communication, problem solving and critical thinking in a personalized learning environment.

Western has two library locations. The Ruth A. Haas Library is located on the Midtown campus and the Robert A. Young Library is located on the Westside campus. The library’s collection
includes 213,314 print volumes, 970 electronic books and 3,516 periodical titles (see Appendix: Standard VII: 4).

The Robert S. Young Library is located on the Westside campus in the Westside Classroom Building and is currently dedicated to the business collection, but it provides most of the same services as the Haas Library for students from other disciplines (e.g., circulation desk and reference help, terminals for searching the library collections, library assistance, and student study areas) (see Appendix: Standard VII: 5).

The Media Services Department has two media centers. One is located on the Midtown Campus with two viewing rooms and a production studio and the other on the Westside Campus. Services are also available to faculty who teach on Western’s Waterbury Campus (Naugatuck Valley Community College’s Founder’s Hall).

Individual departments and faculty members select over half of the titles purchased by the library. The selections are approved for expenditure from department allocations by chairpersons or their designees; occasionally, approval by the appropriate School dean is required. The remainder of the book budget is used to provide materials for interdisciplinary use, reference materials, and continuations. Students may also recommend items for purchase (see Appendix VII: 6).

Total library expenditures per student FTE increased between FY 2010 and FY 2012 (see Appendix VII: 7). The library’s materials budget for the past three years has been unstable (see Appendix VII: 8). Funding from gifts and endowments help support the collection. While total print volumes decreased from FY 2010-2010 (from 222,860 to 213,314), electronic books increased almost tenfold (from 10 to 970), full text electronic journals also increased dramatically from 0 to 119, and total media materials increased by 28.7%. Print and microform serials subscriptions decreased by 5.3%. Although electronic book and journal holdings have increased substantially, the print collection continues to expand and new formats, such as online video streaming, have been introduced.

Students utilize both traditional and contemporary modes of obtaining information; most reference questions are still asked in-person (91.5%; 15,785 of 17,247), however, the number of virtual (online) questions increased by 143.7% (from 600 to 1,462). Total circulation per FTE student increased by 14.3% (from 4.2 to 4.8) (see Appendix: Standard VII: 9).

The library has instituted new programs and services to support broad educational and specific curricular needs. For example, a digital repository system enables faculty, staff and students to place their work online. Through the repository system works are accessible by public search
Beyond the benefits to the individuals having their work posted, it increases the visibility of the university (see Appendix: Standard VII: 10).

The Haas Library provides an excellent venue for offering cultural enrichment opportunities to the public, as well as to the campus community. Since opening in its current form in Fall 2000, the Haas Library has hosted many events. Recent events which were open to the public included: hosting book discussions for Danbury’s One Book, One Community program (2008-2011, included maintaining the website for the program); Women’s History Month exhibit (2009-2013); an exhibit of Latin American artist, German Perez (2011); a Lincoln Centennial exhibit in coordination with lectures and other events in the History Department (2009). During the 2011-12 academic year, the Haas Library was the site of a display of Tibetan Medical Banners and a book exhibit on Buddhist thought and teachings. Both were connected to the visit of the Dalai Lama in October, 2012.

The library works with others to deliver instruction, one successful collaborative informational project is the Center for Excellence and Learning and Teaching (CELT), whose purpose is to provide the Western community with a nexus for the collection and dissemination of information and scholarship in order to facilitate the delivery of high quality education to our students. Teaching faculty and staff have both formal and informal opportunities to increase their knowledge of best practices, current research on teaching, learning, and student assessment, and strategies for enhancing the educational experiences of students (see Appendix: Standard VII: 11).

Funding from Information Technology & Innovation that directly supports students is made available through a Technology Fee. It has remained stable each year during fiscal years 2010-2013 at $1.2 million. These funds are principally used to purchase, support and maintain technology and software in classrooms and labs and to pay for student lab assistants who staff the computer centers.

The university provides the necessary equipment and facilities to deliver hybrid synchronous and asynchronous online courses. Three video conferencing rooms are available on campus: two traditional rooms at Midtown and a new one at Westside. The Westside facility utilizes next-generation Vidyo HD video conferencing technology that works seamlessly with most existing video conferencing systems as well as with most desktop and laptop computers equipped with a webcam and a broadband Internet connection. The Vidyo infrastructure at Western can support up to 55 concurrent users with HD quality and can be expanded easily for future growth. Over 100 faculty, staff and students are enrolled and using the system, including students in the Honors and the EdD in the Nursing Education programs.
Computers with Internet access are available in several computer labs on campus for students who may need to use campus facilities for distance learning purposes. All courses that require laboratories and clinical site visits that cannot be completed via technology-based distance learning are handled with special arrangements made by the faculty in consultation with the Dean and Information Technology & Innovation.

Starting in July 2012, Information Technology & Innovation began working with students in the Ed.D. program for Nursing Education and the EdD program for Instructional Leadership. They were provided with Android tablets to use as a tool for mobile, off-campus learning and to experiment and become familiar with them as a teaching and learning tool for educators.

Information Technology & Innovation is training faculty to move from Blackboard Vista to the newly adopted ConnCSU-wide learning management system, Blackboard Learn. The transition should be completed by June 2013. Blackboard is used widely at Western. (In FY 2012, 783 classes on the main campus, 21 courses offered off campus and 146 online courses have used Blackboard Vista/Learn. In FY13, those numbers increased slightly.

The Instructional Technology Center (ITC) is a collaborative effort between Academic Affairs and Information Technology & Innovation. The ITC went operational in October 2009 (see Appendix: Standard VII: 12).

The Media Services Department complements library and computing services provision of technology through the delivery of media production services and equipment. Central to its role is the support of the technology end of the Media Production degree. Several new and significant technological upgrades have been recently completed or are in progress.

In September 2011 an online equipment reservation system was implemented. In the year following, the department checked out/in almost 2800 pieces of equipment. It provided media support for over 350 events (equipment includes LCD projectors, flat panel displays, DVD players, overhead projectors, voice recorders, cameras, tripods, portable screens, laptop computers, portable sound systems, microphones, microphone stands, and a document camera).

During the 2011-2012 year Media Services worked with the Communication & Media Arts Department to install equipment for a new, shared studio space (following joint research in the selection of equipment) which is crucial for the Student Learning Outcomes of the Media Production degree. The staff does maintenance and repair for all approved media equipment at the University manages the Communication & Media Arts Department’s editing lab.

The Media Services staff has planned, purchased and is in the process of installing a new, campus-wide digital signage. This multi-year initiative that involves the placing computer screens throughout the campus to provide information to faculty, staff and students (e.g.,
upcoming events, weather, emergency announcements, etc.). Media Services is also working with the library staff, the Media & Library Services Policy Committee (MLSPC), and computing to aid in the coordination of creating streaming resources from the library’s collection.

The Media Services’ staff is actively involved in the production of videos for the university for instruction, coverage of events, and the promotion of the university (e.g., October 2012 videos produced for and of the Dalai Lama’s visit – available on YouTube; a video on the new School of Visual & Performing Arts, preproduction & production of a pilot series of videos that demonstrate proper Microbiology Laboratory Technique and Safety 2011-2012; videotaped the Connecticut Supreme Court Civil and Criminal Appeals held on Western’s Westside campus in October, 2011). The department owns high quality digital editing and camera equipment used in production (see Appendix: Standard VII: 13).

**Appraisal**

The library staff strive to anticipate and respond to a rapidly evolving environment in which forms of media are changing and expanding, costs of library materials are escalating, and the university’s range of courses and course delivery methods are broadening (e.g., online undergraduate programs and graduate programs).

The library’s materials budget declined for the past two years. Concerns over funding cuts from the state continue. Book budgets are the hardest hit in the material’s budget because of standing subscription commitments (e.g., journal subscriptions and databases).

Despite a shrinking technology budget due to reduced state support and no increase in tuition in recent years, the Library and Information Technology & Innovation have maintained more than an adequate technological environment. Rethinking approaches to various costs such as student and department printing has freed up funds to cover other essential services and equipment.

Aging department hardware and the lack of a consistent cycle to refresh faculty hardware have become issues. This is especially problematic as faculty attempt to enhance their courses’ technological learning environments. Information Technology & Innovation has recently set a goal of a four-year refresh cycle for computers (25% per year).

Media Services has been adequately funded and remains current with state-of-the-art equipment for departmental and University-community use. Nevertheless, the fact that budget levels are likely to remain the same or even decrease presents a challenge to Media Services to keep pace with growing demand for its materials and facilities.

Despite these challenges, responses from faculty and staff in the spring 2012 survey reveal a positive perception of the Library’s allocation of resources and its technology services (see Appendix: Standard VII: 14). Faculty and staff satisfaction with technology services is also relatively high, indicating that Western uses it vision, mission, and strategic plan to provide a
basis for information technologies and priority setting (see Appendix: Standard VII: 15). Data indicate that students are growing more adept at navigating through electronic information and are using it to support their academic projects and research.

Staffing issues, in particular, remain a significant challenge. The BOR has placed a freeze on filling vacant positions. As a result, Media Services and Information Technology & Innovation have unmet staffing needs which directly affect ability to support University mission. The Media Services is down one administrative position that may not be filled in the near future. As a result a reduction in services began in January 2013. Media Services now closes at 5 pm instead of 9 pm and is no longer available to all evening classes. This cutback has a significant adverse effect on students in the Media Production program who take classes in the evening and who need access to equipment in the evening. Services for weekend events are also limited to high profile events.

IT has its own staffing issues. The IT Help Desk and User Services staff receive and respond to a large number of support calls—an average of 877 per month for 2012 – and close an average of 860 calls per month (a 98% closure rate). Due to current understaffing and significant spikes in calls at the beginning of the semester, average response time has lengthened.

There have been some significant changes in how faculty and students are using the library. Although over 90% of the reference questions are in-person, the number of online questions dramatically increased between FY2010 and FY 2012. There was a decrease in the number of courses supported by traditional reserves but a corresponding increase in the number of courses supported by electronic reserves. These changes can be viewed positively: they indicate greater accessibility for students to librarians in all types of courses and quicker turnaround for access to reserves that can be posted directly by faculty (see Appendix: Standard VII: 16).

The demand for formal library instruction decreased, both in number of sessions (from 157 to 100) and total attendance (from 3,948 to 2,696) from FY 2010-2012. This decrease is an area of potential concern as bibliographic instruction is at the center of library’s outreach to increase library skills and information literacy. The decrease in demand for formal session instruction seems to be offset by some degree by the amount usage of library guides that are available on the library’s website for faculty and students. The library guides are frequently accessed (see Appendix: Standard VII: 17).

Projection

The library staff has significant changes in the planning or pilot stages which, when implemented, will increase services, student awareness of available resources and enhancement of library skills and information literacy. While electronic resources costs often exceeding print costs, adding more electronic books to the collection is viewed as important to meeting student needs in online, hybrid and traditionally taught courses (see Appendix: Standard VII: 18).
Planning is underway to create “Learning Commons” at both campus libraries. These will increase student support systems. The Ancell School of Business expects to open its Learning Commons in summer 2013. The ultimate goal of the Commons program is to increase graduation rates (see Appendix: Standard VII: 19).

At the Haas Library, the library faculty recently convened an ad hoc committee to comprehensively address library space, collections and services. Changes are expected to take place in multiple steps over the next few years and they are dependent on funding. One currently planned change to increase student awareness of available library services, will be the moving of the reference desk to a more prominent position near the entrance of the building so it will be in the sightline of students entering the formal library space (in 2013). Students entering the library or the CyberCafé, a large computing center on the library’s main floor will have to walk past the staffed library reference desk inviting them through this placement to ask questions and seek help. One librarian described this as an opportunity to literally “reach out” to our students. Although in the early planning stage, the library staff is considering reducing the area of the reference section stacks at the back of the main floor of the library to create space for new study workspaces for group work (see Appendix: Standard VII: 20).

In an effort to ensure broad awareness of library services to all departments and faculty, during the Spring 2013 semester, the M&LSPC has recommended and will work with library staff to develop a more active relationship with representatives of individual departments (see Appendix: Standard VII: 21).

Technology changes quickly and Information Technology & Innovation is constantly exploring innovative ways to keep up with these changes in order to continue to build an effective and up-to-date information technology environment for the Western Connecticut State University community. In February 2013, University Computing changed its name to Information Technology & Innovation (IT&I) to reflect a focus on using innovation to drive better service to students, faculty and staff.

Additionally, the Center for Excellence and Learning and Teaching (CELT) will soon move and be housed in the library.
Standard VIII

Physical and Technological Resources

Description

Physical Resources
Western Connecticut State University has a split campus comprising nearly 400 acres, and 30 serviceable buildings with 1.9 million square feet of assignable space. Classrooms, offices, residence halls, student centers, and other facilities are located on both the original Midtown campus and the newer Westside campus. The campuses are approximately four miles apart and are served by regularly scheduled shuttle bus service during the academic year.

The 34-acre Midtown campus has five classroom buildings, a Student Center, three residence halls, the Ruth A. Haas Library, two administrative buildings, Alumni Hall, several parking lots, and two parking garages (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 1). A 122,000 square-foot Science Building was completed in 2005 on the Midtown Campus (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 2).

The 364-acre Westside campus houses a large multi-department classroom building, three residence halls, the Charles Ives Authority for the Performing Arts, the William A. O’Neill Athletic and Convocation Center, an observatory, a new Campus Center, tennis courts and athletic fields, and the 33-acre Westside Nature Preserve (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 3). A 134,000 square-foot Visual and Performing Arts Center (VPAC) is under construction and scheduled to open in May 2014 (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 4).

Together, the Midtown and Westside campuses offer 1,891,124 square feet of usable academic, administrative, residential, and support-service space.

Additionally, WCSU offers nursing and management programs in Waterbury, Connecticut on the campus of Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC). Western at Waterbury also offers General Education and elective classes as needed (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 5).

Major new buildings in the last 10 years added 263,000 square feet of assignable space at a cost of $74.2 million. WCSU also constructed two large parking garages, one at each campus, during this period, at a cost of $18.8 million. During the next five years, WCSU has plans and funding commitments to build a new police station on the midtown campus and a new 500-car parking garage on the Westside campus. We plan major renovations for three buildings (Higgins/Higgins Annex, Litchfield Residence Hall, Newbury Residence Hall) during this period, which will provide “like new” appearance and functionality to 202,000 square feet of space at a projected cost of $53.5 million (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 6).
Total expenditures for technology (operating and capital funds) for fiscal years 2010 through 2012 remained relatively constant, at approximately $5.8 million annually. Funding for other capital projects, however, varied significantly, ranging from $4.5 million in fiscal year 2010 to $32.1 million in fiscal year 2012. Expenditures for fiscal year 2013 will be even greater. The increased expenditures were driven primarily by costs associated with the design and construction of the Visual and Performing Arts Center.

Physical resources have changed considerably over the past 10 years, with the largest transformation taking place on the Westside Campus. A new Athletic Stadium opened on that campus in 2004. The Centennial Residence Hall and attached parking garage were also completed there that year. In 2008, the Westside Campus Center opened and brought dining student center services to the Westside Campus. Construction on the Visual and Performing Arts Center began in 2011 and the building is scheduled to open in 2014. The new building will provide a theatre, a concert hall, galleries, studios, rehearsal spaces and practice rooms all explicitly designed to support a high level of artistic performance and instruction. This contrasts with the current facilities used by the school on the Midtown Campus in White Hall, Berkshire Hall and Higgins Annex: These areas were, for the most part, built as general classrooms and have been converted over the years, with varying degrees of success, to serve more specialized purposes.

The Midtown Campus has also benefited from significant new construction. A new 582-car student parking opened there in 2007. Of greater importance, a new 65,000 square feet Science Building opened in 2005. This state-of-the-art building houses classrooms, laboratories and offices. It incorporates hang out spots along its hallways equipped with benches and chalkboards that facilitate impromptu small group work and tutoring. WCSU saw the number Biology and Chemistry majors jumped up significantly shortly after the Science Building opened.

In addition to new construction, several renovations were completed in the past decade. These include the Westside Observatory (2004); Warner Hall (2005); Old Main Administration Building (2005); Fairfield Residence Hall (2008); Pinney Residence Hall (2010); and Grasso Residence Hall (2011-2012). Higgins Hall underwent extensive exterior masonry and roof repair in 2010 and Higgins Annex space was reconfigured for classrooms and faculty offices in 2011. In fall 2012, WCSU replaced two fifty-year old boilers in the Midtown campus boiler house and updating Midtown’s hot water production system (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 7).

Western’s space usage is guided by a participatory and open master planning process mandated by the Board of Regents. Planning is conducted and updated regularly. The current (2007) update was developed by Symms Maini & McKee Associates and reflects many hours of investigation, meetings, and community feedback from faculty, staff, and students. With the passage of six years, however, conditions have changed in ways not anticipated in the master plan. Enrollment
growth has stopped, and we no longer are filling our residence halls to capacity. In addition, many members of the current administration, including the Provost, the CFO, and three of the four Deans were not in their positions at the time the master plan was created. In light of all of these changes, it is time to revise the University’s master plan. The CFO chaired a task force in fiscal year 2013 that began assessing current needs and how they might be met on the Midtown Campus once the School of Visual and Performing Arts moves to the Westside campus in summer 2014. The data and recommendations from this task force will then be shared with a professional campus master planner, hired through the Regents’ Office, who will create a new master plan for WCSU. Work on developing this new master plan is tentatively targeted to begin in February 2014. WCSU anticipates that the new master plan will focus more on major renovations of existing buildings than the construction of additional new buildings.

The vast majority of WCSU’s classrooms and other teaching facilities accommodate 40 students or less, facilitating the smaller class sizes that allow for greater individual attention and participation. These room sizes are also consistent with the standard class sizes described in the CSU-AAUP contract. Under that agreement, classes larger than 40 may be offered as long as the instructor receives incremental work load credits for each student beyond 40.

WCSU funds capital projects from four primary sources: 1.) participation in the system-wide CSUS 2020 bond program; 2.) participation through the Regent’s office in the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA) bonding program; 3.) use of reserve funds; and 4.) use of current-year operating funds (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 8). WCSU does not issue any bonds on its own authority. Under the CSUS 2020 program, the state, conditional upon the governor’s approval each year, issues $95 million in general obligation bonds annually over a 10-year period, with the bond proceeds allocated to each of the four State Universities in accordance to a project plan developed and approved in fiscal year 2008. These bonds are a general obligation of the state of Connecticut, and neither WCSU nor the Regents is responsible for any of the debt service. The 2020 program is scheduled to expire in fiscal year 2019. It funds capital projects for academic and administrative facilities. WCSU uses CHEFA bonds to finance capital projects for residence halls, student parking garages and student centers. WCSU is responsible for a majority of debt service on CHEFA bonds, although the bonds themselves are recorded as a liability for system in whole rather than for WCSU specifically. The University uses its own reserves on a regular basis for improving residence halls and dining services and, on a more limited basis, for funding other capital projects.

As a state institution, WCSU follows all the rigorous design, permitting, and inspection requirements determined by state law (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 9). All new construction on campus is designed and built to meet the criteria for LEEDS certification, even if the certification itself is not obtained. Whenever possible, the Department of Environmental and Facilities Services uses sustainable products, including cleaning products.
Vehicle policies and regulations are designed to alleviate parking congestion. Resident students who live on Westside campus, for example, must take the shuttle bus to Midtown instead of driving.

The University has adopted and adheres to the facilities guidelines and operational standards set forth by APPA (formerly the Association of Physical Plant Administrators) in terms of cleaning and custodial standards. The Office of Facilities Operations and Environmental Health and Safety Programs manages the following functional areas:

- Maintenance Trades
- Building Services (Custodial Services)
- Grounds Operations, including routine grounds maintenance, snow removal, and landscaping
- HVAC Operations
- Health, Safety, and Environmental Affairs

Since 2007 all requests for services from these areas are managed through the Maintenance Direct Work-Order Management System, also known as “SchoolDude.” This system allows management to track repeat problems, account for hours needed to complete projects, and run reports for more insight into stubborn issues.

Additionally, the university has invested in upgraded and expanded building automation, providing the ability to monitor remotely HVAC and other environmental conditions of facilities, thereby increasing efficiency.

A recent evaluation conducted by Sightlines LLC on behalf of the Board of Regents has provided the University with additional insight into its facilities and maintenance processes as compared to peer institutions. Among its major conclusions were that Western was providing service at levels equal to or greater than its peer institutions, but at much lower cost. The report also noted, however, that Western was not spending enough for ongoing adaptation and renewal of current spaces and could face a significant deferred maintenance backlog in future years.

**Technological Resources**

WCSU maintains a strong network and technology infrastructure that insures fulfillment of the educational and administrative mandates of the university (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 10).

Western’s server and storage environment has improved dramatically in the past 10 years. A significant investment in time, money, and staff has yielded a robust virtualized environment. Servers and storage can be provided easily without additional physical hardware.
In fall 2012, the university became aware of a security vulnerability in one of its systems. Although WCSU found no evidence that records were inappropriately accessed, it offered two years of ID theft protection to everyone whose data may have been compromised.

University data and systems are backed up regularly. The encrypted tapes are stored in a secure location off-site and are readily available if needed.

Western uses the Banner college Enterprise Resource Planning system to manage core services for the university. These include student services (registration, advising, transcripts, grading), financial services (payments, financial aid), alumni relations, institutional research, and institutional advancement. Banner is widely respected in the field. The system widely used in Connecticut and across the country. A number of other software programs are used by various departments to access information (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 11).

Western also uses the Blackboard Vista and Learn learning management systems, both hosted centrally by ConnSCU IT. Blackboard Vista will be completely replaced by Learn in fall 2013.

Information Technology & Innovation and Media Services have endeavored to fully equip classrooms and lecture halls with state of the art technology. As a result, virtually all classrooms throughout Midtown and Westside campuses are now equipped with instructor station computers, projectors (older projectors are being replaced with new HD models) and wired/wireless Internet access, with the exception of a few rooms in which implementation of such equipment impossible.

Over two dozen classrooms are also equipped with student computer stations, including discipline-specific computer labs which support programs in Art, Music, Theatre, Journalism, Writing, Communication, Mathematics, Biology, Education, MIS and Nursing. Classroom technology is upgraded on a rotational basis as established by The University’s Information Technology Committee (ITC).

The University provides state of the art hardware and software in faculty offices. Programs and procedures allow for regular upgrade and replacement of computing equipment. Software (including crucial virus protection) is managed remotely for desktop computers and requires no faculty intervention. Each faculty member has a desktop or laptop computer and access to network storage drives which are accessible from both on and off campus. Faculty also have access to an Instructional Technology Center for assistance with integrating technology into their curriculum.

Students bring their own computers to campus or have access to technology in one of five staffed labs: Midtown Computer Center (MTCC), Westside Computer Center (WSCC), Campus Center
Computer Center (C4), Student Technology Training Center (STTC) and the Waterbury Computer Center. Additionally, there are three 24-hour unstaffed facilities available in the Student Center, the Science Building and the Westside Classroom Building.

Internet connections are available throughout both campuses and are provided in the residence halls for students with their own computers. The campus is 100% wireless-enabled.

The Information Technology & Innovation staff is responsible for keeping all computers in classrooms, labs, faculty and staff offices and the network up and running.

SmartBoards have been installed in 22 locations across both campuses, mainly in support of the teacher education program, in order to ensure that pre-service educators gain experience with the technology available in the public school systems in the surrounding areas (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 12).

In Fall 2011, a print management system, Pharos, was installed. This program has significantly reduced paper and toner use across the University. Students are able to use their ID cards to release print jobs at specially designated print stations and printers.

Specialized equipment is acquired regularly as part of the CSU 2020 Equipment Program (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 13). The University’s standing Information and Technology Committee (ITC) is charged with overseeing the implementation and development of technological resources and improvements (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 14).

**Appraisal**

Western has installed and supports a consistently high level of technology in its classrooms and laboratories. Faculty, staff and students in general report a high level of satisfaction with IT services, with some exceptions as noted below. Physical resources are satisfactory overall, but consistency is an issue, with some facilities, such as the Science Building and Westside Campus Center, able to claim excellence, while others, such as the Westside Classroom Building, are effective liabilities to the University’s image and operations. The University’s two-campus structure is also a challenge. It imposes additional costs (such as operating two student centers and a shuttle bus service), and separates the University community in more than simply spatial terms. When the School of Visual and Performing Arts relocates to the Westside campus in summer 2014, it will help balance student population on each campus, giving each a critical mass of students. With this relocation, two schools (Business and Visual and Performing Arts) will be on the Westside campus and two schools (Arts and Sciences and Professional Studies) will be on the Midtown Campus. Once the VPAC is complete, the university will be able to renovate vacated space on the Midtown campus. The re-uses of the Midtown Campus as
envisioned in the University’s 2007 master plan, however, may no longer represent the best use
for the vacated space. WCSU is compiling and evaluating a list of current and projected future
facility needs at the Midtown campus and will work with a professional campus planner starting
in early 2014 to develop a new master plan to guide development over the next ten years.

Physical Resources
Completion of the Science Building in 2005 brought significant improvement to WCSU. Various
departments benefited from new classrooms, laboratories, equipment, and faculty offices.
Planning for the building and equipment also served as an occasion for faculty to develop a new
vision for the sciences at Western, including working with Danbury area schools on an annual
Summer STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Experience.

Three WCSU buildings are cause for major concern: Berkshire Hall and White Hall on Midtown
the campus and the Westside Classroom Building. Berkshire Hall and White Hall are structurally
sound and have efficient floor plans. Unfortunately, classrooms are small and many windows
don’t open and close properly. Some carpets need to be replaced in both buildings. Faculty
members complain of poor air circulation in Berkshire Hall and White Hall. The air conditioning
in Berkshire does not always work and White Hall is too old to allow for central-air retrofitting.

The Westside Classroom Building is structurally sound but poorly designed. In this building (as
in the original Higgins Hall on the Midtown campus), air-conditioning must be installed room by
room. The Westside Classroom Building presents a particular challenge given its highly
inefficient configuration, its aging mechanical systems, and its vulnerability to moisture
penetration. Mold growth is a recurring problem in many areas of the building, and although
Facilities has eliminated major mold blooms in faculty offices and the library and has installed
dehumidification systems, mold regrowth surfaces periodically. Additionally, the elevators in the
building are often out of order, making it extremely difficult for those with physical disabilities
to reach certain areas of the building.

The 2020 bonding program does not have funds identified for major work in either White Hall or
the Westside Classroom building. The program does, however, provide funds in fiscal year
2017 to design a full renovation of Berkshire Hall (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 15).

Contra some of these problems, students and faculty are satisfied with the classrooms and
facilities of new buildings and older buildings that have undergone major renovations. The upper
floors of Higgins and Higgins Annex were improved after the various science departments
moved into the Science Building in 2005. Other similar renovations are slated upon completion
of the School of Visual and Performing Arts building and movement of several departments to
Westside campus.
Adaptation and upgrade of several programs have improved overall services. Since use of the Maintenance Direct Work-order Management System was implemented in 2007, the Maintenance Department is better able to plan staff hours and make optimal use of its custodial staff. Additionally, WCSU’s upgraded and expanded building automation allows for more extensive remote monitoring of campus facilities and increased efficiency.

The Sightlines LLC evaluation performed in fall 2012 has provided the University with additional insight into its facilities and maintenance processes as compared to peer institutions. Highlights of the report include:

- WCSU achieved custodial and maintenance results that were as good as or better than peer institutions and achieved these at lower costs: A strong service process, a capable staff and solid work culture have allowed Western to do more with less.
- Western has younger, more technically complex facilities than peer averages overall.
- Like many institutions, Western is not spending enough on renewal and adaptation of existing buildings. If this does not change, Western will accumulate a significant deferred maintenance backlog and, most likely, the appearance, functionality, and image of the campus will suffer. The required expenditures cannot be met from Westerns’ annual cash flows or reserves. Western will need to address these issues through the upcoming new campus master planning exercise and in advocating for greater bond funding of adaptation and renewal in the bond program developed after the 2020 program ends.

Clearly, in spite of advances, some problems still need to be addressed, and some are unlikely to go away, in spite of repeated improvement. To wit: even with the new Midtown garage, students consistently express dissatisfaction with parking policies and availability.

**Technological Resources**

Improvements to servers and storage are provided easily without additional physical hardware. This process enables the university to respond much more quickly to new technology initiatives and manage resources much more efficiently. The IT staff does an admirable job keeping the systems and network up and running, especially given its limited staff and a constantly growing system-wide project list.

Information Technology & Innovation has recently set a new goal of a 3-year (33%/year) refresh cycle for computers, in light of modern hardware having longer useful lifespans and concerns about future budgets.

Some outstanding needs grow increasingly pressing with technology innovations. For example, the Department of World Languages and Literature needs a language resource center (a discipline-specific computer lab), and the Communication Department needs better facilities.
There is an emerging need to provide services for students on their mobile devices (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 16).

Additionally, there is an undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the performance and reliability of Blackboard Vista and Learn, hosted centrally by ConnSCU IT, and some frustration with response times to Help Desk calls from Information Technology & Innovation. Although Information Technology & Innovation closes 98% of Help Desk calls each month, the current IT staffing level makes new initiatives challenging.

Data and information security is a high priority of WCSU, the ConnSCU System, and the State. The university’s commendable response to the security vulnerability in fall 2012 was honest and timely in its communication with those affected, and this event has brought some positive enhancements to information security at Western. Since discovery of the vulnerability, the university has dramatically increased its information protection capacity and will continue to assess and improve in this area (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 17). Lack of formal project management, however, opens us up to risk.

While there is room to grow, WCSU continues to improve its resources, thereby saving students, faculty and staff time, money and resources. For instance, during the Fall 2012 semester, Pharos reduced the total number of pages printed by 19.5%-- amounting to a cost savings of 20.2%.

**Projection**

Although the State of Connecticut is currently experiencing financial stress on its operating budgets, the state seems committed to the multi-year CSUS 2020 bonding program that funds major renovations, improvements, and additions to the academic and administrative buildings on campus. The CHEFA bonding program is also expected to continue, providing funds for the renovation or construction of student centers, residence halls, and student parking lots (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 18).

The CSUS 2020 program is currently scheduled to sunset in FY19, and the Board of Regents is beginning to make plans for the post-CSUS 2020 period. These plans include creating a new master plan for each of the four CSU’s during the next few years, with work on Western’s new plan scheduled to begin in early 2014. Unlike the previous master plans, which emphasized the creation of additional space, WCSU expects its next master plan to focus on significant renovations of current space and, in some cases, replacement of buildings (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 19).
Physical Resources
The imminent completion of the Visual and Performing Arts Building on the Westside campus and the approach of a new master planning exercise creates an opportunity for Western to thoroughly review its facilities’ needs as it adjusts its long-term strategy to meet new economic, demographic, and competitive realities. The Vice President for Finance and Administration recognizes the need for a wider campus conversation to address concerns and to re-think space usage and convened a group of senior and upper level leaders to identify needs during fiscal year 2013 (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 20). In the meantime, Western will proceed with those major facilities already envisioned in the CSUS 2020 and CHEFA bonding programs: the construction of a new police station, the full renovation of Higgins Hall, the design work for renovation of Berkshire Hall, the full renovation of the Litchfield and Newbury Residence Halls (all at Midtown) and the construction of new 500-car student parking garage on the Westside campus. Western will use the new master planning exercise to investigate the possibility of replacing the problematic Westside Classroom Building in the future with a new, greatly more functional (and appropriate) home for its School of Business.

WCSU is dedicated to working towards greater standardization of facilities, fixtures, and furniture as it builds new classroom buildings and renovates old ones. The facilities maintenance department is striving for more carefully planned projects and realizing set goals (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 21).

Student retention is a high priority for Western, and physical and technological resources play a part in student success and satisfaction. With that in mind, the university plans to investigate national and international trends that facilitate student satisfaction and engagement in such areas as living and learning environments (learning communities). The University also plans to create a Student Success Center that will house varied support services in a convenient single location. Indeed, Western will open two facilities in fall 2013 to improve learning, advising, and retention: a Learning Emporium and an Information Commons and Advising Center (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 22).

Technological Resources
To improve service to students through technology, the live chat feature currently available on the university’s web site will be made available on mobile devices during summer 2013.

IT will also develop customer satisfaction surveys for students, faculty and staff to get a better understanding of areas that can be improved and to create a set of metrics for periodic self-evaluations.

Although the security vulnerability incident was unfortunate, the university will use its lessons to dedicate itself more intensely to information security and instructional and administrative...
technology. The department name Information Technology & Innovation recently replaced the University Computing name to reflect a focus on using innovation to deliver better service to students, faculty and staff. Information Technology & Innovation will lead a review of business processes at the university with a goal of simplifying them by using IT solutions to replace or augment existing processes.

IBM’s CISO (Chief Information Security Officer) Dr. Joanne Martin is working as a volunteer interviewing the CSU CIOs, and will develop suggestions on how we can move forward on information security. This will include online information on Security Training by the fall of 2013.

Three current critical projects reflect the University’s dedication to security and technology innovation: 1) a long-term network re-architecture and equipment upgrade that will enhance network security and flexibility while replacing older equipment to meet the new networking standards (to be completed in 2015); 2) implementation of new security policies and standards, including recommendations from Dr. Martin on continuous implementation of this initiative, spearheaded by a newly appointed acting Information Security and Compliance Officer charged with putting additional focus on data security throughout the university (implemented in 2014 with ongoing review and changes); 3) disaster recovery planning in which the data center on the Westside campus will be set up as a mirror site for critical data and systems that are currently housed in the Midtown data center, thereby increasing the redundancy and availability of critical systems to the university (to be implemented by the end of 2013).

Centers of Excellence are being created as part of a new model for IT governance within ConnSCU. Centers for Security and IT policy, learning management such as Blackboard, networking infrastructure and enterprise resource planning (Banner) will be developed and used as a guide for all of ConnSCU to share.

The effectiveness of the ITC will be re-evaluated. After a thorough review, Information Technology & Innovation will re-focus personnel to better capitalize on their skills and talents (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 23). Outside training is being given to the entire IT staff in areas such as project management.

Institutional Effectiveness

WCSU’s physical and technological environments have improved greatly over the years, and the institution is reinvigorated. Although the University’s physical resources still face significant challenges, new and renovated spaces on both campuses provide an environment highly conducive to teaching and learning in the 21st century. Recent outside assessment confirms that our infrastructure and maintenance programs are strong and competitive with our peer
institutions. We recognize that we are under-spending for mid-scale projects and we will work to rectify this problem. Refocusing and/or repurposing staff in touchstone areas such as Information Technology & Innovation will allow the institution to pursue new initiatives without incurring additional staff costs. The University’s aligning strategic goals with facilities and technology priorities has guided, and will continue to guide, its response to issues of physical and technological resources.
Standard IX

Financial Resources

Description

Western Connecticut State University is a financially stable publicly-assisted University that budgets and expends funds subject to the statutes, regulations, policies and oversight of the State of Connecticut and the Board of Regents of Connecticut Schools and Universities (ConnSCU). Within this framework, senior administration and the University Planning and Budget Committee (UPBC) use the goals and values articulated in WCSU’s 2007 Strategic Plan to guide budget and spending decisions.

As measured by ConnSCU’s spending plan format, the University has generated operating surpluses from FY05 through FY12 and entered FY13 with a balanced plan. (The ConnSCU format is essentially a cash-based measure that does not include depreciation, that classifies the state appropriation as revenue and that includes certain reserve transactions as part of operations, all in contrast to GAAP, which governs the presentation used on WCSU’s financial statements.) WCSU’s reserve schedule reveals that the University held $33.4 million in reserve at June 30, 2012, including a ConnSCU required unrestricted fund balance equal to 7% of the current year’s operating budget (see Appendix: Standard IX: 1). This balance provides an ongoing cushion against severe adverse economic events.

WCSU’s employees are bound by ConnSCU’s and the State’s ethics policies. Compliance is monitored and enforced by the local Ethics Liaison Officer (the Associate Vice President for Human Resources); by annual audits conducted by an external public accounting firm (PriceWaterhouseCoopers) which includes ethics-related questions to key stakeholders as part of its review; and by regular audits by the state’s Auditor of Public Accounts.

Financial Position/ Net Assets

As DATA FIRST tables reveal, Property, Plant, and Equipment assets comprised 69% of total assets in FY 2011 ($179 million of $260 million). Subtracting $53.5 million in total liabilities from $260 million in total assets yields $206.5 million in net assets. WCSU’s formal liabilities do not include bonded debt although most capital projects on campus are bond funded. Capital projects for academic and administrative facilities are funded by general obligation bonds of the State of Connecticut: Neither WCSU nor the Board of Regents has debt service obligations for these bonds. The current general obligation bond program that benefits the state Universities is called CSUS 2020, and it is scheduled to run through fiscal year (FY) 2019. Capital projects for auxiliaries such as housing, food service, student centers, and for student parking are funded under bonds authorized by the Connecticut Health and Education Facilities Authority (CHEFA). CHEFA debt is carried on the Regent’s balance sheet, not that of the individual Universities. Each University, however, has debt service obligations for CHEFA bonds. In FY 2012, for example, WCSU transferred $7.2 million to the Regent’s office that was either used to make current debt service payments or to fund a reserve for future debt service payments.

Revenues and Expenses (DATA FIRST presentation)
Total operating revenues were $68.3 million in FY 2012, up 2.3% from the prior year. Nearly three quarters of those revenues came tuition and fees ($50.9 million, up 1.2%), and nearly one-quarter from room and board ($16.4 million, up 3.3%). After subtracting $10.5 million in financial aid, the net student fees amounted to $56.8 million. Government grants and contracts are a small fraction of the total: they increased by 0.7% between 2011 and 2012.

Total operating expenses were $116.3 million in FY 2012, an increase of 1.03%, and state appropriations were $38.9 million, a decrease of 15.2% over the prior year. Therefore, state appropriations covered only 33.4% of total operating expenses in FY 2012, compared to 39.0% in FY 2011.

**Supplemental Data**

Net assets at the end of FY 2012 were $211.8 million, an increase of 2.6% over the prior year. During FY 2012, net assets increased by $5.3 million, compared to an increase of $2.5 million during FY 2011.

Unrestricted institutional financial aid funds decreased by 16.2% between 2011 and 2012 (from $4.8 to $4.0 million). Concurrently, federal, state, and private grants increased by 0.4% (approximating $9.3 million in both years), resulting in a 5.3% decrease in total funds available for student financial assistance.

Discount of tuition and fees reached 26.1% in FY 2012 (1.8 percentage points lower than the prior year), while the unrestricted discount declined to 7.8% (1.7 percentage points lower than the prior year). The declines in institutional aid and discount rates reflected a decision to reduce the amount of tuition revenue set aside to fund need based aid by one percentage point, an action taken to, in part, absorb the sharp decrease in state support that occurred in FY 2012.

As measured by ConnSCU’s spending plan format, the University has generated operating surpluses from FY05 through FY12 and entered FY13 with a balanced plan. On April 2, 2013, WCSU estimated that it would end FY13 in balance, despite experiencing a revenue shortfall of $5.6 million. As measured by GAAP in its publically audited financial statements, the University has increased its net assets over the 10-year period (see Appendix: Standard IX: 2).

Since its adoption in 2007, WCSU has used its strategic plan to guide resource allocation and budget decisions. The plan commits WCSU to support a range of high quality academic programs and to seek program accreditation where available. Between FY06 and FY13, the number of fulltime teaching faculty positions increased to 234, from 197, or 19%. WCSU programs are accredited by their appropriate discipline-specific organization and the University is actively pursuing accreditation from additional organizations: The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business; The National Association of Schools of Theatre; and the National Association of Schools of Art and Design.

State support to WCSU was relatively stable between 2007 and 2011, and then dropped dramatically for 2012: it declined by 15.2% ($6.9 million) between FY11 and FY12 (from $45.8 to $38.9 million). At April, 2013, state support and is forecast to decline a further 0.7% for FY13 (to $38.6 million) because of a mid-year rescission. (State support for FY14, however, was budgeted at $40.8 million, based on the Governor’s budget, an increase of 5.6%).
Finances in FY12 were challenged when total enrollment fell short of budget by approximately 3% and challenged again in FY13 when total FTE enrollment fell short by 4.1%. WCSU absorbed these cuts while maintaining faculty lines by reducing the number of funded fulltime positions in other areas (by more than 24 positions), holding some funded positions vacant, identifying operating efficiencies, and holding the line on operating expenses. The University has maintained essential services at acceptable levels even with these cuts, but there have been service impacts felt by students, faculty, and staff. These impacts include lack of adequate clerical coverage in some offices, sporadic lapses in daily cleaning of some areas, and deferral of new initiatives in some program areas, such as study abroad.

Financial pressures will intensify in FY14. Although the state budget has not been finalized, it is clear that the level of state support will effectively decline. WCSU, like all state entities in Connecticut, is a party to a labor concession agreement reached in late fall 2011. Under the agreement, wages were frozen for FY12 and FY13 in return for a commitment to provide raises in FY14 – FY16 and protect the job security of most full-time incumbents. The raises will range from about 3% to 5% annually, depending on specific union affiliation and current pay level.

After rising for several years, enrollment has softened. In FY13 total enrollment on an FTE basis retreated to roughly the same level as it was in FY08. In response, WCSU will leave a number of faculty positions filled by limited term “special appointments” open in FY14, and will remove funding from a smaller number of non-faculty positions to bring the total number of fulltime positions in better alignment with enrollment levels. (Increases in the aforementioned faculty lines were made in response to then-growing enrollment.)

Senior administration believes there is limited ability to deal with future emergencies without impacting some elements of essential services. The institution’s ability to rapidly assess certain operations and reorganize or redeploy existing resources is hindered by a combination of collective bargaining agreements and various state regulations. Despite these challenges, the administration is committed to achieving balanced budgets while maintaining academic program quality.

**Financial Stability**

WCSU is financially stable and has prioritized educational quality. Like any public institution, WCSU’s finances suffer when state finances suffer. Throughout the past 10 years, however, enrollment-related revenue (tuition, fees, housing and food) has provided the larger share of financial support, increasing to 64% of budgeted FY13 revenue (see Appendix: Standard IX: 3).

WCSU draws nearly all of its students from Connecticut. Unfortunately, 2012 WICHE data forecasts a 10.8% decline in graduating Connecticut high-school seniors between 2012 and 2022. WCSU leadership is actively exploring program and marketing initiatives that will make WSCU more attractive to out-of-state students and non-traditional students (see Appendix: Standard IX: 4).

The University is overseen by the [Board of Regents of Connecticut State Universities and Schools](https://www.ct.edu) (ConnSCU), an entity which governs four regional state Universities, 12 community colleges and Charter Oak College (an institution devoted to online degree completion programs). Regents serve by gubernatorial and legislative appointment. ConnSCU assumed its current role
WCSU NEASC Self-Study / DRAFT / April 15, 2013 / 109

in full on January 1, 2012, replacing the former Connecticut State University System (CSUS) that had overseen the four regional Universities for many decades (see Appendix: Standard VIII: 5).

**Financial Planning**

WCSU develops current and multi-year financial planning in consultation with Admissions. Admissions and Finance officers are cognizant of economic conditions, demographic trends, institutional programming, and marketing initiatives. Working with ConnSCU, WCSU estimates likely levels and trends for state support. ConnSCU develops biennial budget requests, which matches the state’s budgeting process, and informs constituent schools of their likely state allocation, based on a pre-established protocol that provides each school with a base line of support and additional dollars related to relative school size and projected fringe benefit expenses for selected staff (11). ConnSCU is reviewing the budget calendar that CSUS had used and may make minor changes. In general, the governing body initiates the annual budget process near the start of the calendar year, requests budget submissions in April, reviews them in May, and approves them in June, shortly before the start of the new fiscal year. The governing board requests a formal mid-year review that is due each February. In April, a revised forecast for the current year is submitted along with the budget for the coming year.

WCSU’s FY04, FY08, and FY12 financial records demonstrate its use of financial resources to support academic purposes, programs and student students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditures</th>
<th>FY12</th>
<th>FY08</th>
<th>FY04</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>$46,035,507</td>
<td>$33,435,587</td>
<td>$27,642,438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>$370,616</td>
<td>$600,753</td>
<td>$403,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Service</td>
<td>$483,647</td>
<td>$424,395</td>
<td>$413,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Support</td>
<td>$8,340,300</td>
<td>$7,798,144</td>
<td>$7,050,077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Services</td>
<td>$12,210,023</td>
<td>$11,214,790</td>
<td>$8,300,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Support</td>
<td>$28,989,087</td>
<td>$19,220,979</td>
<td>$16,287,826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships &amp; Fellowships</td>
<td>$9,226,795</td>
<td>$5,952,916</td>
<td>$5,280,798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary Enterprises</td>
<td>$10,681,718</td>
<td>$8,172,146</td>
<td>$5,683,997</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**                   | $116,337,693| $86,819,709| $71,063,172|

**Financial Aid**

The governing board requires WCSU to set aside at least 15% of its tuition revenues to fund aid for its students, with the bulk of these monies to be used for need-based aid. The Board has authorized two merit-based financial aid programs, the Presidential and the Trustee scholarship programs (see Appendix: Standard IX: 6). The board periodically reviews and amends these programs. WCSU Student Financial Services, Admission, and Fiscal Affairs regularly discuss scholarship and recruiting needs. Based on these discussions, WCSU has chosen to set aside
more than the Board required 15% of tuition for several years. Admissions and some of the Deans report difficulties in attracting the best students due to limited merit-based aid. In response, WCSU funded the Trustee Scholarship program for the first time in FY13, at a policy specified maximum level of $114,000. The University will fund the program again in FY14.

WCSU’s independent foundation is able to supplement the institution’s financial aid resources, consistent with donor restrictions. This makes additional money available for need-based and merit-based scholarships. In FY12, the Foundation provided $213,000 in scholarship assistance. Even with this help, WCSU needs to identify more resources in the coming years for both need-based and merit-based help.

**Finance Staff and Financial Management**

WCSU has a full-time Vice President for Finance and Administration (CFO). Paul Reis has served in this capacity since August 2010. The CFO oversees all aspects of the institution’s financial status. He is supported by a staff of six budget and finance professionals. The CFO holds an MBA from the Kellogg Graduate School of Management of Northwestern University with an undergraduate degree in economics. He has 15-years’ experience in managing finance, budgets, and operations within higher education, holding positions previously at the University of Chicago and Roosevelt University. Sean Loughran serves as the University’s controller. He holds an MBA from the University of Connecticut and is a Certified Management Accountant (CMA). Mr. Loughran has five years’ experience in higher education (at WCSU) and many years’ experience in industry. The balance of the staff is talented and appropriately qualified to serve in their positions; four of the six hold the MBA.

WCSU’s practice of prudent financial management is evident in its ability to have generated operating surpluses while increasing faculty lines and obtaining additional program accreditations through FY13. In FY14, the University will demonstrate prudence by ensuring that the number of fulltime positions is consistent with recent, declining enrollment patterns. The institution will simultaneously identify operating efficiencies and possible new revenue streams. WCSU protects the integrity of its finances through appropriate division of duties in the origination, authorization, and payment of financial commitments and adherence to well-developed fiscal policies. Regular audits by PriceWaterhouseCoopers and the state’s Auditor of Public Account monitor compliance and identify improvement areas (see “Audits,” below). WCSU makes regular semi-annual reports to ConnSCU on its overall finances and generates monthly reports for internal use by budget holders (see Appendix: Standard IX: 7).

**Budget: Establishment, Implementation and Overall Financial Planning**

WCSU establishes its budgets in light of multiple discussions and contacts with relevant stakeholders. In general, the Vice President of Finance and Administration’s (VPFA) generates at least one – and in many cases, several – scenarios projecting various levels of total resources and costs of operations. Budget and finances are regular discussion topics at the President’s senior-leadership cabinet meeting. Senior leaders are free to present their needs and initiatives throughout the year and particularly during the budget formulation period that takes place early in the calendar year. Based on these discussions, the Budget Office formulates budget scenarios that are shared with the University’s Planning and Budget Committee for review and comment. This information is also shared at University Senate and in open forums to which the general
University community is invited. Particular attention is paid in spring to developing personnel and financial aid budgets, while the non-personnel operating expense (OE) budget is generally treated in aggregate. In late spring and early summer, the Budget Office firms up the total OE budget, based in part on feedback and decisions from ConnSCU and after consulting division heads and leaders of various WCSU departments with significant OE budgets (see Appendix: Standard IX: 8).

The Budget Office and VPFA area make a regular practice of developing multiple scenarios in addressing new budgets and possible fund reductions. At the President’s request, WCSU reviewed key elements of its strategic plan during FY12, including its underpinning financial assumptions. The VPFA chaired a group that developed a five-year financial model as part of this review process. The model facilitates the creation of multiple scenarios that show the impact of changes in key variables such as state support, tuition and fee rates, enrollment, and retention.

When recent trends for enrollment, tuition pricing, state support and labor costs were entered into the model in spring 2012, it clearly showed that Western’s current economic model was not sustainable – the institution would generate significant annual deficits by FY 2017. Western cannot control many of these major variables, including tuition pricing (which is set at the system level), state appropriation levels, and the multi-year commitment to raises without layoffs through FY 2016 created as the result of a state-wide labor concession in fall 2012. Western can improve its recruitment and retention of students, however, and is adopting this as one of its key strategies for financial health in the coming years. The budget for FY 2014, for example, assumes flat enrollment with FY 2013 – a result that will only materialize with improved recruitment and retention because the general population of college-age people in Connecticut is declining. The number of in-state high school graduates in May 2013, for example, will decline by 1.9% from May 2012.

Western also realizes that one way to support enrollment growth is through offering superior programs that gain a wide-ranging reputation for excellence. We already have some programs like this, such as our BS in Nursing and our Music Education degrees. To foster excellence and control expense, Western will be much more selective in identifying which academic programs in which to invest. In a time of limited resources, Western will need to prioritize its programs, both academic and non-academic.

Each year’s operating budget contains some unallocated OE funds that are held as a hedge against enrollment shortfalls or other adverse economic developments. Personnel budgets are developed to fund each position fully for the year, allowing the University to use savings from turnover and vacancies to deal with contingencies. These vacancy savings were key to absorbing enrollment shortfalls in FY12 and FY13. While senior leadership avoided overcommitting its budgets in most years, the unexpected scope of the enrollment decline in fall 2012 (-4.1%) in conjunction with a 5% rescission of state support and a sharp increase in retirement-plan related fringe benefits costs fully exhausted any contingencies for FY13. Despite these strains, WCSU forecasts a break-even position at April 2013 for FY13.

At April 2013, WCSU crafted a break-even spending plan for FY 2014 and submitted it to the Regents for review and approval. The plan assumes $40.8 million in state support, but that amount could change based on the state legislature’s final actions for the FY 2014 budget. The plan assumes flat enrollment for the coming year. Senior administration believes, however, that
WCSU can increase its retention rates and improve its recruitment efforts to meet this enrollment level. In order to achieve balance, WCSU reduced total base line full-time positions by 20 from FY13, with most of the reductions achieved by attrition and reduction in one-year special appointment faculty members. New faculty hiring is being focused on programs for which WCSU already has a strong reputation (Music Education and Nursing, for example) or for which it has previously committed itself to making enhancements (Business, for example, which was accepted for AASCB accreditation candidacy this year).

WCSU takes advantage of attrition to re-evaluate positions and, if needed, reallocate funding. It looks for improvements in processes, procurement, and technology to reduce OE expense and free up dollars for use in other areas. The University is party to a combination of collective bargaining agreements and the terms of a labor concession agreement from summer 2011 that bars any position layoffs or reductions for the period of FY12 – FY16. These terms, along with various state regulations make it difficult for WCSU to make changes with the speed that it desires.

**New Revenue Sources**

Opportunities for developing new academic programs are governed by the faculty and reviewed and approved by the University Planning and Budget Committee, WCSU leadership, ConnSCU and, where needed, NEASC (see Appendix: Standard IX: 9).

New sources of revenue related to auxiliaries and other operations are reviewed by the relevant Vice President and the VPFA. The University’s independent Foundation approved a comprehensive campaign in fall 2012 – its first in more than ten years. The campaign has a multi-year goal of raising at least $12.5 million, and is now in the “quiet phase” during which the Foundation and the President will be approaching the most promising donors and soliciting support. If successful, the campaign could add significantly to the Foundation’s endowment assets, valued at about $11 million at December 31, 2012. The campaign will use the excitement associated with the opening of the new 134,000 square-foot Visual and Performing Arts Building in May 2014 as one of its major draws. The campaign will raise money for three major areas: student support, innovation and research involving faculty and students, and partnerships with the community.

The University should also benefit from the services of a full-time Director of Sponsored Research, hired in July 2012. The new staff person will support faculty members and others in the community as they develop grant proposals. Western expects the number and value of grants to increase over the coming years.

**Ethics**

WCSU and ConnSCU leadership expect the highest ethical conduct from all staff. The State ethics policies and compliance mechanisms are overseen by the local Ethics Liaison Officer (the Associate Vice President for Human Resources).
Audits

ConnSCU contracts PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC), a well-regarded public accounting firm, to audit each of the four regional state Universities annually. The auditing agency provides each institution individually and the system as a whole with a management letter. PWC’s senior partner in charge meets with WCSU’s President, VPFA, and Controller at the end of each engagement to review the management letter and the audit. Similar meetings take place at the System level. For FY11 and FY12, PWC reported that WCSU had a “clean audit.” No new management comments were identified and the agency noted that a comment made in the FY10 audit had been addressed and closed (see Appendix: Standard IX: 10).

Institutional Advancement

WCSU has steadily increased the professionalism of its Institutional Advancement (I/A) Office and Foundation during the past several years. Although additional staff is needed and there is more work to do, the office is committed to following best practices, as delineated by the Association of Fundraising Professionals’ “Donor Bill of Rights.” (See the Foundation’s planned campaign in “New Revenue Sources,” above.)

Documentation

WCSU maintains documented policies on internal networked computer files and, in many cases, on departmental websites and shared mainframe drives where they are readily available to members of the University Community. Comprehensive fiscal policies, for example, are maintained on Fiscal Affairs’ shared computer drive, while travel, purchasing and hiring policies are available on departmental web pages (see Appendix: Standard IX: 11).

Appraisal

WCSU has done a respectable job of managing its available resources. There is a realization, however, that the resource base needs to grow for the University to fulfill its strategic priorities. Fostering this growth will be challenging since recent trends point to reduced state support and decreasing numbers of in-state high school graduates over the next 10 years.

The institution is committed to collective bargaining agreements through FY16 that, starting in FY14, call for annual raises of 3% to 5% and preclude layoffs. At the same time, the Governor has indicated a desire to limit increases to tuition and fees. In FY12, for example, state support fell by 12.0% but tuition and fees rose by only 2.5%. This ratio ran counter to nationwide trends, in which tuition and fees for public four-year universities rose by an average of 15%. The tuition increase for FY13 was 3.9% and the tuition increase for FY14 was 5.25%

The University will need to succeed at a number of activities in order to offset troubling financial trends. It must improve current programs and initiate new programs in order to attract a larger share of in-state students and more out-of-state students. It needs to extend its recruiting efforts to nearby populous counties in New York State. It needs to attract larger numbers of non-traditional students. It needs to make its best case for appropriate increases in tuition and fees. It needs to lower operating costs and it must successfully attract new donors and supporters.
In spite of the fiscal challenges it faces, there are numerous positive aspects of WCSU financial management. Perhaps most significantly, the University has remained debt-free in the last four fiscal years. Budgeting and financial transparency have increased steadily during the past five years. And the university continues to receive “clean audits.”

Projection

Whatever policy and operational changes WCSU makes, these decisions must be reached through a transparent and inclusive process. Senior administration works closely with the University Planning and Budget Committee on major financial issues and communicates regularly with the University Senate on finances. The University will continue to hold additional open forums at which tuition and fee decisions and fiscal news are shared with the full University community (see Appendix: Standard IX: 12). In light of recent enrollment shortfalls, the University is reviewing and revising its enrollment operations. A new Director for Admission, who has extensive experience in tuition –dependent private institutions, joined Western in March 2013. That same month, Western’s Interim Chief Information Officer initiated a process re-engineering exercise focused on streamlining and rationalizing the recruitment-admission-financial aid-registration-billing process. The ad-hoc task force working on this initiative expects to make its recommendation for process improvements in August 2013.

Western must improve retention and recruitment to thrive in the future. During FY 2013, we began putting new personnel in place to achieve this result and are also planning changes to our advising, first year experience, and administrative processes to better serve our students and keep them in school. Fall 2013 enrollment levels will provide a good indication of whether or not our early efforts are succeeding and, most likely, will highlight where we need to make further improvements. To support enrollment growth, Western will need to prioritize its programs and make strategic investments in a selected number of programs that will attract students, provide a meaningful distinction for Western from its peers and provide a halo effect for the overall institution. If Western can improve retention and enrollment, it will be able to meet the needs of its students and fulfill its collective bargaining commitments while generating, on a spending plan format basis, breakeven or positive financial results. Failure to generate needed enrollment, however, will create short-term deficits and necessitate attrition-based staff reductions and curtailments in non-personnel expenditures that will lower the quality of learning and the general quality of life on campus.

Institutional Effectiveness

WCSU uses data from internal accounting systems, information created to meet its reporting requirements to ConnSCU, and findings from its audits to monitor its financial condition and make continuous improvements to its systems and polices. Each year, the University forecasts current revenue shortly after confirming its fall enrollment levels and compares that value to its budgeted revenue. It does the same for housing and meal plan revenue, and then uses this information to manage spending throughout the year. WCSU runs monthly expenditure reports against its approved spending plan to track patterns and variances. Early identification of revenue shortfalls provides the University greater flexibility in dealing with the resulting challenges. During FY 2013, for example, the University scaled back its searches for tenure track faculty for FY 2014 once it identified the financial impact of the 4.1% enrollment decline on its resource base for future years. The University has generated break-even results or better for the past 10
years, a reflection of the administration’s commitment to financial responsibility. Even with the
great challenges of the next several years, that commitment remains in place.
Standard X

Public Disclosure

Description

Western Connecticut State University is committed to transparency and full disclosure, to its students, faculty, and staff, as well as the general public. Printed and virtual documents provide extensive information about the University’s Vision, Mission, Strategic Plan and all processes surrounding governance and operation.

The website is comprehensive and fully functional. Current and prospective students have access to up-to-date information regarding programs, courses, registration deadlines and procedures, and costs. Requirements, procedures and policies regarding admissions and transfer credit are online, as are student fees, charges, and refund policies. The Registrar’s page outlines degree requirements and other forms of academic recognition. To facilitate inquiries, the website provides links and telephone numbers for all departments and services.

Major campus publications such as the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs and pertinent information such as regional and program accreditation and audited financial statements are available online.

Academic programs and corresponding undergraduate and graduate program sheets are showcased online, as is the Student Handbook. The Handbook informs students of their obligations and responsibilities, and of the University’s obligations and responsibilities to its attendees.

Other pertinent information online includes instructions for enrolling in and withdrawing from the University; lists of offered courses; academic policies, procedures, and other educational opportunities; and lists of current faculty by department and program affiliation. Many academic and administrative departments have their own webpages.

WCSU conforms to all applicable federal and state laws, protecting the privacy of individuals, while also fully disclosing information that the public and appropriate University officials have a right to know. WCSU complies with the 1974 federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Student directory information is published. With regard to student records, only appropriate faculty and staff are given access and this information is not disclosed to a third party unless the student authorizes disclosure. The University responds promptly to information requests. All non-exempt data are subject to disclosure to the general public and the news media under the provisions of Connecticut’s Freedom of Information Act. The information shared with and presented to the public is obtained from offices responsible for the collection, analysis, and maintenance of data that directly impacts students and the public. The University ensures that information it provides is truthful and accurate.

The website archives minutes of its various committee meetings such as the University Senate, the Information Technology Committee, and the Committee on General Education.
The President’s Annual Report has been produced solely on-line since 2008. In it, the President shares highlights of the last year. The latest report, for instance, showcases the 2012 visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Banned Books Week, interviews with Fulbright scholars, and excerpts from guest lecturers. Faculty achievements as well as contributions by staff and students are also featured.

Other key publications include: the Student Handbook; the Faculty Handbook; various collective bargaining agreements; the Policies and Program Manual, the Admissions Office Viewbook, the WestConn Report, and Institutional Advancement’s publications, Momentum distributed to donors and The Cupola with broad distribution.

In compliance with the Clery Act, the Police Department annually publishes a public safety report, providing information on campus crime statistics and the Police Department’s efforts to create a safer environment. Safety programs and services available to the campus community are also listed. Since 2006, the Police Department communicates with the University community using an Emergency Notification System which sends texts, e-mails, and robo-calls in the event of emergency situations such as inclement weather, disaster preparation, or health and safety issues. Additionally, this system makes it possible to post emergency information directly to the University website (see Appendix: Standard X: 1).

Information on all undergraduate and graduate programs is provided in the Undergraduate Catalog and the Graduate Catalog, respectively. The catalogs include comprehensive descriptions of the University’s Mission, Principles, and Values, expected educational outcomes, admissions policies, and procedures, financial aid information, degree requirements, faculty and course offerings, as well as a listing of the obligations and responsibilities of both the institution and its students.

WCSU’s Waterbury campus is located on the grounds of Naugatuck Valley Community College, approximately 25 miles from WCSU’s Danbury campus. Completion courses for a Bachelor in Business Administration (BBA) or a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) are offered on the Waterbury campus.

The Office of Academic Affairs supervises the revision of the Undergraduate and Graduate catalogs to ensure accuracy and completeness and that courses listed are in fact offered. A schedule of classes is published three times a year (in Fall, Spring, and Summer) listing all courses offered during the current and upcoming semester or session.

The size, composition, description of the campus setting and other relevant characteristics of the student body are found on the Consumer Information webpage. There students may also review the total cost of education, including a net price calculator, and average debt incurred by graduates. The University’s Registration and Cashiers pages clearly explain and identify all student fees, ancillary charges and refund policies.

Information on academic services, such as Academic Advising, and co-curricular and non-academic programs, such as AccessAbility Services, are provided in published brochures, the website, and catalogs.
Institutional learning and physical resources from which a student can be expected to benefit are posted online, as are the University’s goals for students' education. Retention, graduation rates, and post-graduation study are also published online.

Information about program excellence and learning outcomes for programs with external accreditation are found in accreditation reports in the Office of Academic Affairs. The University’s statement on regional and program accreditation is featured on its Admissions webpage, including the university’s current accreditation status through NEASC as well as other accrediting bodies.

**Appraisal**

WCSU makes a concerted effort to meet NEASC standards for Public Disclosure. The University strives for consistency, clarity, and accuracy when publishing print and online information. The same holds true for information that is mailed or distributed to students, faculty, staff, and the public. 87.5% of faculty and staff surveyed in 2012 stated that the university’s educational policies and procedures are clearly stated in publications, including the website. (link to Spring 2012 Faculty-Staff Survey)

Rich in content, the website and publications present a vibrant and thorough picture of the university and illustrate the university’s strengths from a multiplicity of perspectives. In addition to facts, figures, mission, and policies, they showcase the university’s events and achievements as well as civic and community endeavors. They portray a dynamic university with exciting learning opportunities.

Given the number of publications generated by the university it is important that they, and the website, project a consistent image and message to students and the public. A review of university communication vehicles with this in mind would be beneficial.

Aggressive efforts are made to update and add new information which keeps the site fresh. As projected in the Fifth Year Report, a major website redesign was completed in 2007. The site is more student-centered and now incorporates measures of student success in achieving institutional goals including rates of retention and graduation and the expected amount of student debt upon graduation. 83% of faculty and staff surveyed in 2012 agreed that the website contains accurate and current information. Focusing attention on webpage updates will increase this percentage. Generally, web pages do not indicate when last updated. In addition, a web policy, including editorial and content responsibilities and updating procedures and responsibilities, needs to be adopted and distributed to the campus community. This will clarify who and how web pages are managed, which is not currently understood throughout the university.

The website stays relevant by embracing new and popular communication technologies. These include increasing use of social media, a Facebook page, a Twitter feed and online chat sessions for prospective and new students.

The website supports the university’s goal to provide as much information as possible to help students navigate smoothly through every step of the college experience, including contacting their professors. A recent web enhancement does just that. The Dean of Arts & Sciences in Spring 2013 insured online posting of all faculty contact information and office hours. This
information needs to be posted for all full–time and adjunct faculty, including degrees and institution granting them.

Appropriately, the Emergency Notification System (ENS) is used only during emergencies. As of 2011, incoming freshmen are automatically provided with basic enrollment into the system using their University issued e-mail address. Other members of the University community are not required to sign up for this system consequently not all university personnel receive emergency notifications. There is no process in place to remove students, faculty or staff from the ENS system once they leave the university resulting in unwanted notifications. Additionally, if the university electronic communication servers fail, there is no mechanism in place for conveyance of emergency information. Currently the ENS system does not provide coverage to campus visitors.

Overall, WCSU presents an accurate portrait of itself in the information it makes available. Transparency is a valued part of the campus culture and dialogue and this contributes to the University’s positive image.

**Projection**

The University’s website is the primary source for current and accurate information about WCSU. The University’s Communications team is comprised of eight members from various departments including Information Technology and Innovation, Admissions, Institutional Advancement, University Relations, Publications & Design, and the Library. This team will continue to insure that the website maintains high standards of integrity, public disclosure, reliability, timeliness, and accessibility.

In Fall 2013 the Dean’s Council will develop a plan to have current full- and part-time faculty listed on the website indicating departmental or program affiliation, degrees held and the institutions granting them. The list will be online by January 2014.

A Comprehensive Communications Plan Team was formed in Spring 2013 to audit and assess effectiveness of all university communication and develop consistent messaging on all platforms by Fall 2013.

In Spring 2014 Information Technology and Innovation will convene a committee to review an existing, but never finalized, web policy. This policy will be adopted and disseminated to the university community in Fall 2014. Training workshops for faculty and staff to assist with learning various web responsibilities will be held each semester.

The University Police Department is working to improve its ENS system and extend coverage to campus visitors. Improvements will be implemented over the next 24 months.

**Institutional Effectiveness**

Transparency, accuracy, inclusion, and engagement are highly valued at WCSU. So is increased accessibility to information and resources. To this end, Human Resources, and University Publications regularly engage in review and evaluation of university documents and information materials. The Communications Team meets weekly to address website content and accessibility; policies and procedures and ensure that it is consistent with the University’s Mission. The
University is aware of the benefits of having an excellent story to tell and the multiplicity of formats and technologies that can be used to reach prospective students and the campus community. There is campus-wide awareness that it is important to keep current and embrace new communication technologies adopted by our constituents. Emerging electronic technologies will continue to play a part in our information distribution both in and out of the classroom.
Standard XI

Integrity

Description

Western Connecticut State University strives to adhere to the highest ethical standards in the conduct of its affairs. Among the documents establishing those standards are the statutes governing public higher education in the State of Connecticut (see Appendix: Standard XI: 1). Our Mission includes a statement of Principles and Values. The first principle speaks directly to integrity, pledging to empower students to “attain the highest standards of academic achievement, public and professional services, personal development, and ethical conduct.” As an institution our values are “Quality in all that we do,” “Integrity in the process of teaching and learning,” and “Respect for the dignity and rights of each member of our University community.” The third principle addresses academic freedom: “Promoting a rich and diverse cultural environment that allows freedom of expression within a spirit of civility and mutual respect.” The Mission, Principles, and Values are published in a number of publications, including the catalogs and the faculty handbook as well as on-line.

As the DATA FIRST table shows, we have policies in place to address academic honesty, academic freedom, intellectual property rights, privacy rights, and principles of fairness for students, faculty and staff (see Appendix: Standard XI: 2). The University publicizes non-discrimination policies in the areas of admissions, employment, faculty and staff recruitment and evaluation, disciplinary action, and advancement (see Appendix: Standard XI: 3).

WCSU is governed by conflict of interest rules authorized by the State of Connecticut. All University policies are distributed to employees at the time of hire. The employees sign a statement that they have received the policies and a copy of their signed statement is placed in their personnel file.

The Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between the Board of Regents for the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system and the American Association of University Professors sets forth a series of principles of academic freedom and procedures for filing and deliberating complaints. An Academic Freedom Committee has the power to adjudicate substantive issues and to direct a remedy. The CBAs for faculty, professional administrative personnel, and support staffs include standards of conduct as well as procedures the University must follow in addressing alleged violations (see Appendix: Standard XI: 4).

Academic integrity guidelines and plagiarism and cheating definitions may be found in the Undergraduate Catalog and the Student Handbook.

WCSU has a policy statement on Photocopying Materials for Classroom and Research Use. The statement is intended to apprise faculty members of the legal limitations on duplicating
copyrighted materials for research and classroom use, and clearly indicates that compliance is expected.

The Student Handbook contains University policies and regulations on alcoholic beverages, the grade appeal process, parental notification (drug and alcohol violations), public forums, demonstrations, marches, and protests, and student confidentiality, as well as nondiscrimination, affirmative action, multiculturalism, and sexual harassment. The ConnSCU system publishes guidelines that state student rights and responsibilities, create fair and appropriate judicial procedures for the protection of these rights, and provide for the implementation of the stated responsibilities (see Appendix: Standard XI: 5).

To avoid any appearance of conflicts of interest, our President’s biography appears prominently on the WCSU website. This information includes boards and committees with which the president is active and affiliated.

The Office of University Relations is responsible for responding to media inquiries. This process ensures not only timely responses but accurate dissemination of information to internal and external constituencies.

Academic freedom issues are addressed online and in the Faculty Handbook. Additionally, the University Senate may initiate or review academic freedom issues which may develop.

WCSU is part of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities System which is governed by the Board of Regents for Higher Education. The Chair of the BOR is appointed by the State of Connecticut’s governor. The BOR is responsible for setting tuition and fee policies, establishing financial aid policies, reviewing and recommending new academic programs, and conducting searches for campus presidents. The BOR grants authority to WCSU to conduct educational activities including the granting of degrees.

WCSU is an affirmative action/equal opportunity educator and employer, fully committed to the goal of providing equal opportunity and full participation in its educational programs, activities, and employment without discrimination because of race, color, religious beliefs or association, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, or physical disability. A statement of the University’s affirmative action policy appears on all position announcements as well as on event notices, invitations, and other distributed material. The University’s affirmative action policy is disseminated to the University community annually. It is available on-line and stresses the importance of embracing non-discriminatory policies in all aspects of collegial interactions as well as hiring processes. The Chief Diversity Officer is involved in all searches for faculty, administrative, and support staff positions. This process is clearly described in the President’s Affirmative Action Policy Statement. The policy statement affirms the policy of the leadership of WCSU to advance social justice and equity by exercising affirmative action to remove all discriminatory barriers to equal employment opportunity and upward mobility. Additionally, non-discrimination policies are addressed in the appropriate
contexts, including recruitment and admissions, employment, evaluation, disciplinary action, and advancement. The University submits an annual Affirmative Action Plan directed toward developing and maintaining a diversified workforce with the Connecticut Human Rights Office (CHRO). Funds to support the recruitment and retention of protected groups are set aside under faculty (CSU-AAUP) and administrative (CSU-SUOAF/AFSCME) staff collective bargaining. In keeping with efforts to establish an environment in which the dignity and worth of all members of the institutional community are respected, sexual harassment of students and employees at the University is unacceptable conduct and is not tolerated. All university staff have participated in training on sexual harassment and diversity issues (see Appendix: Standard XI: 6).

In 2009, WCSU established the Veterans’ Support Center dedicated to helping student veterans achieve academic and personal success. A dedicated hotline (203-837-8587) and e-mailbox have been established to respond to veterans’ questions about financial aid, admissions, etc. These efforts are the result of the Veterans’ Task Force which works to identify and resolve potential problem areas for vets. While the members of the Task Force are drawn primarily from the Student Affairs area of the University, the Task Force does have representation from several offices which can assist vets with making a smooth transition to the University community.

WCSU strives to maintain transparency in its interactions with faculty, staff, students, and prospective students. This was evident in the Strategic Planning process begun in 2005. Multiple opportunities were provided for individuals and groups to contribute to the document. A draft was made available on the university’s website, with a feedback button; open forums were held on campus and meetings were held with external stakeholders to receive feedback and comments. The plan was unanimously endorsed by the Senate in March 2007.

A more recent example occurred in September, 2012 when a vulnerability was discovered in WCSU’s computer systems. While it is believed that no confidential data was accessed via this vulnerability, WCSU disclosed this information through the national media as well as informing nearly 250,000 individuals whose personal data may have been compromised. In addition to fixing the problem, WCSU is offering two years of identity theft protection as a precaution to those who were potentially impacted. When the president was made aware of this vulnerability, he immediately notified the appropriate authorities in the Board of Regents’ Office. An investigation was launched and appropriate disciplinary measures were taken. In addition to notifying potentially impacted individuals via letters mailed to home addresses, the University’s website carries the information about the incident in English, Spanish, and Portuguese out of respect to the populations that the university community serves.

WCSU believes that conferences and workshops enhance education, professional development, and the learning environment. To that end, recent conferences have included a Creativity and Compassion Conference in conjunction with a 2012 visit from His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. Participants in the conference included faculty, students, and members of the local Buddhist
community. In 2009, following the arrest of Dr. Henry Louis Gates, the University held a panel discussion on Race in America. Among others, the panel featured the Police Chief of the City of Danbury as well as an Emmy-award winning news producer for CBS’s Early Show. Other conferences and workshops include an annual Tri-state Weather Conference and a Young Writers Conference for local high school students. Most conferences are free; however, in cases where a fee is charged, accounting statements are available from Fiscal Affairs and any advertising includes a brief reason for the fees (to cover lunch and/or training materials, for instance).

Policies and procedures for filing grievances or complaints are described in widely disseminated documents, including the Faculty Handbook, Personnel Policies for Management and Confidential Professional Personnel, collective bargaining agreements, the Western Connecticut State University Policies and Programs Manual, the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs, and the Student Handbook. In addition to print versions of these documents, all of them are available via the University’s website (see Appendix: Standard XI: 7).

WCSU has been accredited by NEASC since 1954. The University believes that accreditation reviews and studies are opportunities for collaborative assessment and evaluation of department, program, and institutional integrity and adherence to established standards. In addition to the New England Association of School and Colleges, the University is accredited by the Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education and the Connecticut State Department of Education. Departmental accreditations include the American Chemical Society (ACS), the National League for Nursing (NLN), the Council on Social Work Education, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP), and the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). In 2011, a Steering Committee and teams of faculty and staff members were established to address the eleven standards of accreditation and to prepare for the self-study. A website was established to make the entire University community aware of the re-accreditation process and progress (see Appendix: Standard XI: 8).

WCSU continues to advocate high ethical standards in the management and communication of its dealings with students, faculty, staff, governing board, external organizations and the general public. Integrity is incorporated into our mission and strategic planning. It is encompassed in the execution of academic programs, information resources, fiscal management, technology, and design and use of space. The university expresses this commitment to high ethical standards in personal conduct, public statements, and published documents.

Our institutional integrity benefits from periodic and episodic assessments of its policies, procedures, and institutional climate. Annually the University submits an Affirmative Action Plan to the State’s Commission of Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO). This plan provides a detailed, result-oriented set of procedures that blueprint a strategy to combat discrimination and achieve affirmative action while fostering a climate conducive to the success, retention, promotion and equal treatment of all peoples as prescribed by federal and state laws. The Plan
not only states the University’s future goals, but it also offers an assessment of the University’s multicultural achievements for the past year. In addition to the University’s Affirmative Action Plan, WCSU benefits from collective bargaining negotiations, the dissemination of rulings from the State Ethics Board, Faculty/Staff surveys, and the Fifth Year Report. These types of assessments provide vehicles by which the university takes stock of its progress as well as identifies areas that need to be addressed, goals set, and action taken in order to support WCSU’s commitment to providing an integrity-based education.

**Appraisal**

Basic standards of integrity and civility apply regardless of time and place. While e-mail, instant messaging, and social networking (i.e. Twitter, Facebook, etc.) have enhanced the immediacy of communication, the potential for abuse has also been increased. The University has procedures in place to reduce the likelihood of misuse. For example, all messages that are mass broadcast to the WCSU community must be placed through the President’s Office, a Vice-President’s Office, or the Human Resources Department. University Departments are able to update information pertaining to their specific departments, but the WCSU webmaster is the only one who can post information to the University’s primary website, which is helpful to the University’s ability to present a cohesive message, but slows down the ability to present accurate information in a timely manner.

While no single entity is charged with evaluating the effectiveness of the University’s ethical policies and procedures, the University Senate reviews academic policies and various committees, offices, and organizations review areas that relate directly to them. The Board of Regents ultimately holds the president accountable for implementation of policies in an annual evaluation of his performance. University policies and procedures are consistent with NEASC standards and appear to be working effectively at every level. 87.6% of the respondents to the 2012 Faculty Staff survey believe that the University demonstrates integrity in the management of its affairs.

WCSU’s annual [Affirmative Action Plan](#) prepared by the Chief Diversity Officer serves as a vehicle to assess the effectiveness of the University’s non-discrimination and equal opportunity principles. The University is making consistent and significant progress in systematically addressing issues in diversity. This progress includes campus-wide workshops, speakers, and training sessions. The University is able to retain minority faculty and improve female and minority representation at the management and administrative level. In 1998, minority representation at the management and administrative level was 13%. As of Spring 2012, there has been an increase in female and minority representation to 21%. However, despite this increase in female and minority representation on campus, our faculty and administrators do not fully reflect our student population. This is particularly reflected by the lack of faculty for whom English is a second language. The greater Danbury area has a significant, Brazilian population, but there are few teaching faculty of Brazilian descent on campus.
Several complaints have been filed with the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) since 2003. Most cases have been dismissed, but four cases are pending. Despite the occurrence of two incidents involving homophobic behavior in 2010 and 2012, students describe the University environment as “very accepting.” The aforementioned incidents prompted immediate action by the President’s Office. In addition to the University Police Department’s investigations of these incidents for potential criminal prosecution, e-mails clearly stating the University’s ”zero tolerance” for harassment or bullying activities were sent to all users. In 2012, the Gay Straight Alliance was voted “Best Student Organization” by the WCSU Student Government Association.

The processes in place for resolving grievances are working effectively. Since 2003, twelve grievances have been filed by AAUP faculty. As of Fall 2012, there is only one grievance filed by a fulltime faculty member that is still pending. Of the grievances filed by members of other bargaining units during this period, all have been resolved. 82.2% of respondents to the Faculty/Staff Survey believe that the faculty and staff evaluation process is uniform.

WCSU is aware of changing student demographics and has responded with appropriate services. Student Veterans are a rapidly growing campus constituency. In addition to providing an Office of Veterans’ Affairs within Student Financial Services, the University’s website has dedicated pages that provide WCSU information and a link to federal VA benefit information. In 2010, a Veterans’ Lounge was opened in the Midtown Student Center.

With widespread use of the Internet for research, opportunities for plagiarism have increased. As a result, the number of complaints filed by faculty to the Student Judicial Committee has increased. Information on academic integrity, including definitions of plagiarism and cheating, may be found in both the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs as well as on the University’s website. The 2007 creation of the University Judicial Board provides students accused of violating the Student Code of Conduct, the opportunity to be heard by a board consisting of faculty, staff, and students instead of a single hearing officer. While the inclusion of diverse perspectives may occasionally provide the opportunity for diffusion of responsibility, more often than not, it provides the opportunity for more equitable measures. Of the respondents to the Faculty/Staff Survey, 84.5% believe that WCSU’s educational policies and procedures are equitably applied to all students.

Privacy and security issues continue to be an ongoing concern. Despite the difficulty of keeping up with rapidly changing technology, WCSU has been diligent about protecting these rights while respecting the openness that must characterize a university environment (17).

Since 2004 and the arrival of the current president, WCSU has made concerted efforts to be inclusive and to communicate in a transparent manner. Development of the University’s Strategic Plan is a fine example of the University’s methodology. The Plan was developed with the input of a variety of constituencies and after several “town hall” style meetings were held. As
a result, 77% of respondents to the Faculty Staff Survey indicate that they believe the Strategic Plan, Mission and Values are used to develop and advance enrollment and staffing goals. The president conducts Opening Semester meetings for faculty and staff during which he gives a “state of the University” address. He and his Cabinet welcome questions and comments from the audience. For students, the President conducts “Pizza with the President” forums twice each semester. These are listening opportunities for the President to hear and respond to student concerns. These sessions are felt to be worthwhile by both the students and the President as evidenced by student attendance and enthusiasm. Notes are taken during these forums and are distributed to those who can best respond to, or follow-up on, specific issues.

**Projection**

The vulnerability to WCSU’s computer networks is resulting in reorganization. In addition to new staff, the department has been renamed Information Technology & Innovation. Within 18-24 months, the architecture of the network will have been re-designed. This re-design will provide greater information security and a disaster recovery program.

Our Office of Multicultural Affairs will continue to promote diversity and multiculturalism across campus. Faculty recruitment efforts will include outreach to non-traditional, higher education resources that target under-represented populations. The Director of Multicultural Affairs will re-join in 2013 the New York Southern Connecticut Higher Education Recruiting Consortium, an organization whose mission is to assist higher education institutions with recruiting a talented and diverse workforce, particularly among dual-career couples.

As issues arise, the Office of the President, as well as the Department of Finance & Administration, will continue to hold regular town hall forums to keep the University informed about recent challenges, answer questions, listen to concerns, and accept advice from the WCSU community. A recent example of this is the Open Forum held on April 4, 2013 to discuss the university’s budget for FY14 and FY15.

**Institutional Effectiveness**

The ongoing effort of institutional integrity is supported by the Board of Regents as well as WCSU’s HR policies, procedures, handbooks, accessibility, and continuous education and training. We value collaborative effort and shared governance. This is demonstrated through transparent communications with its students, faculty, staff, and community. This open communication supports a framework of academic freedom, high ethical standards, and commitment to integrity.