

**FOCUSED VISIT REPORT TO THE HIGHER LEARNING
COMMISSION OF THE NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION**

**Office of Institutional Effectiveness
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
<http://www.wmich.edu/poapa/>**

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WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY MISSION AND GOALS

www.wmich.edu/sub/mission-and-goals.html

MISSION

Western Michigan University is a student-centered research university, building intellectual inquiry, investigation, and discovery into all undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs. The University provides leadership in teaching, research, learning, and public service. Nationally recognized and internationally engaged, the University:

- Forges a responsive and ethical academic community
- Develops foundations for achievement in pluralistic societies
- Incorporates participation from diverse individuals in decision-making
- Contributes to technological and economic development
- Engenders an awareness and appreciation of the arts

GOALS

Western Michigan University's mission is characterized by its pursuit of the following institutional goals:

- To foster a safe, civil, and healthy University community
- To provide access to academic programs at reasonable cost and in multiple settings
- To strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration and international programs
- To increase diversity within the student body, faculty, and staff through institutional practices and programs
- To recognize excellence in the teaching, research, learning, creative work, scholarship, and service contributions of students, faculty, and staff
- To conduct ongoing assessment activities and engage in continuous improvement initiatives within the University
- To establish lifelong relationships between alumni and the University
- To advance responsible environmental stewardship
- To support community and regional partnerships that elevate civic, cultural, social, and economic life

I.

INTRODUCTION

A. ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This focused visit report responds to the concerns raised by the 2001 visiting team to Western Michigan University. In addition to this introduction, the report is organized into three sections: the section on assessment, the section on institutional strategic planning, and the conclusion.

In addition to the reasons for the focused visit, this introduction contains a history of Western Michigan University and its relationship to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), and an explanation of the process the institution used to prepare the focused visit report.

Consisting of an analysis of WMU's efforts to develop both a culture and a scholarly system of assessment, Section II (Area of Focus: Assessment) begins with a discussion of the activities of the University Assessment Steering Committee (UASC), Office of Institutional Effectiveness, General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC), and General Education Review Task Force (GERT), and of such complementary data sources as the new Student Information System (SIS), electronic assessment records, and the University Assessment Faculty Grants program. The primary focus is on WMU's development and approval of processes for ongoing program planning, as based on these and other assessment outcomes.

Section II proceeds with an examination of the University's commitment to institutionalizing its assessment efforts, focusing on such factors as academic program planning, reports to the Faculty Senate, and organizational transparency. It concludes with a discussion of WMU's planned and future actions in the area of assessment, which will incorporate priorities identified by the departments and colleges in their annual reports.

Section III (Area of Focus: Institutional Strategic Planning) provides an analysis of key developments in the area of strategic planning since 2001. It identifies several approaches for the institutionalization of long-term decision-making, including: the revision, under President Floyd, of the University Mission Statement and its approval by the Board of Trustees; the formalizing, by members of the Mission Coordinating Group (MCG), of specific Universitywide goals, and the subsequent approval of those goals by the Board of Trustees; presidential initiatives and plans outlined in State of the University addresses and other official pronouncements, with special emphasis on President Bailey's formalized institutional strategic plan for approval by the Board of Trustees; and initiatives, plans, and reports realized at the division, college, and department levels.

Section IV briefly summarizes the focused visit report.

NOTE: Underlined text indicates a hyperlink.

B. REASONS FOR THE FOCUSED VISIT

In its February 2001 Report of a Comprehensive Visit to Western Michigan University for the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, the evaluation team identified two specific institutional challenges of sufficient concern to call for a focused visit in November 2005:

- Assessment of student academic achievement
- Institutional strategic planning

According to the comprehensive visit report, Western Michigan University (henceforth referred to as “WMU” or “Western”) faces several challenges: “Despite significant real accomplishments across the spectrum of its activities, the institution faces challenges in implementing a full program of assessment, in bringing together strategic planning efforts into an institutional plan, in managing growth in enrollment and in graduate programs which strains faculty and staff resources, in maintaining the physical plant, and in evaluating its academic programs” (Report of a Comprehensive Visit to Western Michigan University, February 2001, p. 71).

The evaluation team recommended that two of the challenges and concerns receive near-term attention in the form of a focused visit: “Because of the conspicuous lack of institutional direction, support, and monitoring for assessment of student academic achievement, and because of the several years of planning without completion of a strategic plan, the team recommends that a visit focused on these two areas be made in the fall of 2005” (p. 71).

C. INSTITUTION AND ACCREDITATION HISTORY

The Michigan Legislature established the Western State Normal School in 1903 as a two-year institution responsible for preparing elementary and secondary school teachers. The school began offering Bachelor of Arts degrees through the University of Michigan in 1913 and independently in 1918. Classes were first offered at off-campus sites in 1917.

The Bachelor of Science degree was first awarded in 1924, and in 1927 the school was renamed Western State Teachers College. In 1934 the college first awarded bachelor’s degrees independent of teacher certification, and in 1938 it began offering master’s degree work in cooperation with the University of Michigan. In 1941 the name was changed to Western Michigan College of Education and in 1952 the State Board of Education authorized it to award master’s degrees independently, a role for which it received North Central Association graduate accreditation in 1955, the same year in which it became Western Michigan College. In 1957 the State of Michigan recognized Western Michigan College as the state’s fourth public university and the school took the name of Western Michigan University. In 1963 the State of Michigan revised its constitution and gave the governor the authority to appoint an eight-person Board of Trustees for Western Michigan University.

The normal school was first accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (NCA) in 1915, and in 1916 by what became the National Council for

Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). It has been continuously accredited by the NCA during the intervening years. The North Central Association approved the offering of the specialist degree in 1961. Doctoral degrees were initiated in 1966 and accredited in 1971. NCA most recently granted continued accreditation in 2001. A list of the forty agencies that accredit and license academic programs appears at www.wmich.edu/provost/Agencies.doc; the programs and their review cycles appear at <http://www.wmich.edu/poapa/strategic/myappxls.pdf>.

Since the comprehensive visit, significant changes have occurred in the positions of president, provost, and vice presidents (see Appendix A: WMU Organizational Chart and Appendix B: Academic Affairs Organizational Chart). President Judith I. Bailey assumed office as the seventh president of WMU in late spring of 2003. Provost and vice president for academic affairs Linda Delene, formerly vice provost for academic planning and assessment, took office in July 2004 following a series of short-term/interim provosts over the previous two years. In addition, although each of the senior leaders in business and finance, information technology, development, and legal affairs has been in office for five years or more, new vice presidents have been appointed since 2002 in the key areas of research, student affairs, and legislative affairs.

D. PROCESS BY WHICH THE FOCUSED VISIT REPORT HAS BEEN PREPARED

Preparation for the writing of this focused visit report began on November 15, 2004, when the vice provost for institutional effectiveness convened the first meeting of the Higher Learning Commission (North Central Association) Focused Visit Steering Committee. In addition, on December 7, 2004, the provost and the vice provost for institutional effectiveness met with then-HLC staff liaison Diane Nyhammer to clarify the timeline for preparing and submitting the report. And twice during 2005 (April 5 and June 29) the steering committee met with President Bailey to receive updates on the status of her institutional strategic plan.

Formation of Focused Visit Steering Committee

Each of the twelve members of the steering committee has served on at least one (and some on two or three) of the University's planning or assessment committees or groups since 1998 (e.g., strategic planning or analysis, mission or mission implementation, assessment). The committee thus comprises key individuals in the institution's history regarding the two areas of focus. At the same time, committee membership represents units (and ranks) within academic affairs, as well as information technology and student affairs. Several members of the steering committee also serve as consultant-evaluators for the HLC or other accrediting/licensing agencies or have particular expertise in evaluation and strategic planning. (See Appendix C: Focused Visit Steering Committee Matrix.)

The members of the committee are:

Dr. Judah Ari-Gur, professor, Department of Mechanical and Aeronautical Engineering
Dr. Katharine Cummings, professor, Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership, and
associate dean, College of Education
Dr. Bradford Dennis, assistant professor, University Libraries

Dr. Margaret Dupuis, faculty specialist II, Department of English
Dr. Eileen B. Evans, associate professor, Department of English, and vice provost for institutional effectiveness
Dr. Marie Gates, professor and director, Bronson School of Nursing
Dr. Damodar Golhar, professor, Department of Management
Dr. David Hartmann, professor and chair, Department of Sociology
Mr. Robert Johnson, security administrator, Office of Information Technology
Dr. Margaret Merrion, professor, School of Music, and dean, College of Fine Arts
Dr. Martha Warfield, assistant vice president for student affairs, Division of Multicultural Affairs
Dr. Robert Wertkin, professor, School of Social Work

Data-Gathering Process

Comprehensive summary notes for the focused visit steering committee's regularly scheduled meetings (as well as that of the April 18 institutional strategic planning subcommittee) were made available to the steering committee and the University community throughout the discussion and writing process. The committee also consulted with and/or requested information and materials from President Bailey, Provost Delene, and senior administrators at the division, college, and department levels.

Review and consideration of extant documents, such as the following, served not only as the basis for evidence of institutional progress in the areas of assessment and institutional strategic planning but also as a guide in structuring the report. Grouped by area of focus and in order of their creation, they are (see Appendix D: Strategic Planning Timeline):

- University Strategic Planning Group report (December 22, 1998-April 28, 1999)
- University Mission Statement (March 16, 2001-December 7, 2001)
- Mission Implementation Group report (May 16, 2002-July 7, 2003)
- President Bailey's acceptance of the Mission Implementation Group report (July 7, 2003)
- Draft Transformational Institutional Priorities (April 4, 2005)
- Draft Strategic Plan for Western Michigan University—2010 (July 11, 2005)

- Academic Program Planning Policy "Framework for Institutional Effectiveness and Academic Program Planning" (June 12, 2001-January 7, 2002)
- WMU Assessment Plan and Timetable (November 13, 2001-November 22, 2002)
- General Education Assessment Policy Statement "Report on Student Learning Outcomes, Areas of General Education" (January 23, 2003-May 12, 2003)
- Academic Affairs Strategic Plan (September 4, 2001-January 27, 2004)
- Deans' annual assessment reports (June 15, 2005)

The focused visit steering committee reviewed the addresses and other reports presented by presidents Floyd through Bailey, verifying consistencies between these official pronouncements and the key strategies outlined in the Mission Coordinating Group report.

Further, the committee drew on its membership of assessment and institutional strategic planning groups to create timelines for both assessment (see Appendix E: University Assessment

Timeline) and institutional strategic planning activities (see Appendix C: Strategic Planning Timeline) and a grid comparing the goals cited in the University's mission statement to key initiatives from the presidents' major addresses (President Floyd, Interim President Litynski, and President Bailey) as a means to establish patterns of consistent activity that could demonstrate institutionalization of assessment and institutional strategic planning. Steering committee member and University Assessment Steering Committee (UASC) chair Robert Wertkin consulted with the UASC in creation of the assessment timeline; and steering committee member, UASC member, and General Education Assessment committee member Margaret (Meg) Dupuis oversaw the general education assessment section of the timeline.

The text of this report, along with supplementary information, underwent a continual process of review and revision. The initial drafting of sections II (Area of Focus: Assessment) and III (Area of Focus: Institutional Strategic Planning) was assigned, respectively, to three steering committee members who are members of the UASC (one of whom also sits on the General Education Assessment Committee) and a member of the Mission Coordinating Group (MCG). WMU's Office of Student and Academic Institutional Research (SAIR) supplied data about the University's students, faculty, courses, and programs.

In order to keep the University community apprised of accreditation and assessment issues, and of the progress of the report throughout the writing and revision process, the provost and the vice provost for institutional effectiveness gave updates in person to Deans' Council (September 28, 2004; January 11 and 18, April 26, May 3, July 26, August 23, 2005), Provost's Council (May 24, June 21, August 17, 2005), Academic Forum (January 19, February 16, March 16, May 4 and 25, July 12, 2005), UASC (September 22, November 10, December 6, 2004; January 31, March 28, April 18, May 23, June 20, 2005), GEAC (May 12, October 22, 2004; January 21, March 18, September 23, 2005) and Faculty Senate (February 3, September 22, 2005); and a written progress report in Issue 3 (August 11, 2005) of academic affairs' online journal.

In late July, the steering committee gave its final approval to the draft report, which was then forwarded to the president and provost. The public draft was posted on the WMU Portal on August 3, at which time the provost notified the University community, via campuswide e-mail, that members of the steering committee were available to meet with administrative, faculty, staff, and student groups for the purpose of receiving comments and for presenting updates on the steering committee's work. These public comment sessions were held on August 17 and 18. The steering committee met on August 22 to reach a decision on each of the collated comments and suggestions; the text and graphics were revised accordingly; and the final version of the report was made public in electronic and print format in September.

II.

AREA OF FOCUS: ASSESSMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

In addition to this introduction, Section II (Area of Focus: Assessment) of this focused visit report is organized into seven subsections:

- Historical Context
- Current Status
- Outreach to Programs
- Institutionalization of Assessment Efforts
- Meta-Analysis
- Planned and Future Actions
- Summary

The academic programs and departments at Western Michigan University have informally assessed student achievement in various ways throughout the history of the institution. One method of assessment cited by faculty members, for example, is the set of rubrics and guidelines they develop in order to grade student work. However, as stated in the evaluation team's February 2001 comprehensive visit report (p. 31):

“Western Michigan University has not maintained a focus on assessment since the creation and approval of its plan in 1995. The institution has not implemented assessment of student achievement in many areas, and, until shortly before the NCA team's visit, no office or individual was monitoring compliance with Higher Learning Commission policy. For some years the institution had an office that coordinated campus assessment activities. The closing of that office in 1994 demonstrated a lack of administrative support for the assessment of student academic achievement.”

This cited concern prompted the institution to seek greater understanding of assessment among faculty, and the subsequent adoption of a system of continuous assessment for program improvement. Information provided in this focused visit report reflects the work of the faculty and administration to develop a culture of assessment that values assessment for its potential impact on programs and students. As WMU grows into its mission, it acknowledges the primary role of faculty in developing, implementing, and maintaining a system of assessment. To this end, the University has worked to establish an integrated and faculty-driven system to assess student learning, inform program decision-making, and improve the institution's programs. In a relatively brief timeframe, WMU has accomplished many assessment-related tasks and has developed the framework for ongoing assessment efforts. A summary of program improvements resulting from assessment data is provided in the Current Status section of this report (page 14).

B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

WMU Assessment Plan and Timetable

Written by members of the University Assessment Steering Committee (25 faculty, students, and staff), the WMU Assessment Plan and Timetable sets forth the University's direction regarding assessment of student achievement, including its philosophy and principles of assessment, along with the structure, scope, and resources of the plan. Completed in November 2002, the plan was approved and recommended by the Faculty Senate in December 2002 and approved by Provost Jorgens in February 2003.

University Assessment Steering Committee (UASC)

As noted in the minutes of the first meeting of the University Assessment Steering Committee (UASC), "an enormous amount of assessment is . . . already done throughout the University, although not reported in any systematic, institutional fashion" (November 13, 2001). The formation of the UASC provided the basis for faculty-driven leadership in formalizing WMU's assessment efforts. From its inception, the committee has presented assessment as an integral part of the "scholarship of program improvement." WMU's revised mission statement, approved by the Board of Trustees on December 7, 2001, includes a goal referencing assessment and related improvement initiatives, which also fosters the development of assessment policies and plans at the University. The UASC continues to serve as WMU's Universitywide assessment policy, planning, and resource-coordination group.

The committee's membership consists of students, faculty, and administrative representatives from Extended University Programs (EUP), the academic colleges, the Division of Student Affairs (DOSA), and student organizations. UASC is an active, deliberative committee that operates within public guidelines established and approved by the provost. Nominations from the academic deans, the Faculty Senate, the WMU Chapter of the Association of American University Professors (WMU-AAUP), the Graduate Student Advisory Committee (GSAC), and the Western Student Association (WSA) for two-year membership terms are sent to the vice provost for institutional effectiveness (see page 14). At the committee's last meeting of each spring semester, UASC members elect the committee's chair for the upcoming academic year.

The UASC's main charge is to "develop and recommend assessment policy and plans for Western Michigan University. In recommending assessment initiatives, policy, and plans for the University, the Committee provides formal faculty leadership and direction for all institutional and program assessment endeavors explained through annual reports and recommendations to the academic departments, the Faculty Senate and the provost of WMU."

Among the preliminary tasks for the UASC were the following:

- Orient committee colleagues to current assessment programs nationally
- Inventory and review existing assessment program plans
- Determine and recommend a general education assessment program
- Review and select specialized assessment resources

- Revise the WMU Assessment Plan and Timetable

Academic departments were asked to establish assessment committees to design and implement a plan for assessing student learning outcomes within their programs. To ensure faculty involvement in assessment processes, department-level committees were made up of faculty colleagues and chaired by a faculty member. Each department has an assessment contact. Assessment within the University's programs is faculty-driven, with deans and department chairs given responsibility for oversight of assessment activities and for preparing annual reports that describe the results of assessment and the use of assessment data for program improvement.

The Department of Biological Sciences was the first department to develop a plan consistent with the new guidelines; its plan was shared with the UASC in spring 2003. Based partly on the experience of biological sciences, the UASC established procedures for reviewing departmental plans, and undertook the review during the 2003-2004 academic year.

Review and Consultation Teams (RACTs)

In 2003, the UASC created several review teams to review departmental assessment plans, and to provide consultation with department assessment committees as the latter developed their plans. These Review and Consultation Teams (RACTs) were first proposed at the April 2003 UASC meeting. Their role was discussed at greater length in May, and a total of five RACTs were approved and implemented by the committee during fall 2003.

The RACTs met with departmental committees prior to the submission of an assessment plan, carefully reviewed each plan as it was submitted, and made recommendations to the UASC concerning the acceptability of each plan. The RACTs also developed a rubric to be used when reviewing the departmental-level assessment plans. The rubric was distributed to the department assessment committees to assist them in developing their plans.

Department plans, each limited to 15 pages, were submitted electronically to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Each department was asked to submit a single plan reflecting the assessment of the department's various undergraduate and graduate programs. Departments were also asked to review off-campus programs and determine how candidates' learning outcomes within those programs would be assessed. RACT members encouraged the department committees to identify specific learning outcomes as well as department goals. Recognizing that the goal of assessment is program improvement, the RACTs asked departments to provide specific information addressing periodic review of the plans within the department, as well as specific timelines for sharing assessment data with the department as a whole.

Although the charge to the UASC focused on the development of an assessment system for the academic departments, staff from the Division of Student Affairs (DOSA) also participated in the committee's work. DOSA staff noted that student learning outcomes are an important component of DOSA programming. Therefore, DOSA submitted an assessment plan, with components provided by each area within the division. Professional staff within the division worked to identify the student learning outcomes for programming in student affairs, and to create an

assessment plan reflecting those outcomes. The division has historically engaged in self-assessment, and the current assessment plan builds on that history.

A timetable for submission and review of assessment plans was distributed prior to fall semester 2003. RACTs were organized around colleges, with most RACTs being responsible for reviewing plans from two colleges. The RACT assigned to the largest college, the College of Arts and Sciences, reviewed only the plans from that college. RACT reviews of department assessment plans were guided by the rubric, but also included comments and suggestions for improvements. Following the review and consultation, plans were presented for approval at the monthly meetings of the UASC. The UASC chair periodically provided the committee with a tally of department plans approved, under revision, or not submitted.

General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC)

The General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC) was established to develop, implement, and monitor the assessment of general education at Western Michigan University. The provost convened the first meeting of GEAC on January 23, 2003. The committee comprised faculty members representing each of the colleges, and was charged with creating a plan for assessing the effectiveness of the University's general education program. The plan set forth a two-year, semester-by-semester calendar for general education assessment, beginning with the fall 2003 semester (see Appendix F: General Education Calendar). The assessment information would also serve as one part of the evaluation of the program, to begin once the assessment data were collected.

The group reviewed the formal statement of the University's General Education program, and examined several instruments—the California Critical Thinking Skills Test, the University of Missouri's College Basic Academic Subjects Examination (CBase), the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) offered by ACT (originally American College Testing, now referred to by the acronym ACT), and Educational Testing Services' (ETS) long and short forms for the Academic Profile, Assessing General Education. The committee decided to assess the overall general education goals through a commercially available instrument, and specific area content through locally developed means.

GEAC also formulated student learning outcomes for each of the eight distribution areas, as based on goals established in the General Education Policy document approved by President Haenicke in 1996. Those outcomes, which were reviewed by faculty teaching in each of the areas, became the basis for measurement of general education outcomes until fall 2005, at which time the General Education program would be revisited, as indicated by GEAC's plan. In the fall semester of 2003, faculty who had taught courses in General Education Distribution Areas I and II each submitted five samples of student work, which were subsequently assessed and the findings documented. This process was repeated for Areas III and IV in the spring semester of 2004, for Areas V and VI in the fall of 2004, and for Areas VII and VIII this past spring.

The committee decided to employ standardized tests to assess student learning in the proficiency areas. After reviewing several options, GEAC chose to administer the College Basic Academic Subjects Examination (CBase) to freshmen in the fall semester of 2003, and the same exam to

seniors in the spring semester of 2004. In order to compare two selected instruments, the committee then administered the California Critical Thinking Skills Tests to freshmen in the fall semester of 2004, and to seniors in the spring semester of 2005. The results will be analyzed by GEAC to determine the suitability of each instrument for WMU. In addition, faculty were named to review data and submit a summary report in each of the distribution areas, so as to establish whether learning objectives are being met. The reports will be discussed at GEAC's September 23 meeting, after which a draft report of the committee's assessment findings will be presented to GERT for use in the latter's review of graduate education.

Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness

In summer 2004, as part of the organizational restructuring of academic affairs, the position of vice provost for academic planning and assessment was renamed vice provost for institutional effectiveness, and a unit named the Office of Institutional Effectiveness was established. With formal leadership responsibility for the institution's assessment program (through the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs), the vice provost guides and coordinates the University assessment program, including assessment activities required for compliance with the Higher Learning Commission's guidelines, as well as the numerous external professional accreditation agencies that review and accredit graduate and undergraduate programs at the University. During 2005-2006, base budgeting in the amount of \$290,000 was allocated to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, thus providing permanent rather than one-time dollars in support of the functions of the office. In each of the two prior years, one-time funds supported assessment activities such as university assessment faculty grants, visiting assessment experts, participation in the national survey of student engagement and the faculty survey of student engagement, the USAC chair's reassigned time, and faculty travel to assessment conferences.

C. CURRENT STATUS

Number of Plans Approved

As of its June 20, 2005, meeting, the UASC has reviewed and approved 62 plans. Five units are in the process of revising their plans to meet the requirements of the UASC. Committee members have served as consultants as well as reviewers to assist departmental faculty in developing plans.

Assessment-Based Program Improvements: Outcomes

WMU's academic offerings are subject to some forty program accreditation agencies, thus ensuring attention to assessment at the program level, and this external accreditation endeavor results in a culture of assessment linked to accreditation in six of the seven academic colleges, and in three departments in the College of Arts and Sciences. Assessment activity since the approval and implementation of department assessment plans has resulted in changes to courses, curricula, and programs. While some departments are beginning implementation and others are collecting and analyzing data for presentation at department meetings in September, each of the colleges can point to progress in this area. The following selected examples, drawn from the

deans' annual assessment reports (June 2005), copies of which are available in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, convey the nature of the changes that have been implemented as a result of departmental assessment activity.

College of Arts and Sciences

Assessment activity in Arts and Sciences resulted in the following program changes:

- The Department of Psychology created mechanisms to support students with math deficiencies who had difficulty in their PSY 3000 course, Statistics in the Behavioral Sciences. In a basic math pre-test administered to 114 enrolled students, 24 (21%) were unable to respond correctly to more than 60% of the questions. Another assessment of students nearing completion of the course in a different term found that 33% did not demonstrate adequate math computation skills, which put them at a substantial disadvantage. In order to improve student performance on statistical calculations, the department created technology-based instructional modules addressing basic math operations. These were piloted in spring 2005. Based on the results of the pilot, the instructional tool will be incorporated into all sections of PSY 3000 by fall 2005. An online math self-test and subsequent remedial instruction for students who do not score well on the self-test is also under development for implementation in spring 2006.
- Based on assessment results, the Department of Physics upgraded its prerequisites in several courses. Faculty reports of feedback from current students, as well as measures of student performance in specific content areas, indicated that students were under-prepared for certain courses. Therefore, more rigorous prerequisites were established for PHYS 3300 Thermodynamics, PHYS 3420 Electronics, and PHYS 3520 Optics, to include PHYS 2090. The faculty also added MATH 5720, Vector Calculus and Complex Variables, as a prerequisite (concurrent) for PHYS 4400 Electromagnetism. Open response items on alumni surveys had indicated that the level of mathematics used was higher than in the prerequisite courses. Effective dates for these curricular changes are fall 2005 to fall 2006; thus baseline data will be in hand for study over the next few years.
- The Department of Chemistry made several changes in the general chemistry sequence (1100, 1110 [lab], 1130 [lab]). These responded to data indicating lower than average retention rates among science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) students at WMU. For example, data prepared for the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange revealed that in 2001, while 74.5% of first-year STEM students returned to WMU for the second year (versus 79.3% nationally), only 57.4% remained in STEM majors (versus 64.8% nationally). Given that STEM majors typically complete the general chemistry sequence their first year, the department's actions were intended to enhance instruction in that sequence. These included chemistry faculty collaborating with the Mallinson Institute to change the style of delivery, so as to allow for greater student involvement. Revisions of the general chemistry sequence also included adoption of a new text, development of a uniform set of syllabi linking the lecture and the lab in topic sequence/timing, and the provision of a set of workshops in the first two weeks of each of the labs. The workshops focused on study and note-taking skills, converting word problems to algebraic equations, units/measures, and balancing equations.

College of Aviation

As one of the methods of assessment set forth in the College of Aviation assessment plan, the College of Aviation Advisory Board met in December 2004 to review the curriculum. The advisory board includes representatives from corporations such as British Airways, Duncan Aviation, and Atlantic Southeast Airlines. As a result of that review, a course in corporate aviation management has been changed to a required course for the curricula of Flight Science and Aviation Science and Administration, effective fall 2006.

Haworth College of Business

In the Haworth College of Business, assessment activity resulted in several changes in the Department of Marketing:

- The advertising and promotion major will schedule more classroom visits from industry professionals to increase students' awareness of current industry practices; and, because the weekly Ad Club programs are considered an essential component of student career preparation, greater emphasis is to be placed on Ad Club membership and participation when signing major slips or making classroom announcements. These decisions were reached after faculty conducted a number of interviews with industry professionals and alumni, wrote up the findings, and distributed them to each other. Past students/alumni recommended that the faculty incorporate more visits by industry professionals to give students greater and more current insight into the industry. The Ad Club recommendation follows from those interviews and was based primarily on discussions at the Department's May faculty retreat.
- In food and consumer package goods marketing, a required food sales class (MKTG 4930) was added to the curriculum in response to a need identified by advisory board members, industry representatives, students, and faculty. New content (e.g., nutrition and obesity, geonomics, Radio Frequency Identification, and food safety) was integrated into courses to reflect emerging industry issues. In view of the fact that the sales process is becoming more technology-oriented, and tied directly to category management, the existing professional selling elective in the major was replaced with a required Food and Consumer Package Sales class (MKTG 4930). Intended to build on the skills that students acquire in MKTG 4920 Category Management, MKTG 4930 addresses the requirements of the entry-level jobs typically offered to the department's graduates. The new content was suggested by the curriculum committee as part of its ongoing monitoring process.
- Faculty added MKTG 4770 Consumer Behavior to the marketing major requirements to address educational objectives. In reviewing the learning objectives established for the Marketing major, faculty noted that objectives not being met by existing required courses could be satisfied through the completion of MKTG 4770 Consumer Behavior, previously one of several possible elective courses.
- In sales and business marketing, faculty established a mandatory role-playing requirement in MKTG 3600 and 4600 courses, partnered with Target Training International to provide opportunities for students to develop sales aptitude profiles, and developed two alumni events in Detroit and Chicago. The assessment findings that led to

changes in MKTG 3600 and 4600 were based on ongoing feedback supplied by or about students (e.g., exit surveys of Sales and Business Marketing majors, contacts with employers of SBM majors), and on published data indicating that role-playing is industry's most heavily used sales training approach. SBM faculty sought out the partnership with Target Training International on the basis that sales aptitude testing is a key component in many, if not most, sales employers' screening and recruiting processes. Faculty wanted to offer SBM students an opportunity to learn in advance how they might score on such a test, as well as what specific selling roles might best suit them. The meetings in Detroit and Chicago were based on the college-wide goal of maintaining open recruiting and assessment feedback channels via alumni events, to which end WMU's Sales and Business Marketing Association has created the position of vice president of alumni relations.

College of Education

The College of Education exemplifies the use of technology in support of assessment: all departments used the TracDat system (see page 22 for a more detailed description) in the preparation of their annual assessment reports.

- The Department of Family and Consumer Sciences used TracDat to organize and document assessment activities for an assessment plan that attempted to address broad goals for the department as a whole, while supporting the requirements of each program area. As a result, several changes have been made in terms of the content knowledge and skills student outcome. For instance, faculty modified the curriculum to enhance student learning or content and skills; revised courses to address the latest research, trends, employer requirements, and needs of families and communities; and revised courses based on skills necessary for professional practice in the field. The annual review of the department's assessment findings highlighted the need for two specific changes to curricular and candidate assessment processes. The first concerned the assessment of candidates through a series of case study assignments in medical nutrition therapy. Although 100% of the candidates achieved the score set for passing (75%), the faculty determined that this score was too low to provide meaningful data. The second finding concerned an assessment developed as a group technology project. The faculty found that the group project failed to provide helpful information for individual candidates. The timeline for actions to be taken based on assessment data begins with fall 2005—discontinuing measurement of students' pass rates for the required computer skills or equivalent course (unnecessary since students must pass the requirement as a condition of a satisfactory graduation audit)—and extends to ongoing actions such as determining the effectiveness of various course delivery systems, and developing a plan that considers new audiences and the needs of students.
- The College of Education has used the results of departmental and programmatic assessments to bring about changes in curriculum, student recruitment, and program policies. External reviews of the teacher education program, responses to alumni surveys, and evaluations of intern teacher performances suggested that candidates in secondary education were insufficiently prepared for the specific challenge of working with special-needs students. As a result of these findings, the program now requires a course in special

needs as part of the requirements in professional education. College-level assessments also indicated that candidates did not reflect a sufficiently diverse racial and ethnic background, resulting in additional resources being devoted to the recruitment and retention of a diverse student body. Other examples of the use of assessment data by the college include changes to student teaching policies based on input from school district administrators and teachers, establishment of advisory committees in several program areas, and increased faculty involvement in determining new organizational structures for the college. In addition, the College of Education is engaged in a discussion about incorporating scholarly assessment activities into the college's promotion and tenure guidelines.

College of Engineering and Applied Sciences

Assessment-based program improvements in the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences included the following:

- In response to comments from students and employers, IME 1420 Engineering Graphics has been revamped as an AutoCAD-based program. In support of this revision, faculty in the Department of Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering worked closely with the other departments in the college and with the University community to obtain a broad site license for AutoDesk products at WMU. The revised IME 1420 will be taught for the first time in fall 2005, and will also include the use of the PSPICE system for developing circuitry for designed electrical/electronic systems.
- In mechanical and aeronautical engineering, alumni and student input has resulted in modifications to ME 3350 Instrumentation, a required course. Since fall 2004, ME 3350 has required students to use LabVIEW to write programs for each of their experiments.

College of Fine Arts

Of the units in the College of Fine Arts, the Department of Theatre has had the opportunity to implement fully its assessment plan, examining more than forty specific learning outcomes and testing the efficacy of the measurement tools, sometimes using as many as six metrics to measure one learning outcome. The process has allowed faculty to define assessment methodologies more clearly and to facilitate discussions this fall regarding course content, equipment needs, and potential curriculum revision.

- After assessment identified certain competencies that were not being met by Performance students, action was taken to better coordinate class content in THEA 0141, 0142, 0245, and 0246, ensuring that specific skills are reinforced in a progressive manner.
- Assessment findings suggested that students were not receiving sufficient exposure to a variety of theatre styles in production, so the season selection process was reorganized to ensure more eclectic choices. The challenge in this instance is to maintain box office revenue while pursuing a more pedagogical curriculum.
- After assessment found that Design and Technical Theatre students were lacking in advanced skills, the Stagecraft 2 class, THEA 0220, was revised accordingly.

- Assessment of the Stage Management program suggested that students were not adequately served by their curriculum. The department is considering implementing a program of study specifically designed for Stage Management students.
- The department added a special topics class in Drawing and Painting after assessment found that Design and Technical Theatre students were lacking in certain hands-on art skills, a result of limited enrollment opportunities in art classes.
- After assessment found that Lighting students were not receiving sufficient exposure to new technology, college-level grant funds were used to purchase automated lighting equipment for use in production.
- Assessment findings suggested that Directing students lacked proficiency in staging. Course content in Directing I and II (THEA 0351 and 0352) was redesigned to emphasize these skills.

College of Health and Human Services

Assessment findings informed the following changes in the Bronson School of Nursing and the Holistic Health Program:

- Nursing revised its undergraduate curriculum, effective fall 2005, to focus more on the care of acutely ill people, an identified weakness from faculty and student input and NCLEX scores. Despite high average cohort rankings (75th percentile) on ATI's Critical Thinking Exam, 40% of students did not score above the 50th percentile. The School will reinforce critical thinking skills and attitudes in all courses and continue to track student progress through the administration of this exam. The finding that 100% of students are passing skills validation in all courses by their second attempt has led the school to move some skills instruction to lower-level courses, thus creating additional practice time in the nursing program.
- Based in part on responses from surveyed alumni, Holistic Health Program faculty are revising the core sequence in the graduate certificate program to decrease perceived redundancy between the HOL 6500 and HOL 6510 courses. Effective fall 2006, this revision will eliminate one of these required courses and allow students to choose an additional elective. The program is also organizing a day-long continuing education conference for graduates and other health professionals to address a need identified by surveyed alumni.

Division of Student Affairs

As a result of this past year's assessment efforts, several departments in the Division of Student Affairs (DOSA) are making changes and/or initiating follow-up activities in response to their findings. Examples include the following:

- The Division of Multicultural Affairs indicated that 98% of the students who participated in their University 1010 course found that it assisted them in navigating the campus culture. These findings will be shared with the faculty and upper-class students who are working with the new First Year Experience (FYE) program so that they can incorporate similar information into the FYE program.

- The Student Recreation Center administered a survey designed to determine if student use of the recreation center increased quality of life and whether respondents noticed changes as a result. Given that 91% of the respondents indicated that their use of the recreation center did positively impact their quality of life (e.g., more strength 16%, more energy 16%, less stress 13%, weight loss 12%, greater self-esteem 12%, better eating behaviors 10%, and more awareness of healthy behaviors 10%), the recreation center staff has decided to standardize the survey across program components within the recreation center to ascertain how different components factor into these responses.
- Career and Student Employment Services found that 93% of the students who took the University 1020 (career decision-making) class indicated that the course helped them to decide on an academic major and occupational direction. Because this course is currently taught in two of the seven colleges, Career and Student Employment Services staff will be disseminating this finding to faculty and administrators in other colleges along with the new enrollment management unit at the University in order to expand its potential impact.

In addition, the Division of Student Affairs will bring in a consultant or consultants to work with DOSA department heads to provide additional training regarding the differences among the various types of outcomes, and will develop assessment tools that can be used to measure student learning outcomes across departments. Examples include assessment tools that measure desired competencies for student employees, leadership skills for students in various leadership roles, and conflict resolution skills for individual students as well as student organizations.

General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC)

At the September 2005 meeting of the General Education Assessment Committee, members will review a draft report on the findings of assessment of student work from the eight distribution areas, as well as of the assessment of student learning in the proficiency areas, as determined through the use of locally developed means and commercially available instruments, respectively. The draft report will draw from individual reports written by faculty colleagues over the past year on each of the distribution areas and on the results of the CBase and California Critical Thinking Skills Test. In addition to constituting a preliminary assessment of general education, the report will also then form the basis for a review of general education.

General Education Review Task Force (GERT)

In spring 2005, the provost, with the advice of the Faculty Senate Executive Board, constituted the General Education Review Task Force (GERT) to review current general education requirements at the University. The committee includes representatives and advisors from all academic colleges.

The task force is charged with examining six dimensions of the current program:

1. What findings from the preliminary assessment of general education suggest change, and what should those changes be?

2. From those initial assessment findings, can you determine whether the current general education program helps create the attitudes and skills requisite for a life of learning in a diverse society?
3. Would a different general education structure serve the University equally as well or better in the near future?
4. Are the eight areas currently found within the general education program necessary?
5. Is the total number of required credit hours in the general education program typical of public institutions or not? If not, what is the recommended number of credit hours for the program?
6. What is the annual resource commitment for each general education area, and the total annual instructional cost for the general education program?

Models of general education at other universities and assessment information collected by the General Education Assessment Committee will serve as a starting point for GERT's work. In addition to consulting with faculty colleagues serving on undergraduate studies and assessment bodies, WMU has requested that a focused visit consultant-evaluator with expertise in general education meet with GERT for consultation on general education. The committee met for the first time on June 15, and is to submit its final report to the Faculty Senate no later than December 2005.

D. OUTREACH TO PROGRAMS

University faculty, staff, and administrators recognize the value of building an infrastructure to support assessment. In order for a culture of assessment to be developed at the institution, a number of projects and initiatives have been introduced to provide the frameworks to sustain assessment, including the following six:

Web-Based Portfolios

As part of the new Student Information System (SIS) adopted on campus in 2004-2005, the University is providing a web-based portfolio-development tool for students and faculty. In fall 2005, the College of Education began implementing the use of iWebfolio in its courses and clinical practice sites. Students are able to build portfolios based on templates developed by their instructors, share portfolios with faculty and external reviewers, and maintain a standards-based record of their performance. In addition, faculty are given the opportunity to prepare their annual Professional Activities Reports using iWebfolio; the secure online submission process enables department chairs to easily access these reports throughout the year; and programs can use iWebfolio to capture samples of student work to support their assessment efforts.

The colleges of Aviation, Engineering and Applied Sciences, Fine Arts, and Health and Human Services will make iWebfolio available to their students in fall 2006, followed by the Haworth College of Business in 2006-2007 and the College of Arts and Sciences in 2007-2008.

Electronic Assessment Records

TracDat, a system for organizing assessment activities within departments and programs, was introduced during fall 2004 to allow faculty and staff to enter assessment plans, record assessment findings, and share the results. TracDat was designed to support ongoing assessment with a minimum of clerical effort and is linked with the iWebfolio system, providing a seamless mechanism for collecting and maintaining evidence about program performance. Assessment committees are encouraged to add findings to their TracDat files on a regular basis, and are prompted to suggest remedies, follow-up strategies, and timelines to address any problems identified from assessment data.

Although departments are not obligated to use TracDat, the template for annual department assessment reports is based on the system's assessment impact report. Annual reports of assessment impact include student learning outcomes, measures and criteria for each outcome, and findings resulting from the measures, and are available as part of the deans' annual assessment reports.

“Taking the Pulse” Meetings

During spring 2005, the vice provost for institutional effectiveness, along with the chair of the UASC, met with groups of faculty to discuss the operationalizing of department assessment plans throughout the University. These April and May “Taking the Pulse” meetings provided an opportunity to solicit faculty input, share experiences concerning the reporting of assessment findings, and promote the culture of assessment on campus by providing an open forum for discussion. As a result of the meetings, a glossary of terms from the template for annual assessment reports was written and distributed.

University Assessment Faculty Grants

In December 2002, the UASC approved guidelines for the University Assessment Faculty Grant Program, a competitive program which awards funding to faculty whose research advances the formal assessment of student learning outcomes and program quality at WMU. Over the three years of this program, the eighteen grant fellows have included faculty from art, aviation, chemistry, counselor education, family and consumer sciences, industrial and manufacturing engineering, mathematics, occupational therapy, sociology, teacher education, and university libraries. Ten faculty members in 2003-2004 and eight in 2004-2005 have participated in the program. Three awards have been approved for the 2005-2006 academic year, which include four faculty members from aviation; health, physical education and recreation; and the university counseling and testing center. University Assessment Faculty grant fellows meet regularly as a group with the vice provost for institutional effectiveness to share progress on their projects, discuss successes and challenges, and learn about resources available to them. Fellows for 2004-2005 also received copies of the books *Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, and Improving Assessment in Higher Education* (Palomba and Banta, 1999), and *Assessment in Practice: Putting Principles to Work on College Campuses* (Banta, Lund, Black, and Oblander, 1996), and the article “Learning to do Better: Improving the Campus Climate for Diversity Through Collaborative Inquiry” (Borden, 2005). During each spring semester, fellows present

their grant findings to the University, and, with their permission, copies of the presentations are made available.

Assessment Toolbox

At its February 18, 2002 meeting, discussion of the draft University Assessment Plan, the UASC considered the assessment of resources at WMU. Subsequently, the plan contains section C.4, which states: “A web-based directory of campus assessment methods and activities serves as an information resource, especially for faculty and staff working on assessment at the department or program level. This directory provides access to approved departmental assessment plans; and password-protected access to the results of general education, undergraduate majors, and graduate program assessments. The directory also provides access to student and alumni engagement and satisfaction studies and the results from targeted and institution-wide assessment studies.” To date, the assessment toolbox, launched in limited edition on July 1, 2005, provides access to each of the approved departmental assessment plans included on TracDat; a directory of the different types of instruments used in assessment at WMU; and, if available, access to the instrument itself. Furthermore, the website provides links to assessment resources at other institutions, nationally available commercial tests, online resources for assessment on the internet, and helpful books on assessment.

Assessment Conferences

WMU’s Assessment Plan and Timetable charged the UASC with determining “an annual calendar of institutional assessment support and educational activities, including the provision of . . . fiscal support for assessment conferences.” Faculty working in the area of assessment, including, but not limited to, university assessment faculty grant fellows, departmental assessment coordinators, and UASC members, are afforded an opportunity to attend national assessment conferences. Two WMU colleagues attended the national assessment institute at Indiana University-Purdue University (IUPUI) in fall 2003 and one in fall 2004. Four attended the undergraduate assessment symposium at North Carolina State University in April of 2004 and five in 2005.

E. INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ASSESSMENT EFFORTS

The University’s mission and goals statement, approved by the Board of Trustees on December 7, 2001, includes as an institutional goal “to conduct ongoing assessment activities and engage in continuous improvement initiatives within the University.” Assessment efforts across campus have been included in policy statements and program-planning and review procedures established within the past five years. Some examples of this institutionalization of assessment include the following:

Academic Program Plans

In concert with academic affairs’ strategic priorities, and according to a regular cycle, all departments prepare an Academic Program Plan (APP), which includes the results of their

assessment of student learning outcomes as well as information about enrollment, follow-up studies of graduates, facilities and equipment improvements and needs, faculty productivity, curriculum and program development, and awards or recognition granted to programs. The plans are reviewed by the academic deans in collaboration with the provost, who uses them in making decisions about resource allocations. (Departmental academic program planning will be interrupted for exhaustive comprehensive program reviews on the graduate and undergraduate levels, in 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 respectively.)

On January 7, 2002, the provost, the vice president for research, and the dean of the Graduate College issued the Framework for Institutional Effectiveness and Academic Program Planning document, which establishes a direct institutional link among assessment, academic program planning, and the allocation of resources. The framework stresses the importance of “forward planning by the academic unit with attention to demand for graduates, application rates and applicant quality, student attrition and completion rates, student learning outcomes, major curricular changes, system-wide course and program offerings, accreditation reviews, and assessment findings.” It concludes that the “documentation of continuous improvements through institutional and program accreditation reviews and institutional and program assessment activities confirms the effective allocation of resources in terms of both the University’s academic priorities and the academic units’ program plans.”

Development of Transparency and Roles Policies

In response to queries from faculty regarding the sustainability of assessment efforts and the protection of student information in assessment, members of the UASC developed policies for assessment transparency and for the continuing role of the committee in the assessment process. These policies were shared with the faculty and published on the WMU website.

Annual Assessment Reports

Changes made as a result of departmental assessment activity are reported annually in May to the deans, who summarize the results and determine assessment-related priorities for the colleges. Deans then forward the department reports and their summaries to the provost. The annual reports also include descriptions of changes to the assessment plans themselves. Annual reports are shared with the University Assessment Steering Committee during fall semester. Beginning in fall 2005, deans will be invited to meet with the UASC to discuss the assessment priorities and needs for their colleges.

Annual Reports to Faculty Senate and Provost

At the end of each academic year, the chair of the UASC presents a report to the Faculty Senate and provost, as occurred in April 2004 and May 2005. The report describes committee activities and provides suggestions for future assessment activities. The 2005 report is available on the web.

Web-Based Reports

Summary notes of all UASC meetings are posted to the website of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. This site also provides templates for plans and reports, a listing of committee members, and the dates for future meetings. In this way, all faculty, staff, and students have access to the work being done by the UASC.

Increased Awareness of Assessment Issues

Since 2001, the assessment of student learning outcomes has become a priority for WMU, and student involvement in the assessment process continues to increase as the iWebfolio tool becomes more widely available. In view of the University's ongoing commitment to institutionalizing its evaluation of student academic achievement, it is expected that students will become increasingly aware of assessment activities; and that, as a result, a culture of assessment will, over time, become second nature to both faculty and students. In addition, members of the WMU community look forward to consulting with the visiting team on how best to build a Universitywide culture of assessment.

F. META-ANALYSIS

Beyond the informal assessment faculty have been conducting for years, and beyond the assessment efforts associated with accreditation, the scholarship of program improvement has been formalized with the establishment of a University Assessment Plan and Timetable, a Universitywide committee (UASC) to oversee implementation of the plan, an annual evaluation by deans regarding implementation of departmental assessment plans and resulting changes in programs, and the Faculty Senate's continuing participation through UASC representation and receipt of the UASC's annual report.

Institutional support for the scholarship of program improvement can be demonstrated in several ways:

1. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness, established in July 2004, now has base funding to support its operations and is headed by the vice provost for institutional effectiveness, whose areas of responsibility include accreditation, academic program planning, and assessment. The budget supports, for example, not only the annual university assessment faculty grants and funding for faculty to attend national assessment conferences but also the replacement cost to the department equal to one course workload per semester for the UASC chair.
2. Further, the recently renamed and re-focused Student Academic and Institutional Research (formerly Institutional Research) unit now reports to the vice provost for institutional effectiveness, thus strengthening the administrative relationship between assessment and staff resources available to assist faculty in assessment activities. The director, appointed in April 2005 as a result of a Universitywide search, brings to the position long-standing expertise in general education and course scheduling in the

College of Arts and Sciences. In addition to responsibility for the direction and focus of institutional research activities, he is also responsible for providing assistance with the formulation of student outcomes assessment (e.g., general education, undergraduate majors and graduate concentration) and for implementation of the Banner student services system.

3. The replacement SunGard/SCT (Systems Computer Technology) Student Information System (at a direct cost of \$12-13 million, excluding staff time other than five project associates) now provides faculty with two services to support and facilitate assessment activities: TracDat and iWebfolio. With TracDat, departments can define objectives and specify a schedule for review of improvements that are tracked over a designated time cycle. Additionally, typical assessment measures such as teaching effectiveness, learner proficiencies, instructional and clinical accomplishments, and other accreditation and program measures can also be related to specific goals which document progress. iWebfolio allows faculty to review student work and provide feedback to students, and to provide feedback on programs, assessment outcomes, or institutional goals for accreditation and other institutional reporting requirements. Then, too, iWebfolio can be linked with TracDat to document individual, institutional, and accreditation goals that demonstrate learning outcomes and program quality.
4. The Center for Teaching and Learning regularly offered workshops to assist faculty. Offerings representative of assessment included assessment, evaluation, and the creation of significant learning events. During 2004-2005, the center reported to the vice provost for institutional effectiveness; effective July 1, the center reported to the new Academic Technology and Instructional Services unit (ATIS), which resulted from the redefinition of the distance learning unit and its change in administrative reporting from Extended University Programs to the vice provost for academic operations.
5. As the deans' annual assessment reports show, there are various assessment committees at the department and college levels and/or plans to establish them, as well as faculty members and associate deans identified as assessment contact persons at their respective unit level.
6. Because assessment is critical to ongoing program improvement arising from data-based decision-making, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, as part of the academic program planning process, funds an external reviewer (recommended by the department and approved by the vice provost) to participate in discussions shaping programs for the next three to five years. The modest stipend, travel, lodging, and meal expenses may be supplemented by funds from the department and/or college.

G. PLANNED AND FUTURE ACTIONS

Assessment is an ongoing process at the University, a critical element of academic program planning, and an area of focus for a number of initiatives and activities at the University, college, and academic department levels.

University Assessment Steering Committee

The University Assessment Steering Committee will continue in its role of monitoring the assessment activities of the departments, as well as in developing policy, serving as a source of resources for faculty research and professional development, and reviewing the uses of assessment data for program improvement.

University Assessment Faculty Grants

The 2005-2006 University Assessment Faculty Grant Program fellows will begin their respective projects in fall 2005. Grants were awarded to faculty from aviation; health, physical education and recreation; and the university counseling and testing center. At the suggestion of the 2004-2005 fellows, the vice provost for institutional effectiveness will invite them to join the monthly meetings for sharing progress on projects, and to continue building a campuswide network of faculty conducting research on assessment.

General Education Review Task Force

Following its review of the current general education program, the General Education Review Task Force (GERT) is expected to make recommendations at the end of fall semester 2005 about the structure of the program.

Academic Program Plans

The academic program planning process is defined as a six-year cycle beginning in the 2002-2003 year. Ten departments submitted academic program plans in 2002-2003, eight the following year, and 12 in 2004-2005.

One example of the interrelationship between academic program planning and assessment as an element of ongoing program improvement can be seen in the allocation of resources based on a review of academic program plans by the provost and deans. These priorities are formalized in a letter from the provost to the appropriate department and dean. The review of the plans results in commitments of support, insofar as funds are available.

Outcomes of the provost's and deans' priorities for academic program plans submitted in the 2002-2003 year are as follows:

- A music director position for the Department of Dance was designated for an international hire, but the search was cancelled due to budgetary restrictions.
- A master electrician position was added to the Department of Theatre, but the search was cancelled due to budgetary restrictions.
- A faculty position, funded by the president, was added to the Physician Assistant Department, the position searched, and a faculty member hired.

- A commitment was made to enhance the gallery director's position in the School of Art within the next two years, and the school is working on a proposal to do so through the reallocation of a retirement line in 2006-2007.
- Presidential funding was allocated for a choral director position in the School of Music, but the search was cancelled due to budgetary restrictions.
- The School of Public Affairs and Administration was allocated funding for two positions (one term and one tenure-track). A one-year term faculty member was hired for 2004-2005; the search for a tenure-track position was cancelled due to budgetary restrictions.
- Funding in the amount of \$4,000 was allocated to the School of Social Work for the 2005-2006 fiscal year, to defray costs related to evaluation of the school's curricula in terms of today's practice and current realities.
- The Department of Theatre's academic program plan identified a concern relating to the distribution of merit-based scholarships for undergraduates, prompting the provost to charge the director of Student Financial Aid (SFA) with conducting a thorough campuswide review of the issue. Following leadership changes at SFA, the review is expected to take place during fall 2005 and culminate in a report to the provost.

For the 2003-2004 year, the outcomes are as follows:

- An additional graduate assistant position was assigned to the Department of Philosophy in response to increased student demand on PHIL 4100 as a requirement for accountancy majors in the Haworth College of Business.
- Presidential funding for an additional tenure-track position was allocated to the Department of Blindness and Low Vision Studies, and a tenure-track faculty member hired. Funding in the amount of \$11,000, to support technology in the department, remains outstanding due to budgetary restrictions.
- Two faculty positions were added to the Department of Psychology. One tenure-track faculty member was hired; the second faculty search was cancelled due to budgetary restrictions.

Because of the changing reality of the state's fiscal situation, and WMU's subsequent budgetary constraints, no commitments to resource allocation were made by departments that completed their academic program plans during the 2004-2005 year.

The academic program planning process has been interrupted for 2005-2006 and 2006-2007, while members of the faculty and academic affairs leadership undertake the University's first-ever comprehensive, sequential review of graduate programs and undergraduate programs. As the provost explained in her July 2005 call for graduate program evaluation (see Appendix G: Graduate Program Evaluation—July 18, 2005), although WMU has continued to grow the number of graduate programs over the past thirty years, there has been no comprehensive

examination of their scope or relation to WMU's current mission as a nationally recognized student-centered research university. In light of the changed political and fiscal reality at the University, "continuing to make annual incremental staffing decisions without agreement on which programs are key institutional priorities is no longer supportable" (Graduate Program Evaluation—July 18, 2005, p. 2).

The evaluation takes place in the context of rapid institutional change. Three key factors were identified by the provost in her rationale for the review: year-on-year increases in research, scholarship, and enrollment, and in the infrastructure necessary to support such changes; installation of the replacement Banner student information system, as well as ongoing efforts to reverse the decline in enrollment figures; and the dual issue of state budget reductions and increasing energy and healthcare costs.

A total of seven review teams will make evaluative recommendations to the departments, deans, and provost, based on program review reports developed by each department according to seven specific criteria (see pages 57 and 58). The reports will be presented to the respective deans and review teams between December 2005 and January 24, 2006; the review teams will make their recommendations by March 15 next year; and the provost will present her recommendations to the president and Board of Trustees by May 15.

According to the provost, "the major outcome of this review process will be a determination of which graduate programs, new or old, are the highest strategic priorities in academic affairs and the University, and, as such should become investment centers for positions and higher levels of operating funds during the next several years. This key finding will further articulate our vision to be a student-centered nationally recognized research university in selected programmatic dimensions" (p.1).

Center for Practices with Electronic Portfolios and Assessment

Recognizing the importance of electronic portfolios to assessment, Western Michigan University, supported by SCT and Nuventive, is working to create and implement a virtual Center for Practices with Electronic Portfolios and Assessment (CPEPA). The center will be known nationally and internationally for excellence in Universitywide deployment and use of an enterprise-wide assessment product (TracDat) with an electronic portfolio product (iWebfolio) designed in an integrated system for students and faculty.

The primary focus of the center will be to learn how, through the use of electronic portfolios, assessment impacts individual learning; leads to positive changes in individual courses, academic programs and office services; and improves institution-level performance. The partners will gradually determine the best assessment practices necessary to implement the appropriate use of portfolio technologies by members of the University community. Additionally, this partnership will enable WMU to adopt a continuous model of institutional assessment improvement and, as a national and public higher education institution using SCT Unified Digital Campus solutions including SCT TracDat by Nuventive and iWebfolio, to demonstrate how the effective use of scarce resources within a partnership impacts student learning outcomes.

Deans' Annual Assessment Reports

Among future actions related to assessment are the priorities at the college level, as defined by the deans in their annual assessment reports. Four academic colleges reported specific initiatives in their 2005 reports:

The College of Arts and Sciences this year initiated an annual compact planning process, wherein each unit submits a plan that deals with all aspects of the unit, including learning outcomes and assessment of learning outcomes. Assessment of learning outcomes will be reviewed on a regular basis to determine how each unit is proceeding with its assessment plan and how it is using the assessment results in its revised compact plan.

Foremost among the actions to be taken by the College of Education is the establishment of a college-wide assessment committee composed of the chairs of each departmental assessment committee. The committee will meet at least once each semester to share the assessment processes used within each department, determine necessary resources to support assessment practices, and oversee the continuing implementation of assessment tools such as TracDat and iWebfolio. In addition, as the college and the Professional Education Unit approach the next NCATE review (fall 2006), the college will support faculty preparing reports for the Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs) through the use of written guidelines, workshops, and monitoring of the report development. Finally, promotion and tenure guidelines will be examined to determine how to acknowledge the scholarly activities that support assessment within the college and departments.

Adaptation of each unit's assessment data to TracDat format is among the initiatives that the College of Fine Arts will undertake in the coming year to foster a culture of assessment. The associate dean will also convene the chairs of assessment in each unit for a "best practices" meeting for sharing of model measurement tools, effective strategies, and leadership ideas that bring about clear assessment of learning outcomes.

To assist all units in the College of Health and Human Services, a research associate (Evaluation Center doctoral student), reporting to the dean, will review changes to department assessment plans and monitor progress toward the stated objectives. Further, all units will be assisted in transferring their plans to TracDat.

Ongoing Evolution of Departmental Assessment Plans

The University Assessment Steering Committee will review its inventory of departments, units, and approved plans at the September meeting to identify units with plans needing final approval, and units from which plans need to be requested. Departments will continue to report modifications to their plans as part of the annual report to the deans, and the several auxiliary units that were added to the Division of Student Affairs (DOSA) in January 2005 (dining services, university apartments, the Bernhard Center, and the Children's Place Learning Center) will be included in the division's assessment plan. The UASC will continue to examine the uses made of assessment findings according to the established five-year cycle begun in fall 2003.

H. SUMMARY

Since 2001, Western Michigan University has demonstrated its commitment to continuous assessment for program improvement. This is reflected, in part, by the following:

- The declaration in WMU's mission statement that one of the institutional goals is "to conduct ongoing assessment activities and engage in continuous improvement initiatives within the University"
- The history of the University Assessment Steering Committee, WMU's body for implementation and ongoing monitoring of the University Assessment Plan and Timetable, including consultation on and review of departmental assessment plans
- Implementation of a formal plan for assessment of distribution areas and proficiencies, results of which helped to inform the review of WMU's general education program
- An annual reporting of changes to programs based on assessment activities
- Base funding for the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and professional development and outreach resources for faculty
- Investment in a replacement student information services project, which is providing an online portfolio-development tool for students and faculty, as well as a system for organizing assessment activities within departments and programs
- Development of a center to identify and share best practices in how assessment, through the use of electronic portfolios, impacts individual learning and improves institutional-level performance

III.

AREA OF FOCUS: INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING

A. INTRODUCTION

In addition to this introduction, Section III (Area of Focus: Institutional Strategic Planning) of this focused visit report is organized into six subsections:

- Institutionalization of the Strategic Planning Process
- Historical Context
- Strategic Planning Approaches
- President's Strategic Plan
- Planned and Future Actions
- Summary

Only in recent years has institutional strategic planning become a priority for WMU. Until Elson Floyd assumed the presidency in 1998, some colleges and other units were undertaking long-term initiatives of their own while the campus marshaled its resources to build research capacity and grow doctoral programs—all of this in the absence of a formal document that articulated the strategy by which WMU would become a nationally recognized research university.

In its February 2001 Report of a Comprehensive Visit to Western Michigan University, the Higher Learning Commission's evaluation team noted as a challenge and a critical issue "the absence of either a university strategic plan or a process for formal approval of unit strategic plans" (p. 68). Consequently, the HLC identified institutional strategic planning as one of two areas for a focused visit in fall 2005.

Institutional strategic planning at Western is becoming centrally organized and implemented in 2005. These planning efforts are constantly complicated by a dynamic environment for funding higher education. This is true not only within the state of Michigan but also nationally. It is increasingly apparent that historic federal student financial aid funds are in a substantially dynamic environment. Section III of this focused visit report identifies WMU's recognition of the need for a formalized institutional strategic plan, and its first steps toward making that plan a reality.

B. INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In May 2005, the focused visit steering committee articulated three steps as requisite for establishing an effective, formalized Universitywide strategic plan:

1. After consulting with the University community, the president formulates an institutional strategic plan and seeks its approval from the Board of Trustees.
2. The president mandates each division of the University to:
 - a. identify key strategic initiatives from the Board-approved strategic plan for implementation;
 - b. develop a performance-measurement matrix to assess progress on the key initiatives identified above;
 - c. develop and implement an action plan;
 - d. monitor progress by measuring performance annually;
 - e. identify specific actions for initiatives not yet achieved;
 - f. submit a report to the president for annual review.
3. Annually, the president presents the overall findings to the Board; appraises what has been done, what needs to be done, and what is feasible in the coming year; re-establishes the relative focus for the year in light of budgetary constraints; and disseminates the information across the University.

Discussion of a preliminary draft of transformational institutional priorities began in April with the president's conversations with her senior leadership team and with the focused visit steering committee. What has since evolved is a formal approach to a draft strategic plan in consultation with various University groups, such as the Faculty Senate Executive Board, the Deans' Council, and the Academic Forum (deans, chairs, directors, and staff reporting to the provost) during fall 2005. The historical context (detailed below) provides some basis for understanding why this dialogue did not begin earlier.

C. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

President Floyd called for a review of the University's mission statement, and that work began on March 16, 2001, culminating in Board of Trustees' approval of a revised mission statement on December 7, 2001. President Floyd subsequently established the Mission Coordinating Group (MCG), its charge to ensure that the mission would be implemented by all divisions and departments. It was those efforts that led to a more centralized approach toward both strategic planning and the ongoing monitoring of the effects of that planning. However, multiple changes in leadership (see Appendix A: WMU Organizational Chart) contributed to a delay in moving the University forward rapidly in this direction.

Leadership Changes

It is clear that multiple changes in senior-level leadership have slowed the development of a coordinated strategic planning process at WMU. At the same time, such events serve to underline the University's need for a Board-approved institutional strategic plan.

President Judith I. Bailey assumed office as the seventh president of WMU in late spring of 2003, Daniel Litynski having served as interim president when Elson Floyd resigned in December 2002 to accept another presidency. Provost and vice president for academic affairs Linda Delene took office in July 2004 following a series of short-term/interim provosts over the previous two years. In addition, although each of the senior leaders in business and finance, information technology, development, and legal affairs has been in office for five years or more, new vice presidents have been appointed since 2002 in the key areas of research, student affairs, and legislative affairs and the University is currently conducting a national search for a vice president for research.

D. STRATEGIC PLANNING APPROACHES

Mission Coordinating Group Report

When Dr. Bailey assumed the presidency, one of the first documents she received was the Mission Coordinating Group report, the result of campuswide discussion on the subject of mission implementation. The July 7, 2003 report represented a first step toward “identifying strategic indicators and . . . establishing metrics for measuring achievements and . . . procedures for collecting evaluative data”—areas that the 2001 visiting team deemed essential for strategic planning. The report’s five mission components and nine goals expand on the central thesis of the University Mission Statement—WMU as “a student-centered research University”—and each core statement, component, and goal lists strategic directions with associated metrics. The University Mission Statement puts particular emphasis on the advancement of academic affairs, and on the establishment of a related infrastructure for research and creative activity. Thus WMU’s core strategic initiatives focus on enhancing teaching, research, scholarship, and creative endeavors within the University. In addition, President Bailey and the vice presidents decided that, when completed, academic affairs’ strategic plan would drive other units’ long-term plans, thus reinforcing the division’s key role in the strategic process.

Presidential Addresses

In addition to the Mission Coordinating Group report, other evidence of a movement toward strategic planning can be found in presidential State of the University Addresses delivered between 2001 and 2005. These addresses are reasonably consistent in reporting areas parallel with the mission, such as: enhancing teaching; promoting research and scholarly activities; fostering increased diversity within all constituencies (students, faculty, and staff); engaging in the ongoing assessment of academic programs as a means of continuously improving quality; and engaging with all University partners in the decision-making needed to solve the problems created by the past two years’ reduction in budgets.

Vice Presidential Initiatives and Plans

In their February 2001 Report of a Comprehensive Visit, the consultant-evaluators made the following observation: “[A]lthough individual colleges are producing their own strategic plans, it

is still not clear how the central strategic planning process will proceed and where these college plans fit into it” (p. 34).

Since 2001, academic affairs, development, information technology, and student affairs have developed strategic plans; those plans are available either on the web or in hard copy from the respective units. The other divisions’ initiatives can be inferred from either the Mission Coordinating Group Report and/or their list of achievements over the past years.

Although some units continue to carry out their own well-established long-term initiatives, it is evident that others have yet to integrate their discrete strategic goals into a formal plan with associated metrics and indicators. Furthermore, any such division-level plan will need to be in concert with the president’s institutional strategic plan (see below).

E. PRESIDENT’S STRATEGIC PLAN

On April 5, 2005, President Bailey met with the focused visit steering committee to share her draft document, Transformational Institutional Priorities for Western Michigan University (see Appendix H). That document—along with her April 21 campus community presentation, Moving WMU Forward Together—presented the following vision and strategies for what the president acknowledges are challenging times: remain a nationally recognized research university while increasing research initiatives; enhance student access, engagement, and success at both the graduate and undergraduate levels; and promote intellectual, international, and ethnic diversity. In her April 21 address, President Bailey outlined not only broad strategies but near-term strategies designed to meet the University’s longer-term goals. Those near-term strategies include ways of dealing with the deficit; strengthening enrollment management and student retention; identifying programs of strength through ongoing program review and Universitywide assessment; and engaging outside expertise to assist with the additional strategies needed to review positions, processes, and capacities.

F. PLANNED AND FUTURE ACTIONS

Board Approval of Institutional Strategic Plan

Based on her own addresses, the transformational institutional priorities draft document (subsequently revised and titled Strategic Plan for Western Michigan University—2010), the report of the Mission Coordinating Group, and the plans outlined by her senior staff, President Bailey reported to the focused visit steering committee on April 5 this year that she intends to present a more fully developed strategic plan, including strategic initiatives and procedures for evaluation, to the Board of Trustees in 2005. In her address to WMU’s Academic Forum on August 18 this year, President Bailey reiterated the following points: the University mission statement and Mission Implementation Group report are the basis for WMU’s institutional strategic plan; the goals listed in the plan will be paired with the metrics in the Mission Implementation Group report; fluid timelines will allow for pragmatic tradeoffs; and

accountability will be monitored through annual reports, evaluations by senior staff (deans, vice presidents, and chairs), and progress reports to the Board.

As discussion of the initial draft over summer 2005 has shown, considerable campuswide dialogue will be necessary before there is a final institutional strategic plan. During the 2005-2006 year, that conversation will occur, culminating in an institutional strategic plan for presentation to the Board. Following the Board's official approval of this document, President Bailey is expected to expedite institutionalization of the strategic plan, as outlined in Section III, Part B above. Implementation of the plan will include an annual re-appraisal of priorities for action in light of budgetary constraints. In short, the president is expected to establish a mechanism whereby she is the chief facilitator of a strategic planning process involving WMU's senior academic and administrative personnel.

G. SUMMARY

The Board of Trustees' approval of the mission statement in December 2001 was the first step in development of a strategic plan. The second, implementation of the mission, was interrupted for a period of time when President Floyd left WMU and an interim president maintained the institution until President Bailey began her term. Under the leadership of President Bailey, Western Michigan University is now engaged in the process of defining an institutional strategic plan consistent with the mission and goals approved by the Board of Trustees, and the president is working with Board members to present a plan during the 2005-2006 year for their approval. Institutionalization of the planning process, including ongoing monitoring of progress toward meeting goals, can then move the University forward.

IV.

CONCLUSION

In its February 2001 Report of a Comprehensive Visit to Western Michigan University, the Higher Learning Commission's evaluation team identified two specific institutional challenges of sufficient concern to call for a focused visit in November 2005: assessment of student academic achievement and institutional strategic planning. Since that visit, Western Michigan University has taken steps to address both of these matters.

In terms of assessment, evidence of WMU's commitment to continuous assessment for program improvement begins with the University's mission statement and continues through the organizational structures in place; the policies and plans that have been written, approved, and implemented; and the use of assessment results to effect change in courses, curricula, and programs. Further, the University has invested in a replacement student information services system that includes an online portfolio-development tool for students and faculty, as well as a system for documenting and organizing assessment activities within departments and programs. Finally, in recognition not only of the importance of ongoing program improvement through assessment but also of the scholarship that accompanies the discipline, WMU is engaged in the creation of a center to identify and share best practices in how assessment, through the use of electronic portfolios, impacts individual learning and improves institutional-level performance.

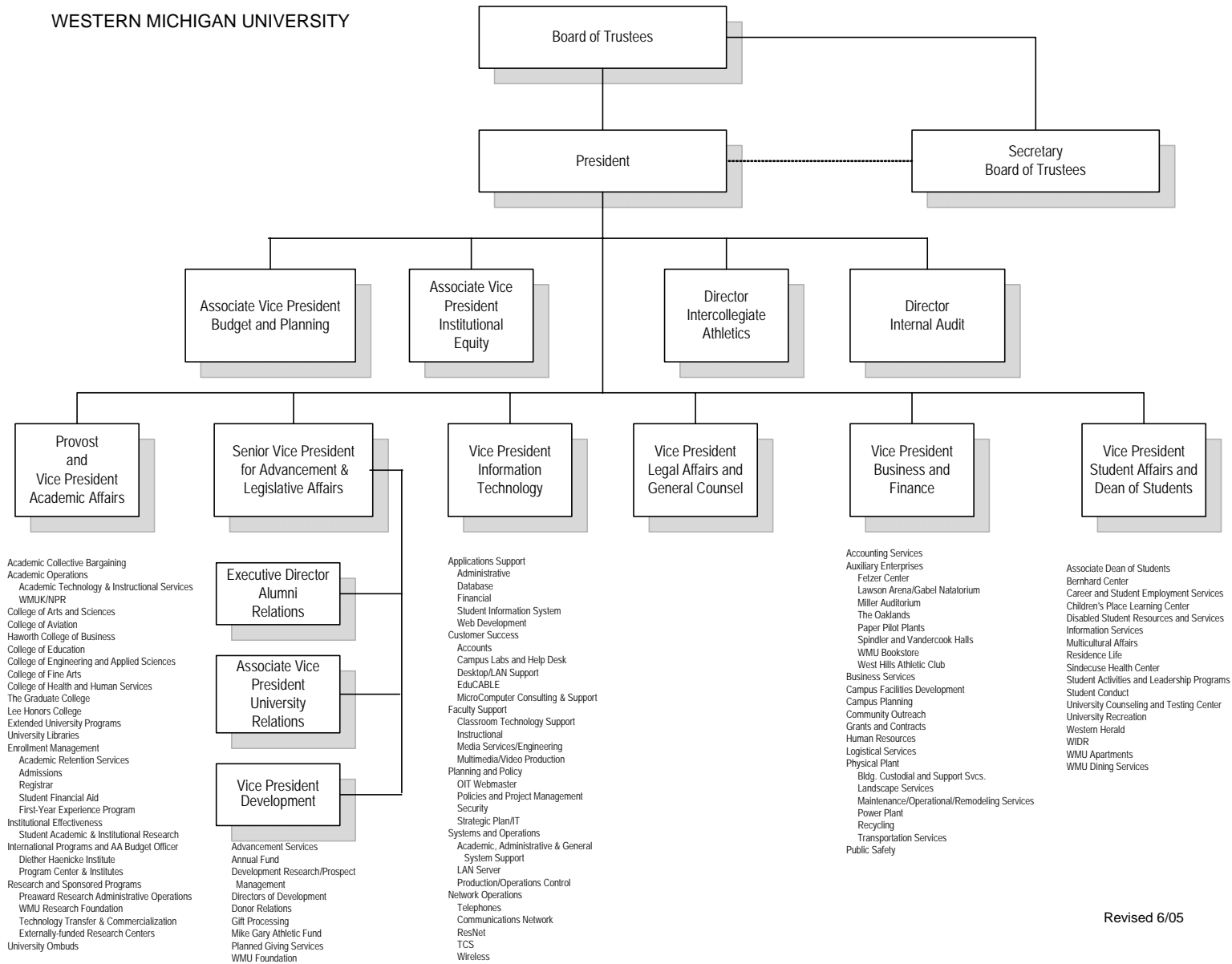
In terms of institutional strategic planning, President Bailey is now engaged in a campuswide dialogue to define an institutional strategic plan consistent with the mission and goals approved by the Board of Trustees in December 2001, and with the substantially changed fiscal and political climate facing higher education in Michigan. The resulting plan will go to the Board of Trustees during the 2005-2006 year for formal approval.

LIST OF COMMONLY USED ACRONYMS

ACT	American College Testing
APP	Academic Program Plan
ATIS	Academic Technology and Instructional Services
CAAP	Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency
CBase	College Basic Academic Subjects Examination
CPEPA	Center for Practices with Electronic Portfolios and Assessment
DOSA	Division of Student Affairs
ETS	Educational Testing Services
EUP	Extended University Programs
FYE	First Year Experience
GEAC	General Education Assessment Committee
GERT	General Education Review Task Force
GSAC	Graduate Student Advisory Committee
HLC	Higher Learning Commission
MCG	Mission Coordinating Group
NCA	North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
NCATE	National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education
RACT	Review and Consultation Team
SAIR	Student and Academic Institutional Research
SCT	Systems Computer Technology
SFA	Student Financial Aid
SIS	Student Information System
SPA	Specialized Professional Association
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
UASC	University Assessment Steering Committee
WMU	Western Michigan University
WMU-AAUP	WMU Chapter of the Association of American University Professors
WSA	Western Student Association

Appendix A: WMU Organizational Chart

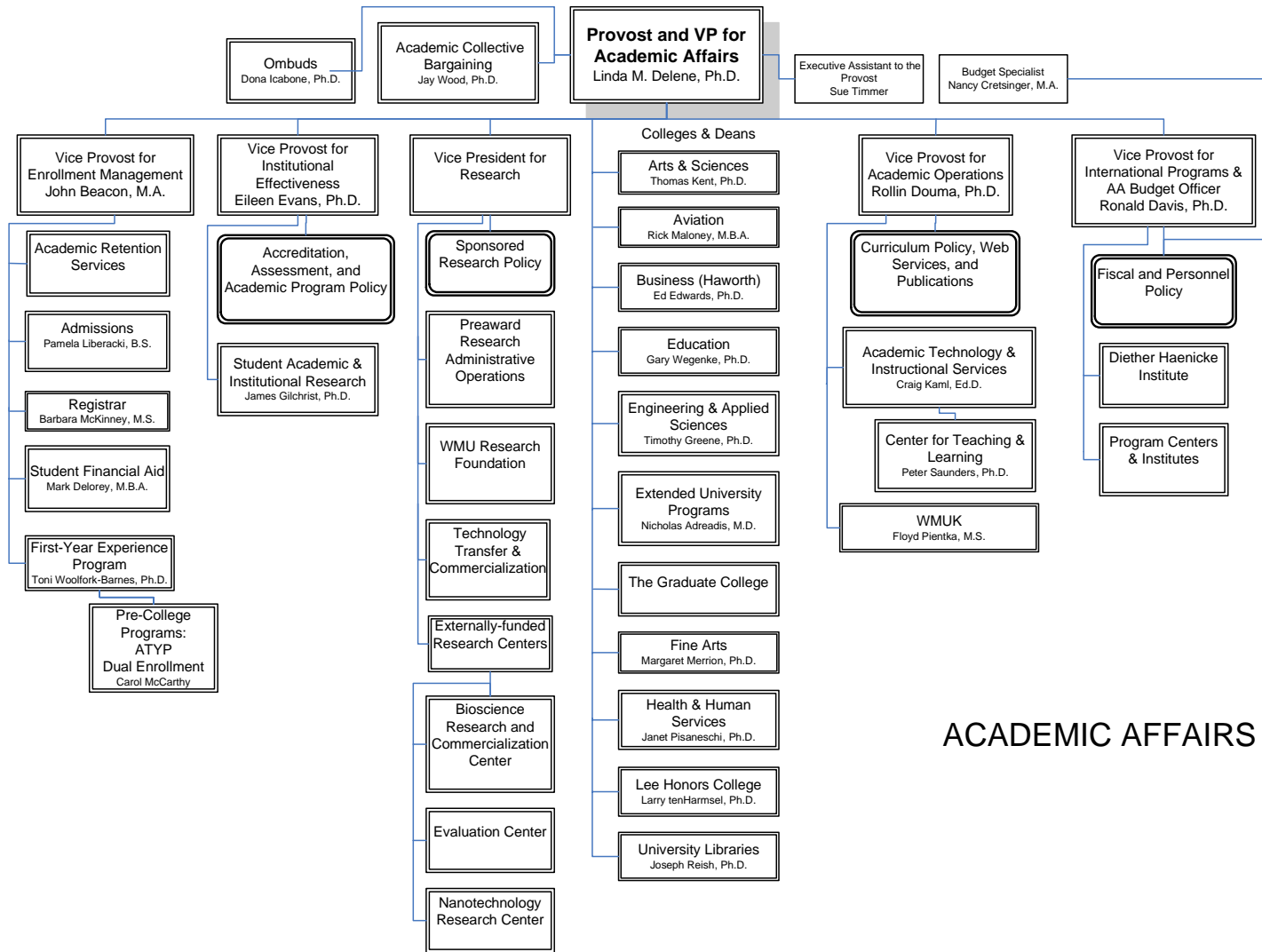
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Revised 6/05

Appendix B:
Academic Affairs Organizational Chart

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
Division of Academic Affairs Organization



ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

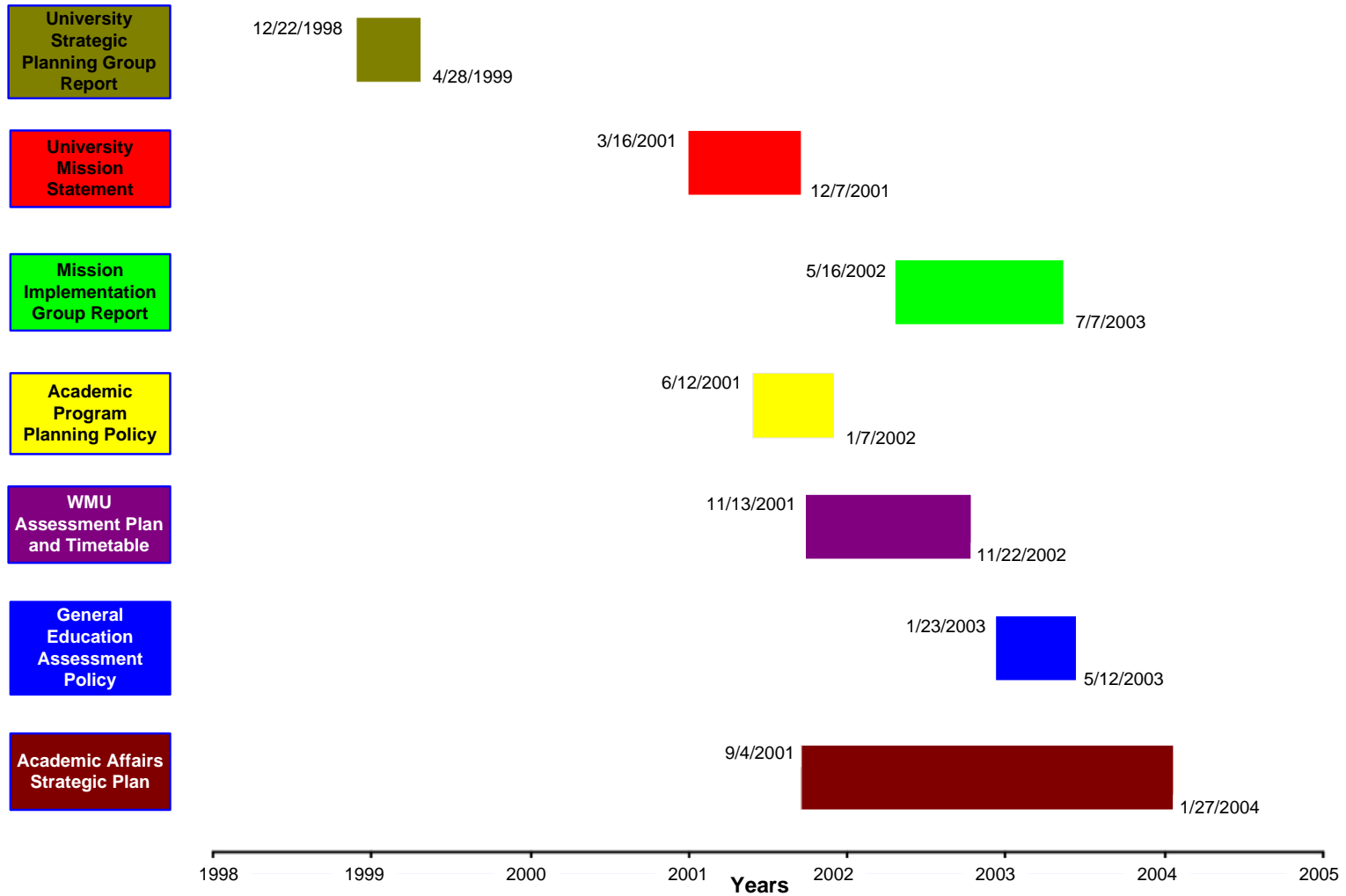
Appendix C: Focused Visit Steering Committee Matrix

Western Michigan University Focused Visit Steering Committee Matrix

Membership	Steering Committee Members											
University Strategic Planning Group					X	X			X			
University Mission Statement	X				X			X			X	
Mission Implementation Group	X				X	X		X	X		X	
WMU Assessment Plan and Timetable	X			X	X		X			X	X	
General Education Assessment Policy				X	X							
Academic Affairs Strategic Plan									X			
University Assessment Steering Committee	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X	
General Education Assessment Committee				X	X							
General Education Review Taskforce				X								
University Assessment Faculty Grant Program		X			X						X	
Student Information System		X			X	X			X	X		
Center for Practices with Electronic Portfolios and Assessment		X			X							
Program accreditation / licensure review groups		X			X	X			X			
	Ari-Gur	Cummings	Dennis	Dupuis	Evans	Gates	Golhar	Hartmann	Johnson	Merrion	Warfield	Wertkin

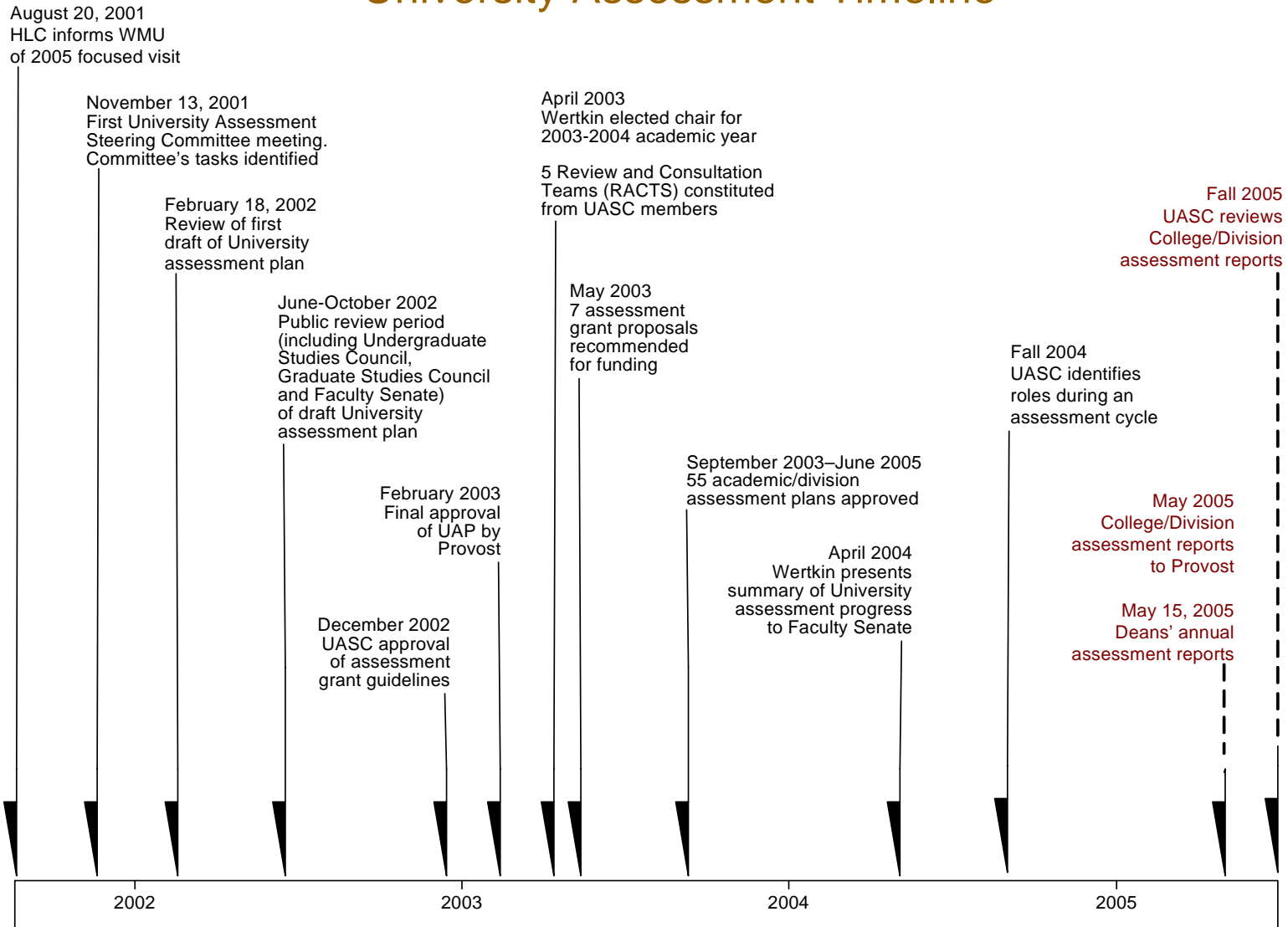
Appendix D: Strategic Planning Timeline

Western Michigan University Strategic Planning Core Documents



Appendix E: University Assessment Timeline

University Assessment Timeline



Appendix F: General Education Calendar

GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT

Western Michigan University

Exploratory Phase - 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 Years

The General Education Assessment Committee has established the following calendar to carefully examine alternative means for general education assessment at Western Michigan University. The Committee and other groups are using the next two academic years (2003-2004 and 2004-2005) to explore alternative means for the assessment of student learning outcomes in terms of the proficiencies and areas within the University's complex general education program. The calendar for this exploratory period of general education assessment is as follows:

Administration Date	Area Reviewed	Instrument Used	Date of Results	Review Parties for the Assessment Evidence
Early Fall 2003	Proficiencies for freshmen	<i>CBase</i> from the University of Missouri	December 2003	General Education Assessment Committee, COGE, UASC, Faculty Senate, Faculty/Chairs, Deans and Provost
Spring Semester 2004	Proficiencies for Seniors	<i>CBase</i> from the University of Missouri	May 2004	Same as above
Fall 2003	Areas 1, 2	Specific Outcomes	December 2003	Same as above plus specific area faculty
Spring 2004	Areas 3, 4	Specific Outcomes	May 2004	Same as above
Early Fall 2004	Proficiencies for freshmen	<i>California Critical Skills Test</i>	December 2004	General Education Assessment Committee, COGE, UASC, Faculty Senate, Faculty/Chairs, Deans and Provost
Spring Semester 2005	Proficiencies for seniors	<i>California Critical Skills Test</i>	May 2005	Same as above
Fall 2004	Areas 5, 6	Specific Outcomes	December 2004	Same as above plus specific area faculty
Spring 2005	Areas 7, 8	Specific Outcomes	May 2005	Same as above
Campus Discussion - General Education Program and its Assessment – Fall 2005				

Appendix G: Graduate Program Evaluation

Linda M. Delene, Ph.D.
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

GRADUATE PROGRAM EVALUATION--July 18, 2005

I. INTRODUCTION: Since the 1970s, Western Michigan University has continuously expanded its graduate programs. Throughout this thirty-year period of gradual expansion, there has never been a comprehensive look at the scope of these programs or how they support our current mission as a student-centered nationally recognized research university. Now, to preserve a stronger future for graduate education, it is time for a comprehensive review of graduate programs to determine the highest graduate-level program priorities and, in turn, to more adequately support and fund those priorities with positions and improved operating funds over the next years. Such comprehensive program reviews are common in universities elsewhere, and need also to become a recurring aspect of WMU's culture.

The major outcome of this review process will be a determination of which graduate programs, new or old, are the highest strategic priorities in academic affairs and the University, and, as such, should become investment centers for positions and higher levels of operating funds during the next several years. This key finding will further articulate our vision to be a student-centered nationally recognized research university in selected programmatic dimensions.

Part of the reason for requesting this comprehensive review is because it is increasingly apparent that we lack sufficient funds and faculty to adequately support the current number of academic programs at WMU. The chronic lack of everyone's time is partially because we have too many courses to staff and teach, too many programs to operate and recruit students into, and too many missed opportunities as we try to keep all programs going forward with available resources. As one point of comparison, Michigan State has 258 graduate programs and 126 undergraduate programs with State budget support of \$6,914 per student. At WMU, we have 102 graduate programs and 152 undergraduate programs with State budget support of \$4,354 per student. This disparity alone generates cause for analysis, especially in the current fiscal environment, regarding the University's ability to sustain the graduate program inventory that has accumulated over the past three decades.

II. RATIONALE: Western Michigan University has been experiencing several rapidly changing conditions in recent years. First, we have all been striving to continue our growth into a world-class university by increasing our research, scholarship, enrollment, and the infrastructure to support this vision. Our funded research has already grown from about \$31,000,000 in 2000 to more than \$40,000,000 in 2004. Infrastructure has been enhanced with the addition of new facilities for the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences, for the College of Health and Human Services, and with the current construction for the Richmond Center for Visual Arts and the Chemistry Building. While these new facilities make learning and research somewhat easier, they also require considerable time and money to build, occupy, and maintain.

Second, the replacement Banner student information system, also currently being installed, supports new software and desktop information for students and faculty alike, including course enrollment, matriculation, and class-related services such as on-line registration and grade reporting. The operational and technical work associated with the Banner implementation has added to the workload of our already lean staff and faculty, and consumed hundreds of hours of rework and adaptation for the most effective use of the new system and its related tools. And, at the same time, we are working hard to expand and strengthen our high school, transfer, and graduate student recruitment and retention efforts to offset recent annual enrollment declines. This enrollment endeavor has also required additional hours of staff and faculty time from colleagues across the University.

Third, we are experiencing state budget reductions, the loss of tuition revenue because of enrollment changes, and constantly increasing costs of energy and health care. For the upcoming 2005-2006 year, there was a \$10,000,000 reduction in WMU's fund 11 expense base, and \$6.7 million of that reduction was in academic affairs. This reduction is the equivalent of almost 55 faculty positions. (No tenured or tenure-track faculty were laid off.) We may face a similar budget adjustment for the 2006-2007 year although the situation in Lansing, at least for higher education funding, remains uncertain at this writing. For several years now we have been managing both changes (growth and budget reductions) on a department-by-department and college-by-college level. The general consequence of these two confounding forces is that, in terms of academic programs, we are spread a mile wide and an inch deep in academic life at WMU. It is clear that no college, department, or academic program has any excess funds, faculty, or staff, and that essential support for faculty development, equipment and lab maintenance, and student activities has been largely eliminated.

Thus, academic affairs daily faces dissonance between "business as usual" and the changed political and fiscal reality at the University. On one hand, we work to move individual decisions ahead to support high-quality instruction, to advance research and scholarship, and to engage our students; on the other, we are faced with the need to examine the program profile of the University in terms of University mission, vision, and affordability. Deans, department chairs, directors, and faculty alike have borne the brunt of this situation, and I clearly recognize the extraordinarily difficult environment in which they work daily. Given this set of circumstances and with President Bailey's approval, I am today suspending:

- 1) New and replacement faculty and staff position authorizations [please note that critical exceptions for faculty and staff positions will continue to be recommended to the president on a case-by-case basis only where absolutely necessary];
- 2) The academic program planning process that involves six or seven departments annually; and
- 3) The processing of curricular changes (undergraduate and graduate) for existing academic programs for the 2005-2006 year.

These suspensions, at least during the 2005-2006 academic year, will enable us to conduct this comprehensive review of graduate programs, and where judged necessary by the respective departments, related undergraduate programs as well. This pause from daily tasks is being taken so we can determine which graduate programs must flourish in the University. Continuing to make annual incremental staffing decisions without agreement on which programs are key institutional priorities is no longer supportable. This is especially true where it would make more sense for a cluster of authorized hires, for possible multi-year hiring commitments, or for position transfers into consolidated or merged programs with the results being increased programmatic solidarity and strength.

Such new position authorization steps as noted above become more instrumental in advancing our research and graduate education objectives simultaneously when the programs selected for growth and advancement are known. Since we cannot respond to all the genuine needs that do exist, it is time to determine the priorities among the graduate programs, and then among the undergraduate programs. ***This step is essential if we are to identify, design, and fund academic programs central to the vision of this institution as a student-centered nationally recognized research university; support graduate education and its resource requirements to become more competitive; and provide the most intentional stewardship of our relatively fixed resources.***

In conducting these graduate program reviews, the following guidelines are vital to all deliberations about WMU's future academic program portfolio:

- 1) Consideration of disciplinary paradigms and relationships emerging nationally
- 2) Interdisciplinary program and curricular relationships that should be formalized
- 3) Broad directions of scholarship that cross college lines, and that should have expression with different or new programs
- 4) Curriculum and course redundancies within programs and among related degrees
- 5) Review of degree requirements, especially in terms of comparable programs elsewhere

These guidelines will help shape academic programs at the University, and provide very careful stewardship of our limited resources, including our time and ability to target recruitment efforts for better results. Little of this will be easy or satisfactory to everyone. However, we must move ahead collaboratively and deliberately in order to support the mission of Western Michigan University as a student-centered nationally recognized research university.

III. PROGRAM REVIEW CHARGE: To determine which graduate degree programs (and specific concentrations) should be developed and supported. It is understood that some programs, as a result of these reviews, may be originated, consolidated, reconfigured, or eliminated; necessary resource reallocations may be made among departments and colleges.

To accomplish this charge, the following will occur:

- 1) Comprehensive program review reports, or self-study reports, by each department should be developed according to the criteria listed on page five, and subsequently presented first to the college dean and then to the appropriate review team. Deans may append comments or additional material but in all cases must forward the original departmental report to the review team. Deans are specifically responsible for assuring that cross-college or inter-college programs are fully reviewed by all involved parties.
- 2) Basically, this review process places most emphasis upon the judgment and knowledge base within the academic department; and then with the dean, chairs, and faculty of the respective college; and finally with explanation and comprehensive presentation of the results to review teams for their deliberative judgment. It provides each college's (or division within a college) departments and dean with the opportunity to determine how best to proceed, and to use an approach that most suits the character and programs within each college.
- 3) The review teams complete this self-study programmatic review process by making evaluative recommendations to the departments, deans, and provost simultaneously.

IV. REVIEW TEAMS: There will be a total of seven review teams: one team for each of the three divisions within Arts and Sciences, one team for Engineering and Applied Sciences, one team for Health and Human Services, one team for Education, and one team for the colleges of Fine Arts and Business since the number of graduate programs in those two colleges is few.

Membership on the teams will be constituted from a pool of tenured faculty and department chairs and directors, both within and outside the home department. The majority of team members reviewing programs in a college will be from outside the college (or division). An endowed professor, a distinguished faculty scholar, or other very senior faculty colleague external to the college (division) will lead each team. Associate deans, deans, non-tenured faculty, students, and staff may not serve on the review teams.

Teams will function in a collegial manner with ample opportunity for dialogue and discussion among all parties. Review teams will share one full-time staff person to assist with meeting schedules, supporting data, coordination of calendars, etc. Additionally, review teams will meet collectively to consider cross-college issues, including new or different and more productive program alignments. The close relationship between graduate and undergraduate programs may be reflected in team reports and recommendations although the comprehensive formal review of undergraduate programs will not occur until the 2006-2007 year. College-level or divisional review teams will be selected using the following process:

- 1) The tenured and tenure-track faculty collectively within each academic college (or division) elect seven nominees from tenured faculty and chairs or directors with tenure within each collegiate unit. Faculty Senate Executive Board, with the

- faculty senators from each college, will schedule how and when such elections across colleges occur.
- 2) Chairs and non-bargaining unit directors collectively within each college (or within the divisions in Arts and Sciences) nominate five tenured faculty or chairs/directors to serve.
 - 3) The appropriate dean nominates three tenured faculty or chairs/directors to serve on the college's review team. In the case of the College of Arts and Sciences, the dean nominates three tenured faculty or chairs/directors for each of its divisions (i.e., the physical sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities).
 - 4) Nominations are forwarded electronically directly to the designated review team leader. Team leaders collectively will review nominations and select team members according to (5), (6), and (7) below. The nominating groups must indicate the review team for which faculty were nominated. A nominee may be appointed to a team other than the one indicated.
 - 5) In cases where faculty members or chairs/directors are nominated by all three groups, that person shall be named to a review team.
 - 6) Nominees that come forward from two groups will be selected before single nominees are named to a review team.
 - 7) If necessary, filling any remaining review team positions from single nominations will be done by the provost in consultation with the Faculty Senate Executive Board.
 - 8) The members of the seven review teams and their college assignments will be communicated to the University community by email from the provost.

V. TIMETABLE:

- 1) July-August: Student Academic and Institutional Research (SAIR) compiles individual graduate program descriptive data.
- 2) August: Department chairs review program descriptive data for errors, clarification, and so forth.
- 3) August-September: Review team leaders and team members are selected, charged, and provided with formal orientation for the evaluation task.
- 4) Recommendations for departmental reviewers external to the University to Vice Provost Eileen Evans by September 30, 2005. (Departments with graduate programs and which have not undergone the academic program planning review process are invited to provide no fewer than two or three names with a brief cv for selection of one reviewer. The provost's office will support one reviewer's \$500 stipend, travel, lodging, and meals for up to two campus visits in fall 2005.)
- 5) October-November: departmental graduate program review reports are written.
- 6) December 2005-January 24, 2006: Departmental reports and recommendations provided to college deans and review teams.
- 7) February 22, 2006: Review teams meet with deans and departmental faculty for dialogue, explanation, and discussions.
- 8) By March 15: Review teams make their respective recommendations to the departments, deans, and the provost simultaneously. (Recommendations may occur at any time prior to this date.)

- 9) By April 5: Programs, departments, or deans may appeal the review team's final recommendation to the Faculty Senate Executive Board, which will act as a committee of the whole in considering the appeal.
- 10) By April 20: Faculty Senate Executive Board makes its recommendations on any appeals with letters to the departments, deans, review teams, and the provost.
- 11) By May 15: Provost makes final decisions and then recommends changes to the president and Board of Trustees for approval.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION: The recommended changes will be implemented no later than fall 2007 with these intermediate steps:

- 1) The provost's office will, during the summer of 2006, take into consideration outcomes from the graduate program review process when authorizing faculty positions for the 2007-2008 year.
- 2) Further, any curriculum changes that are necessary as a result of this review process will be made formally during the 2006-2007 year using the University curriculum review process.
- 3) Concurrently, departments and colleges can target graduate student recruitment and retention programs for graduate programs as soon as practical after May 2006, with the intent of influencing the recruitment of graduate students for fall 2007.
- 4) And, finally, the University will undertake a genuine commitment to students in all graduate programs, and, where programs may be consolidated or eliminated, students will be offered courses or provided with appropriate course substitutions to allow completion of their enrolled degree in a timely manner.

VII. CRITERIA: (Materials produced earlier in academic program planning reports or for accreditation reviews that specifically address these criteria are welcome in these reports.) Review of graduate programs will use the following criteria: ^(a)

- 1) **External Demand:** incoming student demand, competitive nature of program in terms of other institutions, characteristics of students in terms of either full- and part-time enrollment, placement data, and audience or employer market for graduates;
- 2) **Quality of Student and Program Outcomes:** assessment evidence (including student learning outcomes), accreditation findings, student and alumni satisfaction, student publications, research and performance engagement with the discipline, and institutional and industry program recognition;
- 3) **Quality of Program Administration and Planning:** evidence-based decision making;
- 4) **Size, Scope, and Program Productivity:** number of students served, diversity of students in program, faculty and staff assigned work in program, credit hours generated, degrees or certificates awarded, externally funded research, creative productions, and scholarly publications;

- 5) **Impact, Justification, and Essentiality of Program:** relationship to University mission and goals, enduring historical significance and intellectual value, stewardship of place, or community and economic development contributions;
- 6) **Opportunity Analysis:** interdisciplinary and interdepartmental collaboration for strong or new programs, and continuing student enrollment opportunities; and
- 7) **Compelling Program Factor:** one exceptional factor of note or merit about the program that can be documented.

(a) NOTE: The criteria were derived in large part through discussions about the following text: Dickeson, Robert C. (1999). *Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services: Reallocating Resources to Achieve Strategic Balance*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc. See especially Chapter Five, "Selecting Appropriate Criteria," pp. 53-75.

VIII. OUTCOMES: This complex task is a formal response to the president's campus presentation of April 21, 2005, and it will be completed by summer of 2006. Further, the process also provides several assurances. We will:

- 1) Affirm and demonstrate the University's commitment to graduate education with a focused program array and with improved support for priority graduate programs,
- 2) Determine academic programs eligible for targeted hires,
- 3) Protect essential direct instruction, and
- 4) Protect, as much as possible, permanent employees.

IX. CONCLUSION: The president, deans, and I need your counsel in regard to our many graduate programs. We do recognize how difficult it is to make major curricular decisions that will affect the University's future. Because faculty are keenly suited to bring their intelligence and critical abilities to this important process, I call on the talent of academic scholars to critically analyze our programs. We need to arrive at select core graduate-level programs, and thus focus the continued growth of research, scholarship, and international and national program recognition for the University.

Making this task productive and useful for the future of the University will require everyone's working together. Your willingness to participate in this effort is appreciated.

Appendix H: Transformational Institutional Priorities

DRAFT

Transformational Institutional Priorities for Western Michigan University (April 5, 2005)

Dr. Judith I. Bailey, President

Western Michigan University has four strategic themes that serve to guide the University: student access and student success; a high-quality learning environment; intellectual, international, and ethnic diversity; and targeted world-class research areas intertwined with nationally known graduate programs. Each theme has several strategic goals. The administrative leadership is expected to develop strategies within their respective areas to achieve the goals not later than 2010.

1. Enhance student access and student success.

- Recruit, attract, and retain a diverse student body.
 - Engage and educate students through campus involvement and programs that support student retention and graduation.
 - Initiate and coordinate cultural programming and opportunities for student learning and personal development.
- Cultivate a campus climate that values health, safety, and diversity and supports University and community members.
 - Promote a healthy and safe community by educating it about issues such as disruptive behavior in the classroom, acts/potential acts of violence, and use/abuse of alcohol and other substances.
 - Address the special needs of diverse and underrepresented groups within the student body.

2. Sustain and improve a high-quality graduate and undergraduate learning environment.

- Enhance the quality and increase the number of ranked faculty.
 - Strengthen programs by increasing the number and quality of faculty.
 - Implement a coordinated, comprehensive faculty development program.
- Increase the quality of students.
 - Attract and enroll students with stronger academic qualifications to help strengthen all academic programs.
 - Reduce time-to-degree completion and student attrition rates.
- Improve general education and strengthen academic programs.
 - Improve the first-year undergraduate student experience by strengthening the general education program.

DRAFT

- Use integrated academic program plan reviews and accreditation and assessment findings to help improve all academic programs.
- Advance opportunities for student engagement.
 - Clarify and exemplify what a student-centered research university is within the undergraduate major or graduate concentration at the program, department, and college levels.
 - Nurture and prepare students for research, service, and creative inquiry.
- Integrate information technology resources into learning, teaching, research, and community partnerships.
 - Improve the learning environment.
 - Extend the University's reach through distributed education.
 - Support discipline-specific information technology needs.
 - Facilitate technological partnerships with the educational community businesses, and other organizations.
- Plan, build, and maintain University facilities for student, faculty, and staff uses to meet program, health, and safety requirements.
 - Consider the user's requirements in all University projects and result in safe and healthy buildings and grounds.
 - Design all University projects to meet the user's programs and the University's budget and schedule.
 - Reduce annual energy consumption through enforced energy management reduction practices.
 - Manage scheduled maintenance of existing building systems to extend the life of the University's building stock.
- Preserve and grow the overall financial well being of the University through careful planning and management of sources and uses of cash focused on enrollment management, housing strategies, operating costs, and capital expenditures.
 - Provide for a balanced operating budget that aligns economic resources with the institution's priorities and allows flexibility in the operation of the University.

3. Build intellectual, international, and ethnic diversity.

- Solicit the advice of the Council on Institutional Diversity on policy changes necessary to build an environment that supports increased diversity across campus.
 - Develop a comprehensive diversity plan.
 - Review policies, procedures, and limitations for the recruitment, retention, and participation of diverse groups and individuals across campus.

DRAFT

- Determine specific strategies and needed resources to improve the campus diversity climate.
 - Recommend ways to strengthen the use of the limited resources.
- Provide effective human resources services to the University community to facilitate its growth and development.
 - Deliver qualified, diverse candidate pools to hiring agents for selection.
 - Develop and support total compensation and reward programs that attract and retain engaged employees.

4. Advance targeted world-class research areas along with graduate programs of distinction.

- Foster research collaborations and partnerships, especially those that provide educational opportunities for graduate students.
- Acquire substantial extramural research funds.
 - Organize and operate an assertive University Research Foundation.
 - Set measurable, annual extramural funding objectives for each center, institute, college, and the University.
- Improve instructional, technological, library, and research equipment environments.
 - Improve the infrastructure for instructional, technological, library materials, and research equipment.
 - Establish continuing funds for instructional and research equipment replacements to assure quality academic programs.