Self Study 2011

Submitted to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges
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Acknowledgements

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WASC Required Data Exhibits
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Introduction and Background

In the summer of 2009, the West Coast University (WCU) Board of Trustees, led by Chairman David Pyle and President Barry T. Ryan, made the decision to pursue regional accreditation through the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities. This decision was driven by the desire to provide greater support for students in the form of enhanced opportunities for degree recognition and transferability of credits. While the University has enjoyed a very productive relationship with the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS), it was believed that the reputation of the institution could be enhanced by pursuit and achievement of regional accreditation.

The University submitted its application for eligibility to the Commission on May 1, 2010, and participated in the WASC Eligibility Review Committee call on June 22. WCU received official notification from WASC Vice President Dr. Richard Winn dated June 30 that the committee “determined that WCU meets all 23 of the Eligibility Criteria and is therefore able to proceed with an application for Candidacy.” To facilitate this transition, Dr. Winn visited WCU on July 26, met with the University's leadership team and Academic Council to review process steps associated with pursuit of regional accreditation, emphasizing the need to engage in a comprehensive University-wide Self Study which addresses the WASC Core Commitments, Standards for Accreditation and the 42 “Criteria for Review” (CFRs).

Methodology

WASC received WCU’s Letter of Intent to pursue regional accreditation on September 9, 2010. On September 17, eleven members of the University's Self Study Steering Committee met for the first time, reviewed a memo of introduction, CFR action planning template, a template for use in inviting 120 University stakeholders to participate in the Self Study process, the University's Self Study project plan, the WASC Worksheet for Preliminary Self Review and a copy of the Commission's Handbook of Accreditation. Prospective sub-committee members were nominated by Steering Committee members on the basis of their awareness of the issues associated with the CFR they would be asked to address.

Subsequently, Steering Committee and sub-committee members used the self review tool to aid in evaluation activities for each of the Four Standards and related CFRs. In several circumstances, Steering Committee members submitted "CFR Action Plans" as an expression of their sub-committee's belief that focused attention was required to address and fulfill the intent of the associated CFR. Each Steering Committee member was given the responsibility to create a narrative response to their assigned Standard and CFR as well as provide any supporting evidence. By late December 2010, Steering Committee members had submitted narrative responses and associated evidence, and the University Provost coordinated the process of integrating them into the Self Study document. In 2011, the Steering Committee met on January 24, February 17, and April 20 for full day reviews of the narrative and associated materials.

Organization of Self Study

The Self Study is presented in a deductive manner, utilizing the Four Standards and related CFRs as the means by which the organization and flow of the document was designed. In the electronic format, links to supporting evidence are embedded throughout the text. A Table of Evidence is presented after the Table of Contents and provides the reader with a quick reference to evidence provided in support of assertions related to any of the CFRs. Links to the CFR definitions are provided in the margins of the Self Study. Several of the CFRs are related; therefore, some of the narrative is repeated, with abbreviated descriptions linked to the fuller narrative elsewhere in the Self Study.
Institutional History and Authorization

West Coast University was originally chartered in 1909 as an ophthalmology school and over the next 50 years offered programs that varied from aeronautical engineering, applied sciences and mathematics to locomotive diesel engine repairs. West Coast University became one of the forerunners in offering Bachelor degree programs designed to meet the needs of working adults to aid their careers. These programs were offered in non-traditional settings. In 1953, the University began offering evening-only programs based on a schedule of six two-month academic terms. The success of this approach led the University to expand and diversify its programs to include offerings in business and management, computer science, industrial technology, and pre-health science. Associate degrees in Science and Master Degree programs were introduced in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1981, the University reorganized into three distinct colleges: the College of Business and Management, the College of Engineering, and the College of Letters and Sciences. The University was led by the late Dr. Victor Elconin and his direction was instrumental in developing the University’s reputation in the business and academic community. However, the University's fortunes took a turn for worse when the Aerospace industry, to which so much of its enrollment was tied, dried up.

In May 1997, the University reorganized under new leadership, focusing the institution on the development and delivery of academic healthcare programs, which included Nursing and Health Care Administration. In September of 2007, the University began to offer online courses to provide greater flexibility for its students.

West Coast University is incorporated as a for-profit proprietary post-secondary institution. It is approved by the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education with the main Los Angeles campus located in North Hollywood, CA, and branches in Anaheim (Orange County) and Ontario. The campus is nationally accredited by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools to offer select Associate’s, Bachelor’s and Master's degree programs. Its largest program, a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing, is approved by the California Board of Registered Nursing, and accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). It also offers a Bachelor of Science degree in Dental Hygiene at its Orange County location that is accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). The University's baccalaureate and master's programs are Title IV funding eligible.

Standard I: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

West Coast University’s mission is stated as follows:

At West Coast University, we embrace a student-centric learning partnership that leads to professional success. We deliver transformational education within a culture of integrity and personal accountability. We design market-responsive programs through collaboration between faculty and industry professionals. We continuously pursue more effective and innovative ways through which students develop the competencies and confidence required in a complex and changing world.

The University's commitment to student learning is expressed in the first sentence of the mission statement. The mission is found on the University website and includes institutional objectives on page 16 in the 2011-12 West Coast University Catalog. The Board of Trustees formally adopted the University mission in its meeting on February 3, 2010 (p. 3, item 3e). The Deans and Chairs Guide, a publication which provides direction for academic leaders at the University, expresses how WCU defines each element of its mission statement.
The University also adopted a set of statements which reflect the fundamental values (Catalog, p. 16) of the institution. Furthermore, learning outcomes at the Institution, Program, and Course levels have been developed.

The Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs), which emanate from and align with the University's mission, are published in the Catalog (pg. 17) and are stated as follows:

“Upon graduating from a degree program offered by West Coast University, students will be able to:

1. Develop intellectual and practical problem solving skills through information assessment and critical thinking.
2. Demonstrate effective written communication skills.
3. Demonstrate effective oral communication skills.
4. Achieve the stated programmatic learning outcomes of one's discipline.
5. Demonstrate computer proficiency and information literacy.
6. Describe ethical standards and legal guidelines associated with one's chosen career field.
7. Explain why knowledge of and respect for the societal contributions of diverse cultures and perspectives is an important quality in one's discipline.”

WCU has habitually gathered evidence of student completion, graduation, and placement rates, as required by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools. This type of data is available in the Annual Institutional Report. To give greater visibility to these and other measures, and on the basis of a core team attending a WASC workshop on student success, the University has recently created a draft Student Success Dashboard (the proof of concept for which is included as evidence), which will highlight key metrics including graduation rates, placement rates, student loan default rates, campus climate/student satisfaction, persistence and board passage rates. The dashboard will provide a snapshot of the University's performance against established goals, using the standard “green, yellow, red” means of conveying “performance to plan.”

The Nursing program has consistently collected summative evidence of student success via national board examination passage rates (National Council Licensure Examination or NCLEX). These rates are published and publicly accessible at the California Board of Registered Nursing Website. As an additional component of nurse education assessment, the program has used both Health Education Systems, Inc. (HESI) and Assessment Technologies Institute (ATI) instruments, which include national standardized examinations based on the NCLEX-RN test plan. The criterion-referenced proficiency levels are established by the National Standard Setting Study, and test results have contributed to the evaluation of program effectiveness. WCU has collaborated with these exam providers to create custom NCLEX-style exams that are designed to assess course-specific student learning.
In late 2009, University leadership determined that more focus on institution-specific learning assessment tools and processes, as opposed to such heavy reliance on external instruments, was required to ensure integration and alignment with its unique mission. In addition, the institution and its academic programs and non-academic departments determined to initiate formal “program reviews.” In addition, prior to 2010, WCU had no formalized institutional research function.

Accordingly, the University Assessment Council was inaugurated, conducting its first meeting on December 8, 2009. Each academic program leader was given a copy of Nichols and Nichols’ The Departmental Guide and Record Book for Student Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness1 and the process for construction of meaningful, concrete, measurable programmatic learning outcomes commenced. Furthermore, the Assessment Council led the University and its academic programs through the development of “five column models” which detailed programmatic learning outcomes (and associated rationale for why the outcomes were selected), the identification of appropriate instruments to measure student learning against the outcomes, faculty-developed standards, and a process to determine whether student achievement met identified standards. The Council also worked with non-academic departments in the development of “department learning outcomes” that align with the ILOs. This effort was complemented by the Director of Student and Alumni Affairs and Assistant Vice President of Compliance’s attendance at an external workshop which focused on assessing student learning in non-academic departments. The Assessment Council, which is comprised of faculty, academic, and administrative staff, meets monthly in an effort to catalyze a culture of assessment of student learning achievement, and related continuous improvement.

This effort was paralleled by a program of faculty development focused on assessing and improving student learning. A faculty meeting on April 7, 2010, attended by over 100 full- and part-time faculty members, focused exclusively on the topic of learning outcome assessment. Thereafter, 18 faculty, staff and administrators attended the WASC Academic Resource Conference in Long Beach from April 21st through 23rd, after which they held a debrief on what was learned, especially in reference to assessing student learning, and what action plans would be developed.

Throughout the summer of 2010, faculty members were asked to take the WCU-developed 7-module online program pertaining to assessing student learning. On August 25, 2010, faculty and staff convened for a meeting with assessment expert Dr. Mary Allen. In the morning, Dr. Allen taught the fundamentals of learning outcome assessment; in the afternoon she met each academic program’s faculty to review and strengthen their Programmatic Learning Outcome statements. Thereafter, the faculty from each program met and updated the Programmatic Learning Outcomes.

An additional charge for the Assessment Council is to identify how WCU assesses student achievement of the ILOs and continuously reflect upon appropriateness of such measures and tools through its “assess the assessment” process. The University invested in the Learning Outcome Manager (LOM) product from eCollege. In addition to providing the online and blended instructional delivery Learning Management System (LMS), LOM will allow WCU to input Institutional, Program, and Course level outcomes and data, which is expected to facilitate more timely and less onerous assessment of student learning.

Currently, LOM is being piloted across multiple sections of English 340, Written Communications II. Within this pilot process, one signature assessment is utilized. This process utilizes a rubric that assesses Program Outcomes to corresponding Institutional Outcomes. The goal is to use LOM for all sections of all courses, online or on-ground, to capture, record, and report on student achievement in the

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In a further effort to bolster institutional competence in assessing student learning, the Center for Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment (CElTA) was created. The Director of the Center was accepted to WASC’s 2011-2012 Assessment Leadership Academy to strengthen her preparation to serve in this role.

Because students in the BS in Nursing and BS in Dental Hygiene must pass State and/or National Board exams in order to be licensed, ready-made summative data exists for student achievement. But academic administration and faculty agreed on the need to have more formative assessment data available to gain better insight on student learning earlier in their programs. With gratitude to external consultants, Mary Allen and Amy Driscoll, rubrics were identified, modified or created to provide more formative assessment instruments. Faculty members began to develop and use rubrics to help students understand what excellence on given assignments would require, and to provide much earlier feedback to students regarding how they could improve their work products.

At this point in the development of a culture of assessment, the institution has chosen to engage in an annual Program Review of the data associated with student learning. This review (CFR 2.7) occurs in spring and focuses on faculty and other stakeholder’s review and analysis of evidence of student learning as well as their collective plans for improvement.

Another related development occurred in the summer of 2010, as WCU hired its first Director of Institutional Research (CFR 4.5), whose initial focus was on the development of a common data set, data definitions, and identification of data process owners. A desired outcome is to ensure that the institution’s information technology architecture is capable of capturing all of the necessary data elements to improve evidence-based decision making.

The institution recognizes the need for leadership personnel, structures and processes that will enable it to fulfill its mission of facilitating student learning and success in a manner that reflects integrity, honesty and transparency. The leadership system pursues the fulfillment of its mission on several levels. Senior leadership, including the University President, Provost, Vice President of University Operations and the Chief Financial Officer are located at its administrative offices in Irvine, California. These leaders focus on strategic planning, development and delivery of best practices across educational programs and operational functions, and a reconciliation of the University’s fiscal resources with the University’s goals and aspirations.
The institution utilizes a matrix organizational structure whereby key functional roles at University Administration provide leadership and support in an effort to ensure consistency of quality of educational delivery, operations and implementation across all campuses, as described in the fourth chapter of the Deans and Chairs Guide. All employees on a campus have a direct reporting relationship in one way or another to the campus Executive Director. Indirect reporting relationships exist between campus department personnel and their associated counterparts at University Administration.

By way of example, Academic Deans and program leaders on each campus report directly to the Executive Director of their campus. This arrangement facilitates efficiency in procurement, class scheduling, timely responses to student and faculty requests, and numerous other operational concerns. However, all academic program leaders at each campus work directly with the Provost (or other appropriate University Administration member such as the Dean of the College of Nursing) to ensure that the academic programs are delivered in a consistent and high quality manner. On a day-to-day basis, the campus Executive Director ensures a culture of accountability exists, but because of the impossibility that the Executive Director is a thought leader in each campus functional domain, he or she can rely on University Administration personnel for additional direction and support.

In practice, the relationship between University Administration and campuses is highly symbiotic. Campus personnel may identify an area of deficiency and bring it to the attention of the appropriate functional leader at University Administration for resolution. With respect to the academic programs (CFR 2.4), faculty members use “Learning Communities” where those who teach similar courses at different campuses meet telephonically at the end of each term of instruction, as a means to discuss their assessment of student learning and make recommendations for improvement.

Operationally, an issue or concern will be brought to the attention of all of the campus leaders of similar functions and collaboratively, a solution will be developed. Inter-campus teams meet regularly to ensure consistency in the delivery of instruction or services across WCU. For example, the General Education academic leadership, Nurse Leadership Council, and the Registrars meet regularly with their functional counterparts to share best practices and resolve issues. On a planned basis, personnel outside of a given academic or functional area are often invited to attend these meetings to ensure collaboration and integration.

West Coast University places special emphasis on providing students with the support they need to persist. Retention is one of the key metrics utilized in the Student Success Dashboard.
Hence, accountability at West Coast University is triadic in nature and is sometimes described in terms of campus level (vertical) accountability or program/function level (horizontal) accountability. All University employees are expected to receive frequent feedback about performance, including an annual performance review. Key campus leadership positions have meetings that reflect the triadic nature of the organizational structure, with the campus Executive Director or appropriate campus leader leading the performance review, but joined by the University Administration counterpart to whom an indirect reporting relationship exists. The University's Human Resources Department tracks completion of employee annual performance reviews and notifies the campus Executive Director of any that are incomplete and overdue.

To facilitate role clarification, each position has its own job description (see samples). While job descriptions give an overview of positions, the self study process identified several opportunities for improvement. For example, in meetings with campus nursing leaders, it became apparent that responsibility gaps, redundant work practices, and a general lack of clear definition of roles and responsibilities existed. Accordingly, the University Provost collaborated with Human Resources to develop and pilot two initiatives.

First, an annual performance objective template was created, which has been implemented as a pilot with key academic leaders (see sample of University Provost's 2011 objectives). As reflected in the sample version of the New Program Development Coordinator's objectives, this approach is intended to facilitate ongoing discussion about responsibilities, accountability, and performance, as well as lead to formal discussions about issues and challenges three times a year. While this approach stimulates ongoing discussion about performance, it was determined to be too labor intensive. Subsequently, the Human Resources Department has recently obtained a web-based tool called Success Factors to facilitate this type of performance-related discussion. This tool is anticipated to integrate several performance management functions, including the alignment of individual performance with the University mission, the development of individualized performance objectives (and use the tool as a means of creating ongoing, documented dialogue regarding performance), the creation of succession planning and associated developmental activities, and access to all of this information when conducting performance reviews.

Secondly, Human Resources led a “job and task analysis” for campus nursing leadership teams with the intent of clarifying roles and responsibilities. The University Manager of Organizational Development and Training Administration invited team members to convene for full-day discussions regarding roles and responsibilities. A work product of this effort was a model which reflected the current job description of each role (what the job description said was supposed to be done), the actual work performed by each function, and the work each position occupant actually thought they should do. Through vigorous discussion, role definitions were agreed upon and job descriptions and campus staffing models were updated.

The Executive Director at each campus is a conduit of communication and authority between University Administration and the campuses. Campus leadership meetings occur on a bi-weekly basis so as to identify and share best practices, improve communication, and identify areas where expectations are not met and quickly develop and implement improvement plans. The meetings are attended by the campus Executive Director, academic program leaders, the Directors of Admissions, Student Affairs, and Financial Aid as well as the Business Office Manager and the campus leader in Information Technology.

Within the context of the mission, which focuses extensively on student success, the University is committed to academic freedom, the faculty statement for which is found in the Faculty Handbook on p. 18. The institution is committed to the notion that freedom and accountability can and should co-exist in an academically vigorous and healthy environment.
During the self study process, a sub-committee found that a specific statement about academic freedom as it relates to staff and students was lacking. A **task force** developed a draft statement on student ([Catalog, p. 29](#)) and staff academic freedom, both of which were reviewed and approved by the University’s **Academic Council** and **President**.

Additional information related to academic and other freedoms, and responsibilities, is provided in the **Associate Handbook** as well as the **Code of Ethical Conduct**. A University Ethics Reporting **Hotline** ([Catalog, p. 49](#)) exists for faculty, staff and students to call to anonymously report any acts of perceived unethical behavior, which could include the constraint of academic freedom rights and responsibilities.

**West Coast University** is committed to the ongoing development of an institutional culture in pursuit and support of diversity. One of the overarching values of the institution is expressed as follows:

- **We value… Diversity.** We encourage diversity of thought, ethnicity, culture and experience recognizing that through multiple and often differing perspectives offered in a collegial setting, the best ideas emerge. ([University Values Statements](#))

The University subscribes to a strict policy of non-discrimination ([Catalog, pg 15](#)), and all new managers are required to take an online course entitled “Valuing Diversity for Managers.”
As the graphics on this page reflect, WCU is comprised of an ethnically diverse administration, faculty, staff and student body. Furthermore, there are approximately 3 female faculty members to every male.

WCU funds opportunities for students to engage in learning about diverse global practices to healthcare through its summer program in Oxford, England as well as the opportunity to work in a healthcare clinic in the Dominican Republic. Selected students become acquainted with diverse cultures and means of providing healthcare through these programs.

The Summer Program at Oxford, England educates selected students on matters of global healthcare and diversity.

Learning Outcomes (Catalog, p. 18). Recognizing the potential for diversity in learning styles, the “tools for success” workshop, which is part of new student orientation, includes a module whereby students become better acquainted with their preferred learning style. The General Education learning outcomes (Catalog, p. 65) include a focus on topics of diversity, most notably in Lifespan Psychology (PSYCH 290) which explores the varying needs and challenges of humans as they age, while Cultural Pluralism (HUM 470) compares various traditions, experiences and norms among groups of people in differing cultures. Further examples of curricular focus on diversity are found in the core academic programs. For example, NURS 100, NURS 204, DHYG 140 and DHYG 150 all contain diversity-specific learning modules.

West Coast University is committed to delivering education as its primary purpose and focus. All students at WCU are enrolled in degree programs. The University is not supported by nor affiliated with any political or religious organization. Curricular decisions are made through an internal process of shared governance that is delivered through a democratic majority vote process, free from undue external influence. This process is explained in the Standing Councils Guide, which defines WCU’s approach to shared governance. The University’s Code of Ethical Conduct orients employees towards rules of engagement when developing or sustaining external relationships or adjunct employment. Most notably, expectations regarding conflicts of interest (p. 13), dealing with government officials (p. 16), and political activities and interests (p. 31) are intended to ensure that inappropriate external influence is avoided.

West Coast University provides detailed information pertaining to its academic programs within the University Catalog, pp. 66-95. Encapsulated within these representations are the program credit...
requirements and program length in terms of time-to-completion. Programmatic learning outcomes express what students should know and be able to demonstrate upon graduation. Transfer credit policies are provided, and course descriptions are found within the Catalog (pp. 96-121). Entering students must review and sign an enrollment agreement which stipulates program length, number of credits required for satisfactory program completion, and total anticipated costs for the program. The institution also provides students with a Student Performance Fact Sheet with calculated Placement Rates and average salary. In this manner, the institution seeks to fully disclose program details to students.

The University’s Student Services are described in the University Catalog, pp. 53-55, as are the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements for Undergraduate Programs (p. 40-41). SAP requirements are expressed to notify students of maximum time limits to graduate. To remain in good standing, undergraduate students must complete the academic program within 150% of the published length of the program (in credits attempted) and graduate students must complete within 200% of the published length of the program.

Student conduct policies are published in the Catalog, and include academic honesty (p. 29), student attire (p. 48), drug and alcohol prevention (p. 48), and sexual harassment (p. 49), among others.

The self study process identified the need for the development of a set of policies, practices and procedures related to human subjects research. So while both Nursing and Dental Hygiene programs subscribe to a related set of programmatic ethics, the Dean of the Dental Hygiene Program at the Orange County campus has agreed to develop a proposal pertaining to the development of an Institutional Review Board. Another identified deficit pertained to the need for further development of student conduct policies and processes (Catalog, p. 47). The Director of Student and Alumni Affairs led a task force through the development and review of proposed policies and procedures that was subsequently examined and approved by the Academic and Administrative Councils as well as the President. These include student conduct policies, a student conduct incident report, a sanction form, guidelines for a reflective paper in the event of a breach of the code and a judicial affairs “frequently asked questions” document.

Within its Catalog, WCU provides students with a process for how to handle grievances or complaints (pp. 46-47). In general, students are requested to try to resolve issues at the lowest possible level; however, if in so doing students remain dissatisfied, they are encouraged to address their concerns with the appropriate academic administrator. The Catalog (pp. 47) includes contact information for the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education as well as the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) in the event that a student believes his or her options for satisfactory resolution within the institutional setting have been exhausted. There have been no adverse findings with respect to West Coast University’s policies pertaining to grievances or complaints from institutional or programmatic accrediting agencies.

The University maintains complaint logs (see sample) at each campus. The logs list the name of the complainant, the date of the complaint, its nature, the course of action deemed appropriate, and the resolution (if one exists) of the complaint. These logs are submitted to the University Compliance office on a monthly basis. The logs are maintained for a six year period. The institution seeks to resolve issues with students as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The West Coast University grading methodology is found both in the University Catalog (p. 37) and in course syllabi. Should students have concerns regarding their grades, they are encouraged to follow the University’s Grade Appeals process, published in the Catalog (p. 38).
Institutional policies regarding handling of faculty grievances or complaints may be found in the Faculty Handbook (p. 53). The University also provides faculty and associates with an Associate Handbook which further clarifies employee policies and procedures.

Institutional policies regarding student’s rights to cancel or conditions pertaining to obtaining refunds are found in the University Catalog (pp. 60) and on the Enrollment Agreements that students are provided prior to matriculation.

Institutional definitions of course credit are published in the University Catalog (pp. 31) and expressed as follows:

- For lecture hours, one semester credit is equal to 15 clock hours.
- For laboratory classes, one semester credit is equal to 30 clock hours.
- For clinical/practicum classes, one semester credit is equal to 45 clock hours (labs in the nursing and science courses are considered clinical for credit hour calculations).

Clock hours are defined as a minimum of 50 minutes in which lectures, demonstrations, and similar class activities are conducted. Additional expectations are provided for students regarding the number of out-of-class hours that are expected to be invested in support of their learning. The institution also has developed a separate definition pertaining to course credit and credit hours as defined within an online course delivery environment (Catalog, p. 31).

West Coast University holds, as a core value, the imperative to conduct its operations with high integrity, openness and honesty and has created and implemented a number of policies and procedures to support this value. An annual financial audit is conducted by an appropriately qualified and independent CPA firm to confirm that WCU is managing its financial resources in a responsible manner.

New employees receive a copy of the Associate Code of Ethical Conduct and are required to take several online courses that reflect the institutional emphasis on operating in an ethically responsible manner. An Ethics Hotline is described in the Catalog (p. 50) and faculty, staff and students are encouraged to use the hotline if they wish to anonymously report breaches of ethical behavior.

The Admissions Department provides prospective students with relevant materials needed to help them make an informed decision about their educational future. Admissions team members engage in training to ensure a focus on service to prospective students. In addition to the Code of Conduct, team members receive training in the “Do's and Don'ts of Admissions,” the Admissions departmental learning outcomes, and on a "first call" script.

Admissions’ team member compliance is monitored through admissions observation forms, student comment cards, and mystery shopping reports. Mystery shopping is the process of having an external, objective third party call into the Admissions department, behaving as if they were a prospective student. These "shoppers" later send a detailed report about their experience to the University Vice President of Admissions. The feedback received from these sources lead to the creation of individualized development plans for Admissions team members. Admissions also collaborates with Academic Affairs to ensure that quarterly academic program meetings (such as for Dental Hygiene or General Education) occur so as to review any changes in program or clinical setting requirements.

The University strives to create a culture of continuous assessment and improvement. As deficits of operational quality or educational effectiveness are identified, they are ultimately brought to the attention of either the Administrative or Academic Councils. The Academic Council is comprised of all academic administrators and several administrative staff (inclusive of campus Executive Directors) and
reviews proposals that are academic in nature; the Administrative Council is comprised of all non-academic functional leaders and campus Executive Directors and follows a similar pattern. Proposed policies are reviewed, discussed and debated. Proposals that are approved by their respective councils are forwarded to the University President for final review. The Council's Guide provides details about council processes, and evidence of policy or procedure formulation flowing from these councils may be found in Academic and Administrative Council meeting minutes. For example, policies pertaining to student class overload requests, the use of the Sailing to Success remediation program for nursing students who fail a class, and the institutional 5-year academic calendar were all reviewed and approved in one of the councils outlined above.

There are several other mechanisms WCU uses to ensure it operates with a culture of integrity. The Student Academic Honor Code defines what integrity looks like within the academic setting (Catalog, p. 30). To evaluate the effectiveness of the financial aid function and processes, annual audits are conducted. The Compliance Department also created a helpful comprehensive internal audit tool and “internal site visit” teams and processes (discussed more fully on page 23) to monitor issues of quality, effectiveness and compliance.

The University seeks to maintain honest and open communication with WASC. The University's Board of Trustees passed a resolution (meeting minutes, p. 3), expressing its commitment to uphold the standards of the Association. Towards that end, the University was pleased to host the WASC-assigned liaison to visit each WCU campus, meet key people, and review accreditation-related standards, plans and documents. The institution's leadership also decided to revise and improve the University website, in large measure based on attendance at WASC workshops in which the value of increased public transparency was discussed.

**Standard II: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions**

West Coast University currently offers the following approved Baccalaureate degree programs:

- Bachelor of Science in Nursing (Catalog, pp. 76)
- Bachelor of Science Nursing (RN to BSN bridge program) (Catalog, pp. 82)
- Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene (Catalog, pp. 66)
- Licensed Vocational Nursing to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (Catalog, p. 79)

The following Master's degree programs are also approved (Catalog, pp. 84):

- Master of Science in Nursing (Catalog, p. 87)
  - RN to MSN track (Catalog, p. 91)
  - WCU offers a certificate for Nurse Education (Catalog, p. 90)
- Master of Science in Health Care Management (Catalog, p. 94)

These programs are consistent with the University's mission, especially with respect to the clause, "We design market responsive programs through collaboration between faculty and industry professionals."

The undergraduate curricula structure requires students to complete most of their general education courses prior to advancing to the core program. WCU's undergraduate programs are based upon recognized higher education fields of study, meet accreditation standards, provide appropriate nomenclature and are of sufficient content and length to achieve the intended outcomes. Graduate programs have been approved by the institution's current accreditation affiliation, ACICS.
The BS in Nursing program meets the California Board of Registered Nursing (BRN standards) and therefore achieved BRN approval. Subsequently, program leadership obtained the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) standards and submitted an application for programmatic accreditation. A Self Study was created, followed by a site visit, and culminating in programmatic accreditation.

The BS in Dental Hygiene program leadership followed the same path (e.g. Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) standards leading to a thorough Self Study and site visit, and subsequently achieved accreditation status). Both CCNE (Nursing) and CODA (Dental Hygiene) found the programs, inclusive of curricular design, number of qualified faculty, and support resources to meet their standards. Additionally, the University has undergone peer review by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) and has been found to meet their accreditation standards. ACICS also reviewed courses offered in an online delivery format and deemed them to be appropriate, comparable to on-ground offerings.

In an effort to seek external input into the currency of the curriculum, Program Advisory Committees meet twice annually. Academic program chairs and deans recruit leaders within the profession to serve on these committees, and value their contributions pertaining to trends in the profession, their review of program learning outcomes, and their recommendations on ways to improve program quality.

The faculty of WCU is sufficient in number and qualifications to support WCU’s academic programs. As of May 2011, there are a total of 254 faculty members, of whom 93 are full-time, serving across the three Southern California campuses. This is an increase of 115 total faculty (47 full-time) from that reported during the Eligibility Review. Full-time faculty members are listed, along with their credentials, in the University’s Catalog (pp. 128-133). Programmatic and institutional accreditation reviews have found the number and qualifications of faculty to be appropriate to the institution’s mission. Abbreviated CVs of faculty are available to the public on the University website.

All degree programs offered at West Coast University provide definitions, both in terms of entry-level requirements and of the program learning outcomes associated with the program. General undergraduate admissions criteria are presented in the Catalog (p. 21), and further program-specific details are available for Dental Hygiene (Catalog p. 66) and undergraduate Nursing (p. 76). Course syllabi identify course learning outcomes which align with and support programmatic learning outcomes. Graduation requirements for undergraduate students are also outlined in the Catalog on page 26.

Graduate programs provide similar information in a general (Catalog, pp. 84) as well as program-specific manner (MS Health Care Management p. 94; MS Nursing pp. 87). Course specific expectations are articulated in graduate-level syllabi. On February 14, 2011, the MS Programs in Healthcare Management and Nursing underwent a “readiness” review by ACICS and the team found no citations. Additionally, CCNE has recognized the substantive change with the addition of the MSN program and is planning for a November 2011 site visit.

WCU’s baccalaureate programs engage students in an integrated course of study that is sufficient in breadth and depth to prepare them for work, citizenship and a fulfilling life. The General Education component of West Coast University undergraduate degree programs provides a college-level academic foundation to prepare students for higher level inquiry in their chosen disciplines and prepares them to be responsible, ethical citizens in a global society. The two undergraduate degrees in Dental Hygiene and Nursing require 49 (Catalog, p. 66) and 53 (Catalog, p. 76) General Education credits respectively.
The General Education program facilitates student acquisition and application of college-level knowledge in written and oral communication, scientific methodology, information literacy, mathematical skills, ethical decision-making, diversity, and appreciation of artistic expression. This commitment is expressed through the General Education mission, philosophy and learning outcomes.

The relationship between General Education (programmatic) learning outcomes and course learning outcomes is expressed in the General Education curriculum map. This map identifies which courses introduce, reinforce or promote mastery of key outcomes. The General Education "5-column model" illuminates why specific program learning outcomes have been selected and emphasized, what instruments have been selected to measure student learning, the standards of acceptable achievement of student learning as determined by the faculty, the most recent evidence of student learning and the action plans that faculty believe need to be implemented to bridge any gaps that exist between actual and expected learning. A consistent theme of the General Education curriculum is the emphasis on student development of critical thinking skills. The program provides students with multiple opportunities to demonstrate the problem solving capabilities required in their core academic majors and beyond.

The University's General Education program helps students develop sensitivity to the needs of their community, and to contribute to society through thought, effective communication, and responsible actions. The core programs of WCU's academic majors focus on helping students develop the competencies required of specific healthcare professions.

While all General Education courses prepare students for work, citizenship and civic responsibility by focusing on the development of critical thinking and interpersonal skills (including the ability to effectively function in groups), some courses focus explicitly on the realm of citizenship and political science. For example, Cultural Pluralism (HUM 470) compares varied cultural traditions among groups of people in a given society and Introduction to Sociology (SOCY 280) addresses "political, economic, technical and scientific institutions."

As expressed in the University Catalog (p. 66), the objective of the BS in Dental Hygiene is to prepare students to become competent in the knowledge, skills, and values of dental hygiene while building upon a liberal arts and sciences educational background that expands their view of oral health and disparity. Dental Hygiene courses meet both WCU requirements and the CODA Standards for Accreditation.

The mission of undergraduate nursing programs is to partner with each student in the recognition of his or her individual abilities in an effort to build competence and confidence in the fulfillment of a chosen nursing educational goal. Undergraduate nursing students develop profession-specific competencies,
building upon a liberal arts education that expands their world view of the global community. Nursing courses satisfy WCU's requirements and meet the CCNE accreditation standards, building on the AACN nine "Essentials" of Baccalaureate Education.

WCU’s graduate programs are consistent with the institutional mission, reflect the expected rigor of graduate level education, and include the requirement for student engagement in research and/or appropriate high-level professional practice. The three ACICS-approved graduate programs are the MS in Nursing (MSN), RN to MSN, and MS in Health Care Management (MSHCM).

The MSN Curriculum Map identifies program learning outcomes and aligns them with program courses. Program architecture is aligned with the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Master’s "Essentials." MSN course design and descriptions, sequencing and related textbook requirements have been developed to align with AACN-defined emergent competencies of the profession.

The MSHCM Program accepted its first class on the Los Angeles campus in September 2010. Prior to its start, the Chair of the HCM program conducted a review of the top HCM programs in the United States. A market analysis was also completed to show growth prospects for the health care industry, job opportunities and compensation trends. The program objective was developed based on industry requirements for skilled supervisors and managers. The program is intended to respond to the required competencies of healthcare leaders as published by the Health Care Leadership Alliance. The linkage between the MSHCM curriculum and program learning outcomes is reflected in the program's curriculum map. Courses have been developed to include specific outcomes (see samples for HCM 505 and 510), and associated readings that align and scaffold in such a way as to lead towards student achievement of programmatic learning outcomes.

Delivery of instruction for graduate classes is "blended" within WCU’s 10-week terms. Specifically, the first and final class meetings are conducted in person, and the remaining class time is taught in an online environment using eCollege as the delivery platform. The University ensures that blended courses follow the catalog requirements for credit hours in an online class.

As expressed in the Catalog (p. 84), an earned baccalaureate degree is an admission requirement for both graduate programs. The one exception to this policy is the RN to MSN program (Catalog, p. 91). In this instance, students must have an Associate Degree from an accredited institution with a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher and be licensed as a Registered Nurse in the State of California in addition to fulfilling other admissions requirements. Students complete the remaining undergraduate requirements en route to the MS in Nursing degree.

Library resources for graduate programs are largely available in an online format and include EBSCO, Ebrary and LexisNexis. The institution purchased ProQuest’s Health and Medical Complete and The Nursing and Allied Health Source in an online format in support of its graduate programs. An "opening day collection" was developed by program leadership and submitted to the Librarian for procurement. Additional information pertaining to WCU’s graduate programs is found in the Catalog (pp. 84-94).

Student learning outcomes and expectations are conveyed at the programmatic, and course level as reflected in course syllabi. Learning outcomes have also been developed for non-academic departments such as Student Services, Admissions, Career Services and Financial Aid.

Student and Career Services have developed a wide range of interventions and learning activities in support of student success. "Tools for Success" is a new student orientation program designed to help students understand fundamental skills required for to be successful in their academic programs. "Peer Assisted Learning," or PALs, has been implemented as a means of having students who have done well academically to provide mentoring and tutoring support for those who need additional assistance.
Recently a **Student Success Guide** has been developed as a means to identify trigger events that lead to University intervention with students-at-risk. The intent is to identify students who are at-risk as early as possible and provide them with additional support. A central new role to this innovation is that of the **Student Success Coordinator**, who coordinates this process. Examples of trigger events include students who have failed a course in a prior term, students who have a grade of C or lower at midterm, those who have missed a payment, those who have attendance issues or any other factor that reflects vulnerability in meeting the University’s **Satisfactory Academic Progress** policy (Catalog).

Student committees and associations such as the **Student Advisory Council**, **National Student Nurses Association**, and **American Dental Hygienists’ Association Student Council** provide students with opportunities for leadership development or a means of working within teams to pursue and achieve collective goals. The University develops, sponsors, and implements activities and events designed to enhance a sense of **student community**, student understanding of how to appreciate differences in cultures (**U.S. Constitution Day, Symposium at Oxford**), or how to make a difference in the communities we serve (**Toys for Tots, Walk for Kids**). BS Nursing and Dental Hygiene students engage in a **pinning ceremony** which contributes to their understanding of professionalism. These activities support the institution’s learning outcomes and are differentiated by campus and academic programs. For example, Dental Hygiene co-curricular activities, such as **Smile Camp**, are only available at the Orange County campus.

Admissions decisions align with the institutional mission. Since the learning process begins before a student matriculates, the Admissions department recognizes the importance of providing prospective students with accurate and timely responses to questions that are raised about the University or its various programs. **Admissions team members are trained** to recognize that student satisfaction begins at the outset of a prospective student’s relationship with West Coast University, and therefore care is
taken to ensure that the emphasis of interactions is on truthful, honest and transparent presentation of facts about the institution.

The University has invested in information technology systems to support the conveyance of information and services beyond the physical campus. For example, students are provided access to University information and services through the student portal. They may access a wide range of financial aid information and services including online student loan counseling, a Financial Aid Resource Publication from the U.S. Department of Education and exit counseling provided in partnership with the Northwest Education Loan Association (NELA.net). In addition, the University website provides information pertaining to Federal Financial Aid, the Cal Grant program, Loans and Scholarships, Veterans benefits, Direct Loan programs and the Yellow Ribbon program.

Institutional Learning Outcome five states that each student is, at graduation, able to demonstrate computer proficiency and information literacy. As noted earlier, the University maintains a reference library at each campus with print and electronic collections. A Master of Library Science (MLS) or Master of Library Information Science (MLIS) credentialed librarian is on staff at each campus to assist students and faculty with their library and learning resource needs. The librarian conducts orientations and workshops through which students learn basic information literacy skills. Information literacy is infused in the curriculum. Students acquire research and library usage skills by completing two required General Education courses; Written Communication I (ENGL 140) and II (ENGL 340). The curriculum of
each undergraduate and graduate level academic program requires students to complete one research course while many additional courses require library assignments.

In December 2009, and in partnership with Pearson Education, the institution conducted a MyITLab pilot, which was subsequently assessed and improved, then implemented on all campuses. All undergraduate students must take and successfully complete this four module computer proficiency requirement by the end of the first semester. Modules include word processing, use of spreadsheets, presentation graphics and a combination of computer basics, the World Wide Web and electronic communications. Remediation is offered to students who require a second opportunity to achieve computer proficiency, although at the Los Angeles campus (where the pilot occurred), students have been successful in completing the requirement over 95% of the time.

On-ground classrooms employ Smart Board technologies allowing faculty to use innovative presentation techniques. Interactive whiteboards, digital pens and collaborative learning software transform traditional theory classes into dynamic learning environments. Online courses provide interactive classroom activities where chat rooms and threaded discussions provide opportunities for student-faculty and peer-to-peer interactions. Animations, graphs, charts, and video presentations are regularly integrated into the online courses. In addition, campuses provide students with WiFi access and computer labs provide printing and copying capabilities.

West Coast University has a tri-level approach to learning outcomes, which emanate from the institutional mission. The three levels include the Institutional, Program, and Course Learning Outcomes.

Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) have been developed that reflect what the institution aspires to have all students know and be able to demonstrate upon graduation (Catalog, p. 17). The Institutional Learning Outcomes were drafted by the University’s Assessment Council, which is comprised of faculty and academic administrative leaders. The iterative process for ILO development included review with the Academic Council, feedback from an external assessment expert and final approval of the University President.

Programmatic Learning Outcomes (PLOs) have been written by academic programmatic leaders and faculty, and take program accreditation requirements or recommendations into consideration. For example, the undergraduate Nursing program’s learning outcomes borrow heavily from the AACN’s “Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice.” While the Essentials provided the framework, faculty discussed and refined programmatic learning outcomes in Nursing Curriculum Committee meetings, and upon approval, had them reviewed and approved by the University’s Academic Council. Programmatic learning outcomes are published in course syllabi (see sample).
To assess the degree to which faculty believe they engage in learning outcome or other curriculum development activities, the Provost distributed a copy of the WASC Worksheet for Preliminary Self-Review to 12 full-time faculty members to seek their perspectives. Sample responses included:

- “All full-time faculty participate in meetings and committees that support student learning on a regular basis.”
- “Examples of how faculty have been engaged in this include our program advisory council, all faculty meetings (e.g. August 25th meeting with Dr. Mary Allen), outcomes statement (development), rubrics that are used by faculty to assess student work, (and) “Sailing to Success” program data provided by faculty.”
- “As lead instructor med surg (sic), I participated in updating the syllabus for my course and my feedback was taken into consideration. Students are always clear on what to expect from the course and what they're expected to achieve…”
- “Faculty do participate in curriculum committee discussions, but some have expressed that their input often seems undervalued at the University Administration level.”
- “I initiated the assessment of (student learning) process for two courses…”
- “The faculty, through regular meetings, takes an active role in student education and development of curriculum.”

In this assessment process, some faculty noted that it would be useful to engage non-administrative faculty more fully in the evaluation of the efficacy of identified program learning outcomes. One respondent to the survey said, “Some faculty have opined that there are inherent problems with the (Nursing) curriculum committee. Meetings have been infrequent and poorly attended. It has been suggested that this is because faculty are not adequately involved with the actual development of the curriculum…” A composite version of the Worksheet for Preliminary Self Review as it pertained to faculty taking “collective responsibility for establishing, reviewing, fostering, and demonstrating the attainment of student learning” was created. From this feedback and especially in the Nursing programs, an opportunity existed to engage faculty in even greater collaboration regarding program learning outcomes, their linkage to course learning outcomes, and assessment activities required to improve the curriculum.

Accordingly, the leadership of the Nursing Curriculum Committee was transitioned from the Dean of the College of Nursing to a faculty member and greater emphasis on faculty involvement and participation was established. The Provost sent an update to the new Chair of the Curriculum Committee outlining the desire to promote wide ranging participation in the ownership and improvement of the curriculum with the desired outcome of improving demonstrable student learning.

The process for faculty to provide input on curriculum improvement is largely a function of two mechanisms. The first is ongoing participation in “Learning Communities” for faculty who teach similar courses at different campuses. Learning Communities meet at the end of each 10 week term of instruction. In anticipation of this meeting, faculty members submit “faculty feedback forms” to a designated facilitator who uses the feedback as the basis to create an agenda for the meeting. Facilitators are members of the community who ensure the agendas for meetings are developed, feedback forms are reviewed, meeting minutes are taken, and recommendations for further action are submitted to the programmatic Curriculum Committee. Faculty members use this meeting as a forum to come to consensus regarding curricular improvements, and forward recommendations to their respective curriculum committees for further review and discussion.

A second manner in which faculty lead the process for improving student learning is by way of the annual Program Review. The Program Review (CFR 2.7) occurs in the spring and allows faculty to evaluate a number of program-related data elements, including those that relate to admissions, learning
resources, and of greatest importance, student learning. The faculty contribute substantially to the improvement process by recommending action plans for consideration.

Occasionally meetings are called specifically to address issues or concerns pertaining to student learning. For example, a meeting was held in November 2010 that included campus and academic leaders, faculty and staff. The meeting addressed variability of student learning outcomes as expressed in nursing board passage rates with a number of action items intended to improve student learning outcomes.

Academic programs actively engage students in learning intended to challenge them to meet the requirements of their chosen field. Students are made aware of the expectations for their programs through Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs). Individual classes identify Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) on the course syllabus (see samples).

As expressed previously, the pre-licensure Nursing and Dental Hygiene programs utilize State and National Board passage rates as the key summative measure of student learning. National Board Exams such as the NCLEX serve this purpose. The curriculum is sufficiently rigorous and challenging to facilitate students’ ability to be successful on these exams.

When assessing deficits of student learning, faculty from the Nursing program identified a need for students to more fully develop critical thinking skills. After a review of the literature and discipline-related best practices, a determination was made to conduct a pilot test in which high-fidelity simulation experiential learning was used. An intensive six month evaluation ensued. For this assessment phase, faculty members developed a simulation effectiveness tool to be used by those supervising the simulation pilot program, a student evaluation tool, and an evaluation tool intended to assess the efficacy of simulation versus a clinical environment. An observer form of simulated learning was created, and frequent meetings were held by the faculty (meeting minutes) to document findings, conclusions and recommendations.

The pilot study was followed by a review by faculty members of the impact of simulation on learning, including an assessment of each of the mannequin options. Core team members presented their findings to University Administration.

Those who were engaged in the pilot were sufficiently impressed with the level of engagement, the development of critical thinking, and as an unexpected outcome, the refinement of interpersonal skills as students provided immediate feedback to their peers relating to their observations of work performed in the simulation environment. Thus, a recommendation was made and accepted that high fidelity simulation technology become a central component for the future of nurse education at WCU.

At that point, meetings were held to fully investigate all that had been learned through the pilot phase in anticipation of building out simulation centers at each WCU campus. Discussions included facility design, types of supplies, equipment and furnishings, and course and center scheduling. Multiple exchanges regarding budget implications led to the development and approval of Simulation Center budget requirements. The good work of the faculty in the pilot phase has led to the development of what has become known as a “franchise model” for replicating simulation centers at multiple campuses.

Concurrently to this pilot study, development activities have been utilized to help faculty improve their competence in engaging students in the learning process. For example, an outside expert was brought in to teach faculty how to improve student engagement through a workshop regarding “active learning.”

Additional focus has been given on the need for faculty to provide frequent and constructive feedback about student work as part of the improvement-of-student-learning effort. Feedback is available to
students through immediate review of exams, the online grade book, the faculty open door policy, continuous correspondence with students via email, and in-class activities such as those reflected in the simulation environment. For example, the simulation environment has been designed to provide students with the opportunity for self-reflection after they have engaged in a scenario, coupled with peer feedback. The University invested in video technology so that students may observe their performance within the simulation environment well after the scenario. In this manner, faculty are helping students to learn to self-reflect and improve on the basis of observing their own performance.

In response to these initiatives, students reacted very positively when asked by an internal review team about their engagement in the learning process. They also stated that they believed they were being very well prepared not only to pass their board exams, but for their chosen professions.

Student progress is monitored throughout each term, and students who are having difficulty in making satisfactory progress are provided with midterm Letters of Academic Concern and associated improvement plans for each course as necessary. For example, Nursing students who earn a score of less than 76% on course examinations throughout a term are required to attend a Sailing to Success set of interventions intended to improve their performance.

The focus on the assessment of student learning outcomes is becoming a part of the institutional culture. If students are not demonstrating that they are meeting learning outcomes, faculty and academic leaders analyze possible reasons, and then work through action plans to bridge learning outcome gaps.

The institution has adapted a model from Nichols and Nichols to identify the following elements of student learning across all programs:

1. What are the programmatic learning outcomes?
   a. Why were they selected?
2. How will the program measure student learning for the identified outcomes?
3. What is the standard of acceptable learning established by the faculty?
4. What are the data reflecting actual student learning?
5. What will be instituted to solidify outcomes that meet faculty-established standards of student learning? What will be instituted to address learning gaps or deficits?

These “5-column models” have been created for the BS Dental Hygiene, BS Nursing, General Education, MS in Healthcare Management and MS in Nursing programs. Curriculum maps demonstrate the linkage between specific courses and the program learning outcomes they support. As indicated previously, summative data is available in the form of board exam passage rates.

In the wake of the decision to pursue the development of a culture and competency in the assessment and improvement of outcomes, WCU held its first set of Program Reviews in the spring 2010. In preparation for the reviews, the Assessment Council developed a template for academic programs to utilize. Because this was the first experience with an institution-wide systematic approach to program review, the first meetings had more to do with clarifying outcomes and associated instruments for measuring their achievement and less to do with reviewing specific outcome data. Nonetheless, each academic program and non-academic department was requested to submit a presentation in anticipation of the annual Institutional Effectiveness Review (June 7, 2010). These presentations summarized program strengths, opportunities for improvement and proposed action plans. Thirty-two administrators, faculty and staff members gathered for the full-day event to listen to presentations by program leaders from the Nursing, Dental Hygiene, Online instruction, and General Education programs. Presentations were also made by leaders of non-academic departments.
Prior to the summer of 2010, Nursing program leadership had received summary reports regarding NCLEX performance from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), and that was about as much data that was used in assessing student learning. But with the hire of the University's first Director of Institutional Research, greater analysis commenced to explore the relationships between key data elements related to student learning and NCLEX performance. Some of the factors in this research included the relationships between the Nursing admissions exam, external end-of-course computerized examinations, grades, time from the last course taken until the student took the NCLEX, course repeats, transfer of credit and NCLEX passage rates. The study was confined to the Orange County campus, as that was determined to be the campus which had the most consistent quality data.

The findings, conclusions and recommendations of this research were presented by the Director of Institutional Research to campus Nursing leadership and faculty, the Dean of the College of Nursing, and the Provost. As is often the case, the presentation led to more in-depth analysis of factors contributing to student success in passing the NCLEX Board examination.

Subsequently, the Nursing Curriculum Committee drafted several policy proposals, sent to the University's Academic Council:

- Nurse progression policy – proposed the discontinuance of the practice of using an external examination as a “make or break” indicator of student achievement in select Nursing courses, and instead weight the exam in with the remainder of the student's course work.
- "Sailing to Success" program – designed to help students develop greater competency in test-taking skills.

The Academic Council voted in favor of both of these policy changes, and the University President subsequently approved them.

In the spring 2011, another round of program reviews was held. These reviews were attended by faculty, associated staff, program advisory committee members, students, and administrators. From its program review, Dental Hygiene found program strengths to include faculty knowledge and skills, technology support for student learning, the provision of a clinic which provided patient services at no charge, a team-based approach to student learning, and the quality of program leadership and staff support. Weaknesses included a lack of faculty calibration of instruments used to measure student learning with technology and vendor-based products, the need for improvement in communication with cultural sensitivity, and insufficient time taken to mentor and tutor students. Recommendations for improvement included building in time for faculty to mentor and tutor students, better use of adjunct faculty to provide tutoring support, the need to capture lectures in a “pod-cast” format so students have the benefit of potential multiple repetitions of lessons, and the need to provide course syllabi for the subsequent term in the last week of the prior term to give students a head start in preparation.

The Nursing Program Review led to conclusions about program strengths including a sufficiency of resources in support of student learning, clinical partners' expression of appreciation of WCU’s flexibility with assignment of clinical rotations, WCU's shared governance structure which allows faculty to provide input on the efficacy of the program, the use of simulation technology to stimulate student's higher level critical thinking skills, the support of University administration, CCNE accreditation, and the dynamic nature of the curriculum.
The Nursing Program Review identified the following weaknesses and recommended courses of action for improvement:

1. Lack of consistency in calibration of instruments to measure student learning --
   a. Request that each Learning Community utilize a sample of student academic work, and faculty members independently employ the associated rubric to assess student competence as a validation exercise.
2. Variability of NCLEX (board passage rate) outcomes –
   a. Create an inter–campus task that examines data to identify potential causal factors for variability and to recommend improvement actions to the Curriculum Committee.
3. Student deficiency in writing skills –
   a. Faculty provide additional developmental feedback on student’s written work.
   b. Post exemplars of student writing on website for the benefit of students.
4. Lack of a coherent strategy for the use of outside vendors in preparation for NCLEX success.
   a. Create a task force to weigh the pros and cons of each of the vendors WCU currently uses, and make a recommendation for a more strategic use of these vendors in support student success.

Other recommendations from the Nursing Program Review included improving new faculty orientation so as to ensure they are socialized immediately to WCU’s culture of student success and assessment, including more focused attention on the programmatic curriculum map to ensure appropriate and efficient course alignment throughout the curriculum, opening up additional skills lab time to allow for more student practice and active learning, and additional focus of the curriculum in support of professional behavioral development of students in the practice setting. The latter action plan emanated directly from feedback from program advisory committee members who expressed a concern about students from “all institutions” who lack appropriate professional decorum in a clinical environment.

In addition to the annual program reviews, another practice that WCU has embraced is conducting “site reviews.” These reviews serve as a means to monitor compliance with internal policies, accreditation standards and/or regulatory requirements. This process involves an internal team visiting each campus for a day to examine evidence and to conduct interviews associated with ACICS and WASC standards. It is also a useful way to promote consistency across campuses, as site visit team members are frequently representatives of other campuses. Site visits are conducted for the same reason that program reviews have been formalized and implemented. They serve as a mechanism for assessment and improvement.

*The University’s use of site reviews has been valuable tool to assess the degree to which assessment practices and student learning improvement have been implemented at each campus.*
Presently, the University has developed a comprehensive tool that integrates ACICS standards with the WASC Criteria for Review.

By way of example, in April 2010, an internal University team conducted a site visit of the Orange County campus. In advance, the Provost prepared a plan for the visit and shared it with the campus. Team members were selected who had knowledge in each area that was assessed, and a preparatory meeting was held to orient team members to the process. The day of the meeting was treated in much the same manner that an accreditation visit is. While those on visiting teams were acquainted with those at the campus being visited, all were urged to remain “in character” to maximize the learning potential. At the end of the day, the visiting team convened, reviewed their notes, prepared a report and submitted it to the Campus Executive Director.

The Executive Director commented that the visit and process was extremely helpful in providing an “outside” perspective on campus operations. Action plans were created and implementation is on-going. In this instance, the visiting team suggested the need for better organization and coordination of campus documents for team review, as the visiting team found that although documentation was available in support of assertions of compliance, those documents were difficult to find. The campus team created a table of evidence that was alphabetized, making the next review far more efficient.

A similar process occurred for the Dental Hygiene program in advance of a visit by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). In this case, the site visitor was external to the University, and someone who had conducted many accreditation site visits in the past. The Program Chair distributed an agenda for the visit, and the day ended with the site visitor providing an exit interview with recommendations and suggestions. Less than six weeks later, the program was visited by CODA and according to the site visitors during the exit interview, the program was exceptional, receiving no recommendations and no suggestions.

More recently, site visits were conducted at each campus in March 2011. The visiting team was comprised of functional experts in each area to be investigated, and the tour was called the “No Harm, No Foul” tour, as the specific intention was to be meticulous in findings with the intention that the University learn and grow from the experience (versus using the tour as an opportunity to comment on campus team member’s work performance).

The outcome of these visits included a letter to the campus Executive Director. In each case, the Executive Director also received a completed version of the tool that the visiting team used when engaging in its evaluation. This packet was sent to the Executive Directors at the Los Angeles, Ontario and Orange County campuses.
An example of a finding of the process included the need to create better procedures for monitoring student Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). The visiting team found a lack of consistency across the University in how SAP was monitored and tracked. Subsequently, the Assistant Vice President for Compliance was asked to lead a task force in reviewing and improving the set of procedures and related training relative to how SAP is monitored and tracked, and how communication flows to students and related departments.

In each case, campus Executive Directors were asked to respond to the letter they received from the site visit team by creating an action plan for improvement. Subsequent meetings were held to assess progress against these improvement plans. Because of their value, the University has determined to conduct annual site visits at each campus.

As expressed in response to CFR 2.5, WCU promotes scholarship, creative activity and instructional innovations for the purpose of improving student learning. At the core of its mission, West Coast University places utmost value on student learning outcomes that reflect the teaching/learning dynamic. This emphasis is reflected in the University planning cycle, which holds student learning at the epicenter of the planning process.

The use of simulation technology (specifically with high-fidelity mannequins), had not been attempted at WCU prior to the winter 2010. Once this pilot program commenced, faculty members engaged in scholarly activities to test certain hypotheses and assumptions. By engaging in research, the faculty determined that simulation as utilized in nursing education could have powerful benefits. A key pedagogical philosophy stemming from research was to present students in the simulation environment with random patient scenarios, thought to better reflect the nature of their anticipated experiences in clinical environments.

Historically, West Coast University has not utilized some of the conventions of traditional higher education with respect to its relationship with faculty. For example, the institution does not have a system of faculty tenure, nor does it have a faculty senate. Instead, the institution continuously strives to create a culture where faculty and staff are respected for their contributions and held accountable for facilitating student learning or providing students with services. A fundamental tenet of this culture is the responsibility that faculty have in developing, assessing and improving the curriculum.

One hallmark of most institutions of higher education that has been missing at WCU is a system for faculty rank, appointment and promotion. As part of the self study process, this was determined to be an area that needed additional development. Thus, in the fall 2009, the Faculty Promotion and Development Council was initiated under the guidance of the Academic Dean for the Los Angeles campus. The Council was charged (Councils Guide, p. 14) with the development of a faculty rank and promotion set of criteria and processes. The Council spent a considerable amount of time reviewing exemplars from other institutions and developing multiple drafts of a faculty rank criteria matrix, which was approved in April 2011.

The work of the Council led to a meeting on November 17, 2010. There were two issues that were particularly challenging: 1) How to define and recognize scholarly activities in an institution devoted to teaching and 2) How to establish criteria supported by evidence pertaining to a faculty member’s contribution to student learning. One of the significant achievements of the Council was the development of a definition associated with the scholarly activities of the faculty: “West Coast University defines scholarship (within the context of faculty promotion) as faculty engagement in the application of systematic acquisition of knowledge, skill and/or competence through intellectual inquiry and practice and the dissemination of learning through such means as publications, presentations,
workshops, or other means of sharing to appropriate audiences.” “Dissemination of learning” is inclusive of sharing learning with internal audiences.

The Council recommended that faculty ranks be divided into five categories: Instructor 1, Instructor 2, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor. It determined the need to bifurcate the entry level “instructor” rank into two categories due to the fact that WCU has attracted a fair number of outstanding clinicians who hold appropriate academic credentials, but have limited teaching experience. Those in this category will inhabit the “Instructor I” rank.

The three overarching areas of evaluation for promotion include Teaching Effectiveness (defined further as the capacity to effectively facilitate student learning), Scholarship, and Service. The process for developing criteria and processes associated with faculty appointments necessarily took a substantial amount of time and required broad discussion. The final outcome of the Faculty Promotion and Development Council and the Task Force is presented in the fourth chapter of the Faculty Handbook.

Concurrently, the Human Resources Department engaged in an activity to create compensation ranges that tie to the new faculty rank criteria. Assuming it is approved, the faculty appointment plan is intended to go into effect in September 2011.

West Coast University perceives and promotes the symbiotic relationship between effective faculty teaching and student learning, scholarship and service. The discussion begins with the University mission, which states in its first sentence, “At West Coast University, we embrace a student-centric learning partnership that leads to professional success.” The primacy of this statement is further elaborated upon in the Deans and Chairs Guide (p. 4). Excerpting from the Guide:

a. “Student-centric” is not the same as “customer-focused.” In traditional marketing theory, “the customer is king.” Therefore, marketers have long sought to find products and services that are popular and in demand with customers. That is not what we intend by “student-centric.” Rather, this term means that student success is at the center of what we do. Students will not always recognize what is best for them. For that reason, we recruit and hire academic leaders and faculty who have substantial experience and a clear sense for what is required to lead students towards professional success. In other words, what are the knowledge, skills and behaviors that are essential for a student who graduates from our program to exemplify and demonstrate? This is not about making the curriculum easy, engaging in grade inflation, or doing what it takes to get by. Rather, it requires a rigorous, thoughtful, engaging curriculum that is shepherded by faculty who care as much about the student-as-graduate (future) as the "student-in-class” (present).

So “student-centric” implies that we do all that we can to facilitate student learning, and the student learning we aspire to relates to the alignment of course learning outcomes with both programmatic and institutional learning outcomes, with defined measures of competence that knowledgeable faculty members are satisfied with because they know that students who attain that level of competence will have increased odds at achieving the goal of their West Coast University education: "professional success."

b. “...learning partnership” is worthy of note for two reasons:
   i. First, the focus is on learning. That is a different focus than on teaching. One would assume that learning follows teaching, but those who have taught for years understand that this is not always the case. Why not? Sometimes it may have to do with a lack of student academic preparation or motivation. But sometimes it has to do with knowledgeable faculty who, while demonstrating content expertise, have limited success in facilitating student learning. Academic leaders, therefore, must be especially cognizant of student learning, and where it
is not occurring, be able to thoroughly assess what the causal factors are and develop and implement improvement plans.

ii. Secondly, the word “partnership” connotes that both parties have a shared responsibility. Because of age, experience and expertise, we must accept that the “partnership” in our institution tilts towards a heavier responsibility for the faculty member than the student. Nonetheless, when faculty members determine that students are not holding up their end of the bargain, part of the process of learning is having discussions with those students about the need for them to “own” their education. And engaging in those types of conversations early and if necessary, often, is just as important in the development of a student towards “professional success” as the content itself.

Therefore, effective fulfillment of the University mission begins with the facilitation of student learning in such a way as to produce evidence of achievement of defined learning outcomes.”

Faculty scholarship is defined in two ways at WCU. The first way consists of faculty members who contribute to the growth of the body of knowledge both within the institution as well as to appropriate external audiences that relate directly to the content of one’s field or base profession. Secondly, scholarly contributions at West Coast University support the mission in that there is an ongoing sharing of best practices as related to the process of enhancing student learning. “Service” is in large measure defined as the vehicle by which scholarship is shared within the institution.

For example, as faculty members attend conferences that are intended to ensure they maintain currency in their field, they complete a faculty development form which prompts them to share learning with other faculty members. It also asks faculty members to address the topic of how this development opportunity will enhance student learning. The University has also invested in the development and implementation of an internal Academy, intended to aid in the process of faculty development. One of the primary benefits of the Academy’s portfolio of developmental interventions is the way it integrates into faculty performance assessment. By using the Success Factors performance management system, supervisors are able to quickly identify training and development modules from the Academy’s catalog to assign to the faculty member.

In 2010, a number of faculty members were invited to attend various conferences specifically designed to assist in the development of assessing and improving student learning skills. For example, 18 faculty and administrative staff members submitted a summary of learning from the WASC Academic Resource Conference they attended in April 2010. They met to share their observations from the conference and determine what action plans might be developed as a result of their collective reflections. Similar types of debrief synopses occurred when WCU faculty attended a workshop on how to lead an outstanding Program Review as well as another pertaining to the assessment of student learning.

For 2011, $750 has been allocated for each full-time faculty member to cover faculty development activities. A pool of $5,000 has been budgeted at each campus to cover unexpected or adjunct faculty-related developmental costs. This is in addition to any University Administration-specific requests for faculty development activities such as the WASC workshops mentioned in the prior paragraph.

An ongoing, systematic service expectation of faculty members is the participation in program-oriented Learning Communities, where best practices, opportunities for curriculum improvement and proposed action plans are shared. The point is, the symbiotic relationship of scholarship, faculty teaching effectiveness and service are all key elements to the institutional culture of assessment and continuous improvement with one overarching goal in mind—the improvement of student learning outcomes.
The University also benefits from the scholarly contributions of its faculty outside of the institution. Several faculty members have published, and the institution is committed to recognizing these scholarly activities through its faculty promotion policies.

WCU collects and analyzes student data disaggregated by demographic categories and areas of study. The addition the Director of Institutional Research has greatly enhanced this process. For example, on page 3 of his summary report regarding NCLEX success, the Director of Institutional Research noted some changes regarding the demographic composition of the student body at the Orange County campus, and the related impact on board exam passage rates. His research showed a decline in the number of enrolled Asian students and an increase in the number of enrolled Filipino students, and he noted that some of the challenges appeared to relate to Vocabulary and Grammar as reflected on the HESI admissions entrance exam. This combined with other data that correlates poor student success with poor fundamental academic skills of reading comprehension, writing and math skills has led to the development of a policy proposal by the Chair of the General Education program. This proposal would require that all students who do not meet a certain standard on the admissions examination in each sub-test would be required to complete Pearson’s MyFoundationsLab before entering into the core part of their academic program. This intervention provides both a diagnostic to assess fundamental academic skill development as well as an online tailored remediation program for those who need it. This would be a significant departure from the current approach, which requires that students achieve an aggregate score on the HESI admissions test, with no diagnostic or remediation in place.

Since Institutional Research is a relatively recent addition at WCU, much more of this kind of collection and analysis of pertinent data is expected in the future. To further support this function and the development of a culture of assessment, a position was approved entitled “Institutional Research Specialist” for the 2011 budget. The person occupying this position, reporting to the Director, will spend time at each campus ensuring that staff members are trained to collect the right kind of data and submit it to the database in a consistent manner so that the University can have confidence in the quality of its data. One of the challenges faced by the Director of Institutional Research upon arrival was a lack of consistency of data collection and quality across all campuses. Subsequently, he created a plan for improving the quality of data gathering and reporting.

Another example of how the University collects and examines data pertaining to student learning is associated with the Dental Hygiene program. In collaboration with the Director of Institutional Research, the Dean of the Dental Hygiene program engaged in an analysis of admissions criteria related to the Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS) entrance examination. From this analysis, the Director of Institutional Research created a summary report, which highlighted the need for further exploration and analysis of the relationships between student achievement on the TEAS and program success as reflected in course grades. A similar analysis was conducted on behalf of the Nursing program with respect to the predictive quality of external examinations, and specifically which sub-tests correlate favorably to student success in passing the national board examination.

In preparation for program reviews, the Director of Institutional Research created and distributed a “data portfolio.” This information packet provided University-wide data that was disaggregated by program pertaining to student ethnicity, age and gender. It also explored student satisfaction and provided projected graduation dates as data elements for academic leaders to discuss within their reviews.

The University tracks satisfaction and campus climate in several ways. Students participate in the Faculty Course Evaluation process at the end of each term. They complete and submit the surveys, which reflect their level of satisfaction for each course taken. These surveys culminate in the development of detailed aggregated reports which are returned to academic administrators.
explained in the Faculty Handbook (p. 28), this information is summarized and included as part of the performance review process for faculty members.

Some of the key information that the summary Faculty Course Evaluation reports provide includes a general report from the aggregate of all surveys, a consolidation of student written comments, a summary of student response to all questions across all campuses, a detailed report by faculty member, a summary of faculty member’s ranking as associated with student feedback, and a report that reflects faculty member trends over time. Because of the sensitive nature of this information, these reports are available to the visiting team upon request. Student feedback is only one element of faculty performance review, but the results of the surveys are discussed with faculty members by supervisors, and development plans are subsequently created. Furthermore, campus leadership teams review the data and create campus-based improvement plans.

The University recently determined to include an annual Student Satisfaction Survey using the Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory as an additional way to capture data relating to campus climate and student satisfaction. Additionally, Student Advisory Councils have been developed at each campus, which have been chartered to provide students with another opportunity to provide feedback to campus administrators regarding their perceptions of campus climate. This provides students with a mechanism to contribute in the development of institutional policies and procedures.

Given that student learning is central to WCU’s mission, all co-curricular and student support departments have begun the process of developing Departmental Learning Outcomes (DLOs) and related assessment tools. For example, Career Services, Student Services, Admissions and Financial Aid have each developed DLOs. Assessment-related activities and tools are discussed and adopted as a team. Each of these non-academic departments also engages in an annual Department Review to determine the efficacy of their services in support of achieving goals and contributing to student learning.

WCU aspires to have all students understand the requirements of their academic programs and receive timely and meaningful information and advising about relevant academic

WCU invests significant resources into the development of leading edge facilities, labs and clinics, which support student learning and replicate the professional environments to which students aspire upon graduation.
requirements. An intentional focus exists regarding the accuracy and integrity of recruiting and admissions practices, academic calendars, publications and advertising. The mission statement includes a clause, “within a culture of integrity and personal accountability.” The institutional intent is to ensure accuracy and clarity.

With respect to admissions and recruiting, “mystery shopping” involves the use of an outside company to engage the University as if the “shopper” were a prospective student. This occurs every two weeks, and Admissions team member calls are monitored. If during this process it is determined that admissions representatives behave in a manner that is inconsistent with how they have been trained, an improvement plan is created and implemented. As explained in response to CFR 1.8, Admissions employs numerous means of training and assessment to ensure that prospective students receive accurate and current information.

Another significant improvement that was a function of the Self Study was the initiative to substantially improve the University's website. The purpose of doing so was to provide additional information to faculty, staff, students, program advisory board members, parents, accreditation and regulatory agencies. The University aspires to be transparent in its operations, outcomes, academic programs and services to the public. The new site includes information pertaining to all academic programs by means of “program summary” documents.

Newly matriculated students receive a comprehensive listing of their classes for the totality of their academic program within the first semester. Academic advising is available to students who have additional questions once they have commenced their academic program.

A Publications Council has been established and is chaired by the Assistant Vice President of Compliance to ensure accuracy and consistency of published materials such as the Catalog and academic calendar. For example, when the 2011-2012 Catalog draft was completed, Council members were requested to review their subject areas to ensure the information was current and valid. Furthermore, a process which is coordinated by the University's New Program Development Coordinator exists whereby “program summary” documents are developed which contains key information about each academic program. The review process includes multiple stakeholders who must “sign off” on each summary. Upon final review, these program summaries are submitted to the Marketing Department for inclusion on the institution’s website.

To ensure accurate and complete advertising and marketing, the University uses an approval process that requires key stakeholders to review, approve and sign off on all marketing and advertising initiatives. A recent innovation is the development of a web-enabled document that any faculty or staff member can use to suggest new content for the University's web-site. While each submission must be reviewed and approved by the Assistant Vice President for Compliance, this provides faculty with a means of sharing recent developments within their courses or programs that may be of broader interest. Documents and publications such as the catalog, fact sheet and crime and statistics reports are available through the University website.

The University Registrar is responsible for developing and maintaining the academic calendar. Every update of the calendar requires review and approval of the Academic Council.

Each campus has multiple means of sharing information, including video monitors in high traffic areas. Updates or announcement are shared using this media and are updated frequently.

The various student support services provided by WCU have been created to meet the needs of students. The intention of orientation is to provide new students with the information they need to successfully launch their academic careers at WCU. The orientation enables new students to become
familiar with key personnel at the campus and allows those staff members to provide an overview of the services that students can expect to receive from their department. Through this process, students become familiar with those elements contributing to their success.

Students with disabilities are afforded reasonable accommodation provided they submit proof of disability from an appropriately qualified source. As expressed in the Catalog (p. 52), the Student Services Department coordinates the process for evaluating petitions for accommodation. A policy has been created in support of students with defined needs for accommodation, as well as associated forms for students seeking assistance.

The University has libraries on each campus. These are staffed with appropriately qualified librarians and provide primarily online resources for students. Librarians assist students with research, database searches, and computer utilization in support of the student learning process. Part of the self-assessment process includes library utilization, resource acquisition processes, availability of resources and technology, and general student support. This is addressed more fully in response to CFR 3.6.

West Coast University strives to make the transfer-of-credit process as transparent as possible. Transfer credit policies are found in the University Catalog (pp. 23, 24, 37, 67, 68, 76, 87, 88, 91, 95). The self study process demonstrated that easy visibility into already approved courses-for-transfer did not exist. Upon her hire in summer of 2010, the University Registrar recommended that all courses that had been approved for transfer credit at other institutions be visible to prospective and current students by way of the University’s website and with the use of a vendor’s (Transfer Evaluation Services) product. Upon approval of this proposal, each approved course was uploaded to the site, and is now visible to the external public, thus giving prospective students a sense of confidence regarding transfer credit possibilities. Under the direction of the campus Academic Dean, the transfer credit process is coordinated by the New Student Advisor. Each new course is evaluated by a designated faculty subject matter expert for equivalency, and once approval has been conveyed, the New Student Advisor is responsible for ensuring the transfer credit is applied and the website is updated. For courses to be considered, the student must provide an official transcript. The University also requires all foreign transcripts to first be reviewed by an approved transcript evaluation service before consideration for transfer credit will be provided (Catalog, p. 24).

**Standard III: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Sustainability**

West Coast University employs personnel sufficient in number and professional qualifications to maintain its operations and support its academic programs. A continuous assessment process exists to determine if the right number of appropriately qualified personnel exists to provide the greatest potential for the University to fulfill its mission of student success.

By way of example and as detailed on page 7 of this Self Study, in early 2010 feedback was provided by campus personnel that indicated both the number as well as the clarity of roles and responsibilities for the administration of nursing programs was in question.

Thus the Manager of Organizational Development and Training Administration was consulted and a project plan was initiated to engage in a “job and task analysis.” This analysis demonstrated that there was inconsistency of role definition at each campus, as well as the need for an additional role to be added to the departmental team. New job descriptions were created for the campus Dean of Nursing, Associate Dean of Academics, Associate Dean of Administration, Clinical Coordinator, and Testing Coordinator that clarified expectations. In addition, the role of “Program Assistant” was added in the 2011 budget for each campus and an associated job description for the new role was created simultaneously.
A number of other roles were identified in 2010 as needed to support the University’s strategic direction and growth. The first University Director of Institutional Research was hired midway through the year as was the first Director of Student and Alumni Affairs. Early in 2011, an Institutional Research Specialist was added. Because of the planned future focus on high fidelity simulation education, a University Director of Simulation Education was hired in the spring 2011. This role is intended to provide training and support for each campus and to lead to consistency of operations in the simulated environment. The Director of the Center for Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment was also hired in spring 2011.

Additionally, a Student Success Coordinator role was added at each campus to help to coordinate the process of identifying students in need of additional support, and to track interventions on behalf of the student as well as results.

West Coast University is committed to ensuring that a minimum of 33% of courses are taught by full-time faculty members.

During the winter term 2011, 42% of classes were taught by faculty who had full-time status. Full-time faculty members have, as their primary focus, responsibilities to the University. The University maintains a roster of the faculty inclusive of dates when their degrees of higher education were granted, institutions where degrees were earned and WCU assigned courses to teach. This roster identifies which faculty members are full-time or adjunct. Employment categories have been created by Human Resources and are found in the Associate Handbook. Job descriptions have been created for nursing, health care administration, dental hygiene and general education faculty to assist in role clarification.

The Faculty Handbook (p. 28) further elaborates on the qualifications of the faculty in the following manner:

The faculty is comprised of the teaching staff at West Coast University. To qualify, faculty members must hold an earned degree in the field of study associated with the courses they will be teaching and which meets accreditation requirements.

In addition to faculty job descriptions, West Coast University also provides faculty with a list of expectations, found on page 19 of the Faculty Handbook. Of special note is linkage between faculty contributions and student success. Faculty members are involved in curriculum development, assessment and evaluation, and continuous improvement with the intent of improving student learning. As shared previously, faculty members complete a faculty feedback form, which captures best practices as well as opportunities for course
content or instructional improvement. Each program has a curriculum committee, and at the course level, all faculty members (full-time or adjunct) are invited to engage in Learning Communities. These communities lead in the summative assessment and evaluation of the course, its objectives, instructional strategies, textbook and readings, and lesson plans all with the intent to improve student learning. Annually, faculty members participate in the Program Review in which specific learning outcome data are reviewed, gaps in student learning are identified and action plans developed for learning improvement.

Faculty and staff recruitment at West Coast University are sufficient to meet institutional stated goals of having a minimum of 33% of courses taught by full-time faculty members. WCU has recently purchased the TALEO software system to support the hiring process. Through this online vehicle, prospective employees (including faculty members) submit their application for employment, CVs and other required documentation as the first step of their employment relationship with the University. The purpose of this system is to increase the efficiency of the hiring process. While the hiring process has improved, feedback from recently hired faculty members and campus academic leaders has pointed to a need to improve the faculty orientation process.

On July 6, 2010, a task force met to review the requirements for improving faculty orientation. Deficiencies in new faculty orientation included the fact that faculty were hired too close to the start of terms, that the only consistent orientation they received was a full-day orientation at University Administration the first day of work, and that they were under-prepared for their service to the University. Accordingly, the task force recommended that faculty members be hired no later than the 7th week of the prior term. University-level orientation will occur during the 8th week of the 10-week term, and a campus level orientation will occur in the 9th week. In this campus-based orientation, the focus will include:

1. Review of mission and institutional purposes delivered by the campus Executive Director.
2. Review of the processes and procedures for getting work done at the campus level, delivered by the campus Academic Dean.
3. Review of programmatic requirements, including the academic program's mission, program learning outcomes, copies of programmatic syllabi, copy of the Faculty Handbook and an orientation to the issues and challenges of the program, delivered by the new faculty member's direct supervisor.

The workload of the faculty at West Coast University is aligned with the mission of the institution as a teaching University. Therefore, the majority of the faculty's time and energy is in the classroom, or focused on helping students improve their learning. Additional priorities for the faculty include
engaging in development activities which are intended to support improved understanding of assessing student learning as well as the improved facilitation of student learning skills. Faculty are encouraged as part of their service to the University to contribute to Learning Communities, Curriculum Committees or other standing Councils.

Faculty evaluation practices are largely identified in the Faculty Handbook (pp. 24-26). Some of the key hallmarks include a self-assessment of the efficacy of student learning as related through the faculty end-of-course feedback tool. The faculty member’s supervisor also observes instructional effectiveness on at least an annual basis. A missing element to this process has been the utilization of peer review, which is planned for implementation in the fall 2011. Another important source of evaluation comes from student course evaluation forms. This information is summarized and presented to campus academic personnel and feeds into the process improvement initiatives both at a campus and faculty member level. Non-teaching staff also engage in an annual evaluation of performance.

West Coast University is committed to faculty development. Because of the health care disciplines that it focuses on, the University tends to attract and hire faculty members who have appropriate credentials and substantial clinical experience, but sometimes limited teaching experience. As such, a significant emphasis was placed on the assessment of student learning in 2010, with two full-day developmental meetings in April and August. Furthermore, a 7 module online course is required of new faculty which identifies the relationship between the University mission, Institutional, Programmatic and Course Learning Outcomes and the curriculum. In addition, two individuals went to Alverno College in November 2010 to review some of their assessment best practices, and shared their observations with the University’s Assessment Council upon their return.

The Faculty Handbook provides insight into the bifurcated emphasis on faculty development (pp. 28-30). One focus is the need for faculty members to remain current in their content area(s). The second is to ensure that faculty members are frequently introduced to new and innovative ways to enhance student learning. A total of $750 per full-time faculty member plus a pool of $5,000 for adjunct faculty is available for development activities at each campus. Faculty members who take advantage of this benefit are expected to submit a plan, track progress against the plan and submit a faculty development request form prior to each opportunity. As expressed in response to CFR 2.9, WCU expects faculty to share their learning when attending workshops or conferences.

Another means of stimulating ideas amongst the faculty pertaining to improving the facilitation of student learning comes in the form of the Provost's "Tip of the Week." For example, one of these tips focused on the need to be intentional about the use of required textbooks in classes, while another addressed the issue of providing timely and comprehensive feedback to students on their work products in an effort to promote student learning. A third example addressed the concept of differentiating learning in the classroom environment by finding ways to introduce meaningful peer-led learning activities, and yet another shares some best practices from one of the University faculty members from the Los Angeles campus regarding classroom management tips and tactics.

A recent development relates to the launch of the Center for the Excellence of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (CELT). The Center is focused on providing support of faculty and faculty development, specifically with regard to assessing and improving student learning. The Director of the Center (who also chairs the Assessment Council) assists campus based academic leaders in the assessment and review of faculty teaching effectiveness, providing coaching and feedback in an effort to consistently improve student learning.

Faculty who teach online or blended classes are required to engage in a separate “online” orientation and receive instruction regarding platform policies. During the spring 2011, the University transitioned from the Angel platform to eCollege. This transition will lead towards more comprehensive use of
features of eCollege by providing instructors with eCompanion shells where content can be placed (for on-ground and online courses), threaded discussions will occur, and students can access additional learning resources. A central component of the eCollege solution being implemented is the Learning Outcome Management system to help facilitate the provision of a centralized repository for learning outcome data.

In 2010, the Human Resources Department began the development of an internal Academy as a means of further support of the development of faculty and staff. Courses available through the Academy will provide a curriculum to faculty on the basis of their rank. The benefit of this approach is that it will be systematic and enduring rather than ad hoc.

WCU financial statements for the past four years demonstrate a consistent positive trend in both revenue and net income. A significant percentage of net income has been reinvested into contemporary, state-of-the-art facilities to establish campuses in Orange County and Ontario, CA. In late 2009, the original Los Angeles campus relocated into a new 100,000 square foot campus. Further resources were invested into the development of a 30-chair dental hygiene clinic and twenty-five seat simulation lab at the Orange County campus. Furthermore, in an effort to meet the critical shortage of qualified nurses in the State of Texas, the University expects to open a campus in Dallas in late 2011.

The annual planning cycle is predictable and leads to budget planning and allocation decisions. Data are gathered and analyzed early in the year leading to Program Reviews. At the program or department level, priorities are established, and then shared with other University leaders during the annual Institutional Effectiveness Review (IER). At the IER, institutional level priorities are established leading to the development of an annual plan, and the budget process ensures alignment between budget development and institutional planning. In this manner, there is a direct link between the institution's culture of assessment and improvement with the planning and budgeting process.

The University Library provides a substantial array of online resources in support of student learning and faculty scholarship.

West Coast University provides students and faculty with access to information resources, services and technology sufficient in scope to support the needs of its academic programs and the scholarly endeavors of campus community members.

While librarians exist at each campus, a University Librarian will be hired in 2012 who will ensure the development of a strategic library plan and to participate in University-wide learning resource discussions. To promote consistency between campus libraries, a Library Manual has been created.

As mentioned earlier in the Self Study, WCU maintains a reference library at each campus with print, audio-visual and electronic collections. In addition to library facilities and physical holdings, the University maintains subscriptions with premier online databases providing access to key information resources, including those specific to the medical professions. Subscriptions include LexisNexis, EBSCOhost, Library and Information Resources Network (LIRN) and Ebrary.
Print and electronic collections strengthen and support the University’s general education and other academic programs. Campus libraries provide electronic access to the collection catalog, resource databases and the internet. They also maintain subscriptions to trade, professional and academic journals. The online library provides access to full-text research articles, links to scholarly and professional websites and e-book sites. Decisions regarding acquisition and availability of information resources are informed by faculty recommendations. Librarians work collegially with faculty through Curriculum Committees and Learning Communities to determine the adoption of new textbooks as well as new text editions as they become available.

The 2010 Noel-Levitz Survey results indicated a gap between the level of importance and student satisfaction for both library and information technology services and resources. Further investigation revealed that students were not sufficiently aware of the breadth and depth of services and resources available to them. On-going technology training for faculty is imperative in order to maximize the role of information and technology resources in teaching and to bridge student use of technology with faculty competency.

In 2010, students (via the Student Satisfaction Inventory) expressed an interest in having WiFi access on each campus. Subsequently, a plan was created, budget approved and installations made at each campus. Personal computing stations are also situated in the library, classrooms and at strategic locations throughout each campus in order to maximize student access to online information resources.

Through the annual budgeting process, West Coast University plans for the acquisition of information resources required of new programs, degree offerings or campuses. The fiscal year 2011 library budget reflected a significant increase in both personnel and non-personnel library expenses on all WCU campuses.

The institutional philosophy regarding information technology resources emanates from the University mission. Strategic technology initiatives are embedded within the University's Strategic Plan, as new information technology resources have become important education, research, service, and administrative tools. For example, there is a substantial symbiotic relationship which exists between the University's Nursing Simulation Centers and required information technology infrastructure.

WCU continues to invest in the acquisition and use of clinical and classroom technology to enhance the educational experiences and professional preparation of students. Most classrooms are equipped with Smart Board technologies such as interactive whiteboards, digital pens and collaborative learning software, allowing faculty to use innovative teaching techniques in the presentation of academic concepts.

The University has invested in simulation, skills and clinical facilities providing students with experiences that complement their classroom and clinical rotations. For example, in addition to the Nursing Simulation Center, WCU has developed a remarkable Dental Hygiene Clinic at the Orange County campus. Both facilities offer dynamic, interactive learning environments utilizing technologically advanced equipment specific to the profession. In the Simulation Center, faculty-developed patient care scenarios provide students with practical learning opportunities. Within the Dental Hygiene clinic, students gain hands-on experience with emergent technologies while extending healthcare services to the greater community.

WCU offers on-ground, online and blended (part on-ground, part online) courses. Online courses include chat rooms and threaded discussions to promote student-to-faculty and peer-to-peer interactions. Animations, graphs, charts, and content presentations are regularly integrated into the courses.
The Catalog (p. 27) outlines acceptable hardware and software configurations as well as internet access guidelines for students enrolled in online or blended courses. Students receiving instruction in these modalities are required to participate in the online new student tutorial. Administrative policies have also been developed regarding the acceptable use of information technology resources for faculty, staff and students. Student guidelines are articulated in the Catalog while faculty and staff receive information at orientation and in Associate and Faculty Handbooks.

Consistent with West Coast University’s goal to stay “ahead of the curve,” the Board of Trustees has made a commitment to invest in technology to deliver exceptional student learning outcomes. The information technology (IT) strategy is aligned with the institution’s objectives to facilitate exceptional student learning outcomes and build-out of the data architecture to accurately and effectively monitor key success indicators.

The IT strategic framework is illustrated as a house: the foundation being the technology infrastructure base; first floor systems to manage students and faculty, admit applicants and place graduates; second floor to support academic, human resource and financial objectives; and a roof for monitoring and reporting performance in a volatile compliance and economic climate.

The technology design objective is to enable students, faculty and administrative staff to access information anytime and anyplace; delivering content and capabilities across multiple delivery platforms including PCs, Web Kiosks, mobile smart phones and tablet devices.

A technology assessment was conducted in early 2011, where an inventory and assessment was taken of the capabilities necessary to achieve institutional objectives. The assessment revealed that most of the technology infrastructure elements met current needs. However, it also revealed the need to repair and reinforce critical delivery mechanisms to expand and extend technology delivery to support growth. The assessment surfaced the need to enhance network availability, improve internal help desk service delivery, and implement a more robust disaster recovery capability.

One of the most critical needs identified through the information technology assessment process is related to expanding the architecture and development of the IT infrastructure for the purposes of common definition, capture, use and organization to improve ability to report and monitor institutional
and programmatic health, especially as it relates to student learning. The IT strategic plan and the technology roadmap articulate the approach and plan to achieve the technology objectives necessary to enable and accelerate the objectives of West Coast University.

The effective use of technology is predicated on base infrastructure availability and usability. The IT infrastructure is made up of networks, platforms and support services. In 2011, 87% (1300 of 1500) of faculty and staff workstations met institutional standards of 3 years or newer. The remaining 13% is 5 years or newer and will be refreshed within the next 12 months as WCU moves all workstations to a 3 year lease cycle. Eighty-five percent of WCU’s server platforms meet institutional standards of 3 years or newer and 90% of the networking gear meets institutional standards of 3 years or newer. The out of date elements will be folded into a 3 year lease cycle within the next 12 months. Ninety percent of all West Coast University classrooms are equipped with computers, Internet access, SMART Boards, LCD projectors, Lavalier microphones and media players.

In 2008, West Coast University implemented Campus Management Corporation’s CampusVue student information system to enroll students, manage their schedules, track attendance, health and accounting records and track academic performance. The student self service portal allows enrolled students access to their class schedule, view grades and receive alerts. It allows faculty to post grades, view class rosters and other pertinent information. Currently, CampusVue is used to track prospective students; however, a plan has been developed to migrate prospective student tracking over to Microsoft Dynamics’ Customer Relations Management (CRM) in 2012 to improve the admissions and financial aid work flow.

As reflected in its organizational chart, West Coast University utilizes a “matrixed” organizational structure that supports effective decision making and sustains academic programs. The University operates under the direction of the Board of Trustees. Daily operations have been delegated by the Board to the University President. The President has several direct reports, including the University Provost, Vice President of Operations, and the Associate Provost of Nurse Education and Compliance. The latter position was added in 2010 as a means to provide a consultative role which focuses on the external environment in which nursing education exists. Its primary purpose is to identify key trends and areas of concern which may impact nurse education, and to provide recommendations to the President.

The Provost is responsible for the identification, development, delivery, assessment and improvement of quality academic programs for the University. The Dean of the College of Nursing is a direct report to the Provost, and is responsible for the development of plans, curricula, staffing models, resource requirements and standards to exceed accreditation and compliance expectations of academic Nursing programs at both the graduate and undergraduate level. The Dean is intended to have three direct reports: an Associate Dean of Undergraduate, Associate Dean of Graduate programs of Nursing and the Director of Simulation Education. The Chairs of the General Education and MS in Health Care Management program, who provide similar leadership and support to their respective programs, also report to the Provost. These academic program leaders work closely with campus academic leaders to ensure consistency of quality of program implementation, and provide support in the assessment and continuous improvement process.

Other direct reports to the Provost include the University Registrar, Director of Institutional Research, University Librarian, New Program Development Coordinator, Assistant Vice President of Compliance (Accreditation Liaison Officer) and the Director of the Center for Excellence of Learning, Teaching and Assessment. The University Registrar is responsible for developing best practices and associated training for campus registrars. The Director of Institutional Research is responsible for the architecture and implementation of an information management system that ensures that the University is data-guided in its decision making processes. This role develops and distributes reports comprised of...
essential information that is expected to support effective University decision-making, and engages in analytical activities in support of University Administration.

The University Librarian is responsible for ensuring that academic programs are supported by sufficient learning resources that enhance student learning and scholarship and for creating effective and efficient procurement processes of learning resources across the University. The New Program Development Coordinator ensures that new programs are thoughtfully considered, researched and developed in a disciplined manner that complies with the institutional mission. The Assistant Vice President for Compliance (Accreditation Liaison Officer) ensures that academic programs meet or exceed accreditation and regulatory requirements, and assists in the preparation for site visits and internal audits as a means of quality enhancement. This role also develops relationships with accrediting agencies and regulatory bodies.

Those who report to the Provost work in a “horizontal” manner across the University and its several campuses. In an effort to ensure consistency of quality, they meet regularly with campus-based personnel with whom they have an indirect reporting relationship. These meetings facilitate the sharing of best practices, provide training, audit current procedures and provide for improved performance.

As a peer to the Provost, and a direct report to the University President, the Vice President of Operations is responsible for the day-to-day implementation and operation of campus-based academic programs and non-academic functions. As evidenced by the institutional organization chart, direct reports to the Vice President of Operations include campus Executive Directors and the Director of Student and Alumni Affairs.

Campus Executive Directors are responsible for managing the quality of all campus-based activities. As such, campus academic leaders, who have an indirect reporting relationship to their counterpart at what is called “University Administration,” have a direct reporting relationship to the campus Executive Director. Other direct reports to the Executive Director include the campus Director of Admissions, Director of Student Financial Services, Director of Student Affairs, and Business Office Manager. To help facilitate smooth operations within a matrixed environment, especially as it relates to academic programs and functions, a “Deans and Chairs Guide” has been established.

A Board of Trustees governs West Coast University and is responsible for ensuring that the mission of the University is being achieved and that the institution continually maintains quality, integrity and financial sustainability. The Board meets formally five times a year and is currently comprised of five members who have a broad variety of expertise and experience in education, business, and management. The Board does not have a majority of persons with employment, family, or personal interest in the institution. The Chair of the University Board of Trustees is neither the Chief Executive Officer nor another institutional executive officer.

The Board of Trustees governs the institution in accordance with policies set forth in the Bylaws of the Board of Trustees. This document prescribes the rules and procedures of governance, the relationship between the Board and the President, and constraints on presidential authority. The Board is an independent body that, through the nature of its membership, activities, and decisions, represents the interests of the institution, the industries served by the University and its graduates, and the community. The Bylaws detail the authority of the Board of Trustees to monitor the President’s performance. The President is not under contract to the University, as the position is one of “employment at will”; however, the Board sets the terms of the President’s employment. During its August 2010 meeting, the Trustees evaluated President Barry T. Ryan’s performance and unanimously agreed that his performance exceeded expectations. Furthermore, the Board engages in discussions regarding its own effectiveness.

CFR 3.9
The Board has vested the authority to manage the institutional integrity, policies, and ongoing operations to the University President, who serves as an ex officio member of the Board. Dr. Barry T. Ryan has been appointed by the West Coast University Board of Trustees to serve as the President and Chief Executive Officer of the University.

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the President’s full-time responsibility is to the University, and he is charged with providing strategic leadership, ensuring financial accountability, leading the integrity of academic programs and ensuring the institution meets its stated mission.

As addressed in response to CFR 3.8, the University has a sufficient number of other qualified administrators to provide effective leadership to the institution. WCU benefits from a “shared service” model whereby key functions are shared with a sister institution that shares the same founder, American Career College. Rather than duplicating support functions at both institutions, the Board determined that some synergy and leveraging of resources could be attained by use of this shared service model.

The functions that are included in this shared services model include Information Technology, Legal Counsel, Human Resources, Admissions, Marketing, Online Education, Facilities, Finance, and Financial Aid. Many of these functions provide similar types of support, though they are responsive to the specific needs of the unique institutions.

West Coast University defines the governance roles, rights and responsibilities of the faculty, and the faculty effectively exercises academic leadership. The Provost frequently describes the students as the “lifeblood” of the University. “Without students, we have no purpose. And it is not just the ‘having’ of students that matters,” he states. “It is ensuring that we are fulfilling our mission with those students by helping them achieve academic and professional success in those professions that relate to our institutional programs.” He goes on to describe the faculty as the “heartbeat” of the institution. “It is the faculty,” he explains, “that are at the very heart of the teaching/learning dynamic.” For this reason, continuous input regarding how to improve student learning is sought from the faculty.

There are several mechanisms functioning at West Coast University to enable faculty to provide effective academic leadership. One is the existence of the matrixed organizational structure that allows leadership of particular programs to flow horizontally across campuses. Roles such as the University Provost, Dean of the College of Nursing, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs for the College of Nursing and Chair of the General Education program (to name a few) work across campuses in
collaboration with campus leadership to promote consistency of quality and practice from location to location, and from program to program. The organizational structure is described in detail in the Faculty Handbook, (pp. 10-12).

Campus Academic and Program Deans work directly with faculty members on a daily basis and are responsible for the creation of schedules of classes, faculty teaching assignments and classroom scheduling. These academic leaders also meet with both faculty and students to address issues and resolve conflicts. They ensure that faculty members are appropriately recruited, hired and supervised.

As discussed in response to CFR 2.4, faculty participate in Learning Communities which serve as a primary mechanism for furthering the institution’s culture of shared governance. It is through the Learning Communities and curriculum committees that faculty exercise effective academic leadership.

There are several devices used to help to clarify roles, rights and responsibilities of the faculty. Job descriptions reflect the position definitions that are often used to recruit faculty members. They detail, for both academic and administrative leadership and faculty members, expectations and reporting relationships. The Faculty Handbook provides further information regarding faculty roles and responsibilities, and the Deans and Chairs Guide provides academic administrators with direction on a range of operational issues.

Faculty members serve in a variety of standing councils and committees such as the campus Appeals Committee, the University Assessment Council, Learning Communities associated with their field of instruction and Curriculum Committees. They exercise academic leadership by providing recommendations for improvement in matters of both the curriculum and policy.

**Standard IV: Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement**

In anticipation of updating the University’s Strategic Plan in the summer of 2010, the President commissioned a task force to engage in a vision casting exercise entitled “WCU 2020 Vision.” The 6-person team was led by the Provost and included the Vice President of Operations, a campus Executive Director, an Academic Dean, a faculty member from the Orange County campus, and an external consultant. Team members engaged in research regarding how futurists are anticipating the next decade, shared those findings with one another, and developed recommendations regarding how the institution could strategically pursue opportunities over the next ten years.

The first meeting of this task force established the scope of the initiative and provided direction regarding individual assignments. The second meeting focused on member’s research findings, conclusions and recommendations. Examples of documents reviewed at these sessions included a futurist's anticipations of Nursing Education leading to the year 2020 as well as a summary of potential international education partnership opportunities. The President attended the final meeting to provide his assessment of the task force's work. This meeting involved the review of a summary presentation regarding the task force’s recommendations, many of which flowed into the 2010-2013 Strategic Plan.

A parallel planning activity was the development of the annual University plan, which flowed from the Institutional Effectiveness Review (IER). As pointed out earlier in the Self Study, the IER integrates multiple academic program and non-academic department reviews, contributions for which come from faculty and staff across the institution.

Thus the annual plan emanates from the input of the entire University community, with a grassroots ground up approach from each of the academic programs, non-academic departments and campuses overlaid by the input from the Institutional Effectiveness Review and Strategic Plan. The 2010 Institutional Effectiveness Review (CFR 2.7) culminated with a Strengths, Weaknesses,
Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. Each of the 32 attendees at the IER independently submitted their perspectives on institutional strengths and weaknesses, and shared them in small teams. The teams were required to identify a list of 5 strengths and weaknesses, then force rank and report out on them. The same process was used in the development of institutional objectives.

This led to the identification of institutional objectives:

- Create and implement a plan that will lead to greater consistency of policies, practices and procedures across West Coast University.
- Have positive accreditation outcomes in 2011, including making as much progress as possible in our pursuit of WASC regional accreditation.
- Create and implement a plan to improve Information Technology infrastructure and support, including a plan for website improvement.
- Identify the institutional behaviors that led to outstanding outcomes in 2009, and replicate that performance in 2010.

The Institutional Effectiveness Review occurred on June 7, 2010. Since that time, the following progress against each objective has occurred:

- In an effort to improve consistency of policies, practices and procedures:
  - Multiple University-level Councils have been developed, including the Academic Council, the Administrative Council, the Assessment Council, the Faculty Promotion and Development Council and the Appeals Council (to name a few).
  - Guides and procedures have been developed or updated including the Registrars Guide, Deans and Chairs Guide, Standing Councils Guide, and the Student Success Guide.
  - New positions have been approved and staffed that are intended to provide support across campuses. For example, the University Registrar, the Associate Deans of Nursing at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, the Chair of the General Education Program and the Director of Student and Alumni Affairs all help to ensure the policies and procedures are developed for implementation across all campuses.

- West Coast University has achieved favorable accreditation outcomes since the Institutional Effectiveness Review in 2010. Examples include:
  - Achieved accreditation from the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) for the BS Dental Hygiene program at the Orange County campus.
  - Achieved a favorable outcome from ACICS regarding the “readiness” of the University to support graduate level education in February 2011.
  - Received a favorable response from WASC pertaining to the institution’s application for eligibility in July 2010.

- Improvements in Information Technology include:
  - Hiring a new Chief Information Officer.
  - Completely redesigning the website.
  - Developing an “Institutional Research/Information Technology” sub-council of the Administrative Council to ensure ongoing communication occurs about information technology.

Ultimately, all assessment and planning decisions for facilities, human resources, technology or other resource requirements are viewed through the lens of the University’s mission. The University
provides the flexibility in its planning processes to allow for mid-year course corrections. It assesses the effectiveness of its planning process on the basis of how well plans that are implemented help the institution to achieve its desired goals.

Examples of how the planning process has been informed by assessment of the mission and strategic goal achievement, leading to the identification of specific initiatives includes:

- The development of the new Center for the Excellence of Learning, Teaching and Assessment, which was based on recurring feedback that a more intentional focus on faculty development was needed.
- Development of Simulation Centers to facilitate the improvement of student's critical thinking skills and help to develop fundamental competencies and confidence.
- Determination to purchase the ParSystem from Scantron to assist faculty members with the development of test construction capabilities.
- The parsing of the Dean of the College of Nursing's role into four key positions (Dean of the College of Nursing with two Associate Dean director reports, and the Associate Provost of Nurse Education and Compliance) to ensure greater breadth of leadership and coverage regarding the needs of both graduate and undergraduate education, as well as committed focus on the external, innovative, strategic trends associated with the education of nurses.

Planning processes are therefore informed by appropriately defined and analyzed qualitative and quantitative data. As expressed in response to CFR 2.7, each program review meeting is preceded with the gathering of data, much of which relates to student learning. Utilization of the “5-column model” facilitates this process.

Outside of the normal annual planning process, if there is an evidence-based concern regarding student learning outcomes, a response is triggered. In November 2010, an “NCLEX Summit” meeting was held to discuss concerns pertaining to the passage rates for the Nursing national board exam. One commitment emanating from this meeting was the need for the Director of Institutional Research to develop and distribute weekly updates on NCLEX passage rates and trends. These reports are intended to trigger action plans at the campus if concerns regarding student performance exist. Most notably, action plans are expected to address students who are perceived as being vulnerable or “at risk.”

WCU embraces a culture of assessment of student learning. Evidence allows for data-guided decision-making and thorough and ongoing analysis of the “health” of the institution. From conceptualization of new programs to assessment of existing ones, WCU employs a deliberate set of quality assurance processes. Concerted efforts are made to integrate systematic reviews that include comparative data from external sources, especially for existing programs. This process begins when new academic programs are conceptualized. New program development begins with a feasibility study which identifies general job market trends, competitive analysis, programmatic accreditation requirements and numbers of other institutions that provide similar programs. Examples of new programs that underwent this kind of study include the MS in Health Care Management program (approved and operational), the Doctor of Pharmacy program (developing) and the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program (future).

Feasibility studies are reviewed by University Administration, and if found to be promising, a due diligence phase ensues. In this phase, the Provost contacts the associated programmatic accreditation agency to notify them of WCU’s interest in the program and requests assistance in the identification of a consultant to lead this phase. For example, with the pursuit of the Doctor of Pharmacy program, the
Provost contacted the Accreditation Council of Pharmacy Education, which identified a consultant with whom the University subsequently developed a relationship. The consultant spent two days with University administrators and provided in-depth information including a summary of Doctorate of Pharmacy programs in the United States, typical pharmacy program space requirements, a sample profit and loss statement for typical programs, and staffing costs to support the program. Sample information for the Doctor of Physical Therapy program, included a summary of notes from the meeting with the consultant as well as a summary presentation.

Upon Administration approval, a founding dean is recruited and hired. The founding dean is responsible for developing a project plan for curriculum development, faculty hiring, clinical site pursuit, and application development in response to all compliance and accreditation requirements. In addition, they collaborate with the New Program Development Coordinator to populate a new program data repository template, which houses the data elements required for all University functions to support the new program.

Once the new program has undergone approvals (internal and external) and the first class is seated, the Program Review process is engaged as addressed in CFR 2.7. The institutional annual planning and assessment cycle assures a deliberate process for program and departmental assessment. Because the current undergraduate programs offered at WCU require passage of culminating board examinations, comparative data are available to determine how well WCU students perform in comparison to students from other institutions. For example, the California Board of Registered Nursing publishes board passage rates by institution (http://www.rn.ca.gov/schools/passrates.shtml). Other new programs under consideration will have the benefit of similar comparative analysis.

West Coast University has an institutional research capacity consistent with its purpose and objectives. The Institutional Research (IR) department is dedicated to addressing the strategic data needs of the University by providing the accurate collection, analysis, and reporting of student data in a timely and efficient manner. For example, data packets were made available for academic programs (including Nursing and Dental Hygiene) in anticipation of the annual 2011 Program Review. For the Nursing Program Review, specific evidence in support of four programmatic learning outcomes was provided, and the Director of Institutional Research presented and explained the data. The Institutional Research department is responsible for providing information that supports institutional planning and decision making, for coordinating responses to inquiries for university-related information and serves as a source for information about the institution.

The Director of Institutional Research has led an effort to provide data and analysis for improved Nursing Program Board passage rate predictability. Reports have provided data that assist campus
deans in the identification of trends or vulnerabilities. As noted in the response to CFR 2.7, the results of such research and data organization efforts directly impact academic policy formulation. For example, a correlation analysis between use of end-of-course standardized exams and board passage rate success led to a policy decision pertaining to the discontinuation of end-of-course exams as “make or break” grading criteria.

The IR department also pursues research inquiries at the institutional, programmatic, and course levels in an effort to assess student performance, gain greater insight about student demographics, and aggregate identified metrics crucial to student learning. For example, a report was created in support of the Dental Hygiene program to examine the relationships between entrance exam requirements and student success.

Periodic reviews are conducted to ensure the effectiveness of the research function and the suitability and usefulness of data. Such reviews include improvements to the internal data infrastructure. An example was an initiative in which the Institutional Research Office sought to understand the usage of multiple departments relative to the institution’s Student Information System (CampusVue). This initiative was a starting point in the process of refining the data architecture to promote better quality information. The Director of Institutional Research leads meetings of the Institutional Research/Information Technology Council to ensure data requirements, definitions, access and reporting are improved.

West Coast University has adopted a culture of continuous assessment and improvement, whether with respect to student learning and related outcomes or with services provided in non-academic departments. The institution has a deliberate process, beginning with the establishment of clear and measurable Program Learning Outcomes. Each academic program has developed a 5-column model which identifies the programmatic outcomes and related information as expressed previously in the Self Study. Data pertaining to student learning is gathered and presented to faculty at the annual Program Review. While this approach provides for a systematic evaluation of student learning on an annual basis, the utilization of Learning Communities allows for faculty discourse at the end of each ten week term of instruction regarding course-level student learning.

Other mechanisms are used to assess and respond to individual student achievement. Students who need additional attention or support are identified through the “Student of Concern” process. Programs like “Sailing to Success” have been developed specifically to support those in need.

Non-academic departments such as Admissions, Student Services, Career Services and Financial Aid have all created departmental learning outcomes as a means of assessing co-curricular objectives, and are committed to engaging in annual Department Reviews which convene departmental staff to assess goal fulfillment.

As expressed in response to CFR 4.2, data from academic and non-academic reviews flows into the annual Institutional Effectiveness Review, which serves as the mechanism to integrate all of the learning gained from these reviews into an institutional plan and ultimately ties directly into the budget process.
West Coast University engages in recurring inquiry and assessment into the processes of teaching and learning, with an emphasis on continuous improvement of facilitation of student learning as reflected in measurable outcomes. Formal and informal mechanisms exist to achieve this goal.

Formally, the shared governance model calls for the existence of “Learning Communities.” Academic program leadership coordinates the facilitation and attendance at these meetings, and occasionally provides input into meeting agendas. Faculty consensus around recommendations flow into program Curriculum Committee meetings. This process of shared governance is frequently communicated to faculty, through faculty meetings or through emails from the Provost.

Faculty submit recommendations for course improvement on the faculty course feedback form. The forms are submitted to a Learning Community facilitator who includes the topic on the end-of-term Learning Community meeting agenda and takes meeting minutes.

Those items that faculty members come to consensus on relative to improving courses are submitted to the programmatic Curriculum Committee for further review. The Curriculum Committee reviews Learning Community recommendations and determines a course of direction. Often these discussions revolve around currency of content, sequencing of learning, textbook utilization, evidence-based and innovative teaching methods, student achievement relative to learning outcomes (either at the course or programmatic level) and general discussions pertaining to student success.

An informal mechanism that has proved helpful have been the one-on-one meetings that the University Provost conducts with faculty members. Generally every two weeks, the Provost makes a campus visit to meet with academic leaders, faculty members in one-on-one sessions, and full group discussions with faculty for the purpose of providing updates or listening to issues and concerns.

Appropriate stakeholders, including employers, practitioners, and experts in the fields of study, are regularly involved in the assessment of effectiveness of West Coast University’s educational programs. Stakeholders are brought into the assessment process through Program Advisory Committees (PACs) and the annual program review.
Program Advisory Committee meetings enable external practitioners to review program curricula and provide input about trends in the profession. Feedback is funneled into other forums for faculty to discuss for improvement of the quality and currency of the curriculum. Members of the Program Advisory Committees are also invited to participate in the Program Review to provide points of emphasis on the basis of their experience.

Both the Nursing and Dental Hygiene programs are professionally accredited. As part of this process, self-study documents are reviewed by those external to the institution and site visitors provide additional feedback regarding the quality of the academic program and related support. Both of these programs have subsequently achieved programmatic accreditation.

Conclusion

West Coast University has benefited greatly from the self study process, identifying numerous strengths, as well as opportunities for improvement. Action plans have subsequently been created and many have been implemented. The University, its Board, administration, students, faculty and staff look forward to an enduring relationship with WASC and are eager to learn from and contribute to the Commission for many years to come.