

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students

of

Worcester State University
Worcester, Massachusetts

by

An Evaluation Team representing the
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
of the
New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Prepared after study of the institution's
self-evaluation report and a visit on
October 14-17, 2012

The members of the team:

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This report represents the views of the evaluation committee as interpreted by the chairperson. Its content is based on the committee's evaluation of the institution with respect to the Commission's criteria for accreditation. It is a confidential document in which all comments are made in good faith. The report is prepared both as an educational service to the institution and to assist the Commission in making a decision about the institution's accreditation status.

COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

New England Association of Schools and College

Preface Page to the Team Report

Please complete during the team visit and include with the report prepared by the visiting team

Date form completed: October 24,

2012

Name of Institution Worcester State University

1. **History** Year chartered or authorized 1874 Year first degrees awarded
1876

2. **Type of control:** ☒ State ☐ City ☐ Other; specify:

☐ Private, not-for-profit ☐ Religious Group; specify:

☐ Proprietary ☐ Other; specify:

3. **Degree level:**

☐ Associate ☒ Baccalaureate ☒ Masters ☐ Professional ☐ Doctorate

4. **Enrollment in Degree Programs** (Use figures from fall semester of most recent year):

	Full-time	Part-time	FTE	Retention ^a	Graduation ^b	# Degrees ^c
Associate						
Baccalaureate	3,973	1,334	4,379.6	78.1%	47%	861
Graduate	189	725	390.8	83.0%	91%	372

(a) full-time 1st to 2nd year (b) 3 or 6 year graduation rate (c) no. of degrees awarded most recent year

5. **Number of current faculty:** Full time 196 Part-time 344 FTE: 310.7

6. **Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year:** (Specify year: 2012)
(Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions; e.g., \$1,456,200 = \$1.456)
(Additional information available if you click on the table)

Revenues

Tuition	\$38.584
Gov't Appropriations	\$25.429
Gifts/Grants/Endowment	\$8.333
Auxiliary Enterprises	\$0.701
Other	\$2.255
Total	\$75.302

Expenditures

Instruction	\$29.124
Public Service	\$0.609
Research	\$0.000
Academic Support	\$6.214
Student Services	\$6.579
Institutional Support	\$10.017

7. **Number of off-campus locations:**

In-state 0 Other U.S. 0 International 0 Total 0

8. Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:

Programs offered entirely on-line 0

Programs offered 50-99% on-line 0

9. Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?

☒ No

☐ Yes; specify program(s):

10. Other characteristics:

Worcester Center for Crafts: On July 1, 2009 the Worcester Center for Crafts forged an alliance with Worcester State University, specifically with the Worcester University Foundation, which purchased the craft center. Beginning in January 2010, University and community began sharing studios at 25 Sagamore Road.

Latino Education Institute: The Latino Education Institute (LEI) at Worcester State University (WSU) was founded in 2000 by a partnership of community leaders to provide outcomes-based development programs in education, literacy, leadership, civic engagement and health. Its mission is to: (1) improve the academic achievement and well-being of Latino students (grades K-16) and their families throughout the city of Worcester, and (2) provide innovative solutions to families, who are looking for alternative ways to increase their English language literacy skills, connect with other families who share similar experiences, and for those new to our country, navigate local systems and resources through community outreach.

Intensive English Language Institute: The Intensive English Language Institute (IELI) offers students the opportunity to attain English language fluency and U.S. cultural competencies to succeed in college or university studies. IELI offers both full-time and part-time programs providing top quality English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction to international students and working professionals. Courses are not for credit.

Introduction

This evaluation of Worcester State University (WSU) is a comprehensive evaluation following a fifth-year interim report in 2007.

The visiting team found that the campus had prepared systematically and thoroughly for both the self-study and the visit. Participation was widespread on the self-study steering committee, the subcommittees for each standard, and at the meetings scheduled during the visit. The process was clearly faculty-driven, and in all, some 122 faculty members, staff, and students participated in the preparation of the self-study. The coordinators prepared an online document room and embedded most documents (the catalog, student handbook, policies and procedures manuals, campus master plan, external consultants' reports, etc.) electronically in the online version of the self-study, which greatly facilitated the team's access to supporting data. The tone of self-study and accompanying materials, including some sensitive reports, demonstrated the institution's commitment to an open and honest examination of its challenges as well as its strengths. The visiting team greatly appreciated the candor and thoughtfulness with which the institution approached this evaluation.

During the visit, the team had access to a full range of constituents. Members of the Board of Trustees, including the chair, attended the welcome dinner on Sunday and a lunch with selected team members on Monday. The team met as a group with the key administrative bodies, and individual team members met with selected groups and individuals as appropriate to the relevant standards. Monday's itinerary for the team included meetings with the president's cabinet, academic affairs leaders, department chairs, and student leaders as well as two open forums: one for faculty and staff members and one for students. Tuesday's itinerary included smaller meetings on focused areas such as the general education curriculum, enrollment management, institutional finances, information technology, student services, teaching and learning, and assessment of student learning outcomes. All meetings were well-attended, and the team interacted with at least 165 individuals, some several times.

The following report is based on information obtained from the self-study and documentary materials cited above, the chair's preliminary visit of May 11, and the team visit of October 14-17, 2012. We look forward to sharing our impressions with the institution and hope our report will be helpful as it moves into the future.

1. Mission and Purpose

After a period of financial and leadership challenges, the Worcester State University community is to be congratulated for marshaling the energy and enthusiasm for positive institutional change. It is approaching this arduous task thoughtfully, with an eye for preserving important elements of its past, forging new elements for its future, and beginning to use assessment to enhance the effectiveness of its institutional progress.

Albeit outdated, WSU has a statement of mission and purposes that are appropriate to higher education, consistent with its charter, and formally adopted by its governing board. It appears in appropriate institutional publications. Consistent with this mission, WSU endeavors to enhance the communities it serves. The current administration recognizes the inadequacy of the current mission statement and plans to begin a process for updating the current mission statement

concurrently with completing a refined version of the current strategic plan (which is due to expire in 2014). This will ensure the existence of an updated mission statement before beginning the process of developing a new strategic plan.

WSU has been trying for at least five years to update its mission. Unfortunately, these efforts have not been fruitful. The reasons for this appear to be many and varied, and are not solely the result of institutionally related causes. With the recent frequent changes in key institutional leadership and without a mission statement with currency, it is not surprising that a survey of the campus community found the institution's mission was not widely accepted or understood by faculty and staff.

The university needs to renew its attempts to formulate a concise, concrete, and realistic mission statement that the campus community can rally around. This is a necessary part of ensuring success in its current efforts to define, refine, and enhance its distinctive character and its educational and other dimensions (student and faculty scholarship, development of new curricular and administrative units, teaching and research endeavors, and enhancement of community service).

Institutional Effectiveness: Because an institution measures its success against its mission, the lack of a current mission statement greatly hinders its ability to assess the effectiveness of its institutional operations and endeavors.

2. Planning and Evaluation

Worcester State University has started the process of becoming more data driven. The institution has now hired an officer to educate, train, implement, and oversee assessment, institutional research and planning activities on campus (academic and administrative). This person is in the Division of Academic Affairs, reports directly to the provost, and has staff consisting of a director of institutional research and a data analyst. This office conducts educational meetings and training workshops, meets with departments as needed, and sends out periodic newsletters to departments. As a result, there is evidence of much data collection on campus in many academic and administrative departments. In addition, there are several departments that have begun to use their data to enhance achievement level on outcomes. For example, all academic programs with external disciplinary accreditations and the vast majority of the offices in Student Affairs have "closed the loop" on the assessment of their student learning outcomes.

Although some academic departments have notable planning and evaluation efforts underway, some departments still view planning and evaluation as "foreign" to their core duties. Given the wealth of data being collected, there is less evidence of data analysis and usage for program improvement and of wide spread acceptance of the benefits of doing assessment among those many departments that are collecting data. In part, this is because of staffing turnover in the Office of Assessment and Planning.

It appears that most institutional planning has taken the form of strategic plans that, in reality, are statements of anticipated responses to immediate problems on a 3-5 year horizon. The current strategic plan (2010-2014), by most accounts, is not fully developed, long-range, and strategic; nor does it enjoy support from a broad spectrum of university constituencies. For example, a recent external consultant characterized the plan as "limited" and "tactical" while others have

described the plan as “fragmented” and “hidden.” This review found that most on campus agree with these characterizations of the plan. Although the administration recently submitted a re-working of this plan to the Board for approval [word of its approval arrived on campus during the visiting team’s review], the campus now needs to ensure that future planning efforts start at this new higher quality level and that future plans include cross-area impacts (input from and effects on multiple areas of the university of the various separate parts of the plan).

Institutional Effectiveness: Although the institution has recently made impressive progress in solving some of its immediate operational issues, the lack of previous institutional planning and evaluation activities of high quality has made it difficult for the university to assess these efforts.

3. Organization and Governance

The Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) is responsible for maintaining the state’s system of public higher education and for coordinating and defining the mission of the Commonwealth’s system of public higher education and its institutions. The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education is responsible for executing the Board’s policies and day-to-day operations. The BHE’s responsibilities include academic policy and program approval, financial aid, fiscal and capital planning, research and performance measurement, workforce development, and overseeing the Retirement Program.

Worcester State University is governed by a Board of Trustees guided by a set of operating by-laws. The Board has several standing committees that meet regularly to review plans and evaluate performance in several key areas including an Executive Committee, Academic Programs and Student Services, Human Resources, Finance and Facilities, and Academic Student Planning and Development. All meetings are announced in advanced and open to the public. The Board is responsible for evaluating the performance of the President, approving major capital projects, and exercising authority over all budgetary matters.

The authority and responsibilities of the Trustees and the university are clearly defined in the by-laws, and in the collective bargaining agreement between the Board of Higher Education and the faculty of the state universities (MSCA) which outlines committee roles, responsibilities and composition. The various constituency groups understand and fulfill their roles and responsibilities. The organizational structure and decision-making process is consistent with the mission of the university. Presidential appointments are recommended by the Board of Trustees and are approved by the Department of Higher Education. The Trustees delegate authority to the President as the Chief Executive Officer of the university, to act with administrative authority on all matters pertaining to the conduct of the university’s business.

The MSCA agreement outlines the structure of governance involving faculty, administrators, and students related to curriculum, academic policies, and planning. The agreement and this system of governance are designed to ensure that representatives of all constituencies of the campus have the opportunity to contribute to university governance.

The institution has a Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs who reports directly to the President. The President has put in place a new governance structure that includes the Direct Reports Council consisting of the Vice Presidents and Provost; the Cabinet, consisting of the Direct Reports plus deans, the diversity officer, a representative from the Chairs’ Council, and

other representatives from across the divisions; and the Administrative Council, which includes, in addition to those mentioned above, union leadership from the three unions on campus, and additional faculty representatives. This is a relatively new structure and not all segments of the campus are aware of the roles and responsibilities of these groups.

Academic governance is defined by the MSCA agreement. Academic departments have an Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and a Graduate Committee whose purposes are to review and make recommendations concerning the undergraduate and graduate curricula of the department. University-wide governance consists of the All College Committee, University Curriculum Committee, Academic Policies Committee, and Student Affairs Committee. Students are engaged in the decision-making process and serve as voting members on departmental curriculum committees as well as university-wide committees.

Integrity and quality of the undergraduate day programs are ensured by appropriate oversight of the faculty. In some cases the programs offered through the Division of Graduate and Continuing Education are only loosely connected to the full-time faculty in the academic departments, and therefore these programs lack the oversight they need to ensure academic integrity. The university is aware of this disjuncture and is working to increase the coherence of undergraduate, graduate, day, and continuing education offerings.

Communication about the planning and approval process could be improved. Faculty and chairs are committed to and expend considerable energy in university initiatives and processes such as the new zero-based budgeting, strategic planning, assessment and the program review process. Chairs expressed frustration at the lack of follow-up and communication on the outcomes of these initiatives.

Since the last NEASC review Academic Affairs has undergone a re-organization to include deans of two newly created schools. The roles, responsibilities and authority for the dean positions remain unclear, creating confusion on campus and the appearance that the only change was the creation of an additional layer that must be navigated in order to get an answer. Faculty, chairs and administrators reported that with the current structure, all decisions in academic affairs ultimately are made by the provost. A review of the deans' job descriptions reveals that very little authority has been transferred from the provost to the deans in the areas of budget, curricular oversight, and faculty hiring. At the same time, the provost indicated the desire to decentralize budgets and move more decision-making authority to the deans and department chairs. It will be important for this next step to occur for the deans to be effective academic leaders.

Students participate in governance through the Student Government Association, whose president is elected annually by the student body. The Student Senate consists of 24 members, representing the four classes, residents, and commuter students. As noted above, students also participate in the main governance committees of the university.

Institutional Effectiveness: The university periodically assesses the effectiveness of its organizational structures and makes changes to improve function and reporting as evidenced by the recent changes in the leadership groups that report to the President and the re-organization in academic affairs. The President retired the previous Executive Leadership Group and in its place has formed three groups: the Direct Reports Council, the Cabinet, and the Administrative Council. Academic Affairs has recently gone through a process of re-organization into colleges

headed by deans, which will require further specification of the duties of deans as distinct from the provost.

4. The Academic Program

Worcester State University offers degrees at the baccalaureate, post-baccalaureate, and master's levels. At the undergraduate level, there are 20 B.S. degrees, 5 B.A. degrees, 35 minors, 10 interdisciplinary concentrations, and 2 post-baccalaureate certificates. At the graduate level, the university offers 22 degree programs at the master's level and 5 post-baccalaureate certificate programs leading to initial licensure for teachers. There is also a Certificate of Advance Graduate Study in reading/language arts, psychology, and educational leadership. The courses are scheduled according to semesters and summer and winter sessions. The general education sequence is called the Liberal Arts and Science Curriculum (LASC), which includes a First-Year Seminar for all freshmen. WSU is a part of the Association of American Colleges and Universities Liberal Education for America's Promise (LEAP) initiative.

The university has one off-campus location, the Worcester Center for Crafts. Here, students can major in Interdisciplinary Arts with a specialization in a particular content area, such as ceramics, painting, or printmaking. The program is unique due to its integrative quality of the major. The Center acts as an off-campus studio as well as a community center. Additionally, there is a Worcester Consortium, where students can take courses, including graduate courses, at no charge at any university or college in Worcester. Five of the consortium campuses are served by a shuttle bus.

Undergraduate Degree Programs

In Fall 2011, WSU's enrollment of students in a bachelor's program was 4,141. The largest programs are biology, business administration, criminal justice, nursing, and psychology. Policies governing degree requirements are clear and reasonable. For example, if degree requirements change, students are grandfathered in under the old requirements for six years. After six years, they must meet the new requirements. This may not apply if the degree requirement changes are the result of mandated state regulatory or licensure revisions.

According to a member of the President's Direct Reports, some majors are oversubscribed, such as Occupational Therapy, Communications, and Nursing, while others are less in demand. The university deals with this by closing courses when necessary so that others that are necessary to run can remain open, attempting to strike a balance between efficiency and students' curricular needs. At times, under-enrolled courses are allowed to run in order to move students through programs in a timely fashion.

The university has recently expanded its service learning, internships, and civic engagement programs by establishing a Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement (CSLCE). According to a member in the Academic Vice Presidents and Deans meeting, several years ago students' participation in community service was about 80,000 hours and has risen to over 140,000 hours in recent years. The university has recently hired a full time person to oversee the CSLCE and to develop better connections with Career Services and Academic Affairs. In addition, the university has formed an Academic Advisory Board to keep better accounting of

internships and to nurture closer relationships with organizations outside the university that may provide internships.

While the breadth and scope of courses seems sufficient, some structural issues impede fluid delivery of courses. In a meeting of chairpersons, a lack of information regarding student headcounts that causes unnecessary impediments to scheduling was expressed. Other chairpersons noted lack of information regarding retention rates and other forms of information that would facilitate assessment of their programs and called for better interaction between the Division of Enrollment Management and the academic departments.

According to the undergraduate catalogue and comments by students, undergraduate programs provide a broad overview of knowledge, theories, and means of inquiry, as well as in-depth study of at least one content area. There are ample electives, though electives are often limited in certification programs by necessity. In general, courses seem to provide substantive content at the introductory, intermediate and advanced levels.

General Education

The heart of the general education program is LASC, which was introduced during AY 2009-2010. The learning outcomes are, for the most part, clearly delineated, substantive and coherent, and align with the LEAP learning objectives. This is a new general education program so assessments are not fully developed, but the intent of the program is to provide students with a strong grounding in the arts and humanities, the sciences, and the social sciences, and it is widely perceived as superior to the general education curriculum it replaced.

The undergraduate catalogue speaks to the importance of LASC in 12 concise and commendable learning objectives, and the self-study explains that LASC was implemented with the support of a Davis Educational Foundation grant. The institution has, however, struggled to implement the program as designed. In addition to a minimum of twelve 3-credit courses in defined areas, students must complete a capstone course and three across-the-curriculum courses in different areas. The capstone and across-the-curriculum offerings are not sufficiently available and students report that they frequently receive waivers for these requirements. Faculty members and department chairs support the goals of the LASC but expressed frustration at the lack of resources to implement it as designed.

Most unique about the LASC program is the First-Year Experience program, which includes a First-Year Seminar, a First-Year Learning Community (which links an English Composition course to the First-Year Seminar course), and an Hour X, led by a mentor from Student Affairs who guides students through the college experience giving them “survival skills.” In this way, the program combines rigor, breath of experience, and an attempt to bolster retention of students. A problem noted by faculty was an over-reliance on adjuncts teaching the First-Year Seminar courses. The coordinators of the program stated that in fall 2012, 33 of the 44 First-Year Seminar courses were taught by adjuncts. The coordinators also felt that the program needed an office, advisory board, and a secretary so that valuable faculty-time was not wasted on menial tasks.

In spite of its shortcomings, the new LASC is a comprehensive general education curriculum. There is much in the curriculum that addresses diversity, global perspectives, politics, economics, culture, and other topics that are the foundation of an educated person. It is likely that a student who completes the LASC program will be challenged and will be well informed

about the world. The E1 form states that a LASC Advisory Board revised LASC. Some faculty felt that LASC needed a complete overhaul, but the evidence suggests that LASC needs more modest reforms to ensure that there are enough courses in the program to meet student demands, especially in the “across the curriculum” courses.

The Major or Concentration

The majors at WSU contain between 36 and 95 credits and 61 percent of the programs require at least 1 course outside the program, including ancillary, prerequisite, and/or co-requisites; 23 programs offer special topics courses. The university offers opportunities for students to study abroad through faculty-led study tours, WSU Exchange Programs, Study Abroad Programs, or the National Student Exchange Program. Students may choose to take an Independent Study, though some administrators feel that there is sometimes little oversight of them, which can compromise their integrity. There is, however, a process to document expectations and requirements of Independent Studies.

The institution has recently focused on experiential learning related to students’ majors. As noted above, the Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement coordinates and tracks participation in five areas: internships, clinical experiences, practica, service learning, and volunteer activity. In meetings, many students expressed their enthusiasm for internships. Students gave examples of how internships led to jobs, connections that will undoubtedly help them later in life, and piqued their interests in business and politics. The self-study states that the university “encourages” faculty to include service learning in their courses, but it is not clear how many faculty do so or what incentives or release time are provided by the university for faculty to develop and oversee service learning components of their courses. The university’s Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement provides support for the development of these efforts and has approved 19 courses that have service learning components, but the success of these programs seem to depend on committed faculty. One of the challenges faced by the Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement is the lack of resources to fully incorporate an imbedded service learning component to the academic program.

Lack of resources is a reoccurring theme that dampers possibilities for academic departments to grow and expand their offerings. There is concern about the over-use of adjuncts, poor equipment in classrooms, faculty lines that are not filled when faculty enter administrative positions, and inadequate equipment in certain majors where equipment is very important (such as Communications and Nursing). In recent years, departmental budgets have been cut or have remained stagnant. In spite of these cuts and challenges, the university has managed to maintain a broad range of majors as well as concentrations in women’s studies and global studies.

WSU offers a Commonwealth Honors Program, which is a track within the existing curriculum, with approximately 250 students currently enrolled and 400 students projected by 2014. Students take six to seven courses that are designated honors courses or complete more advanced work in typical courses in order to complete the Honors Program. Students invariably spoke very highly of both the Honors Program and the professors involved in it.

Graduate Degree Programs

WSU offers 27 Graduate Programs that include Certificates of Advanced Study, Master of Arts, Master of Occupational Therapy, Master of Science, Master of Education, Post-baccalaureate, and certification programs. Of the 27 programs, 19 are accountable to national accreditation

agencies or state agencies. Where there are required licensure exams, the programs have a 90 percent or better pass rate for first-time exam takers. Graduate programs must be self-sustaining, are taught primarily in the evenings, and generate their own revenue, and students may transfer in as many as 12 credits from other institutions. According to the Dean of Graduate Studies and Continuing Education, each academic department has a Graduate Coordinator who serves as the liaison between the Graduate School and the departments.

While admissions criteria are published for only some of the graduate programs, there are clear policies in place to maintain a level of rigor for enrolled graduate students. Students must maintain a 3.0 GPA and may be dismissed if they receive a C+ grade in two or more courses. A grade of B- or better is acceptable for graduate credit. The capstone requirements include either a written and/or oral comprehensive examination or a thesis, depending on the program.

Staffing graduate programs can be problematic. The team heard that many full-time tenure track faculty members do not wish to teach graduate classes and, of those who do wish to teach, some do not have sufficient experience or the academic background to do so. Additionally, there are not clear policies regarding the credentials required to serve as graduate faculty. Some instructors with master's degrees teach graduate students at the master's level. While this may make sense, for example, in business, it may not make sense in other areas, such as education, which offers the majority of graduate programs at WSU.

The Graduate School website and catalogue provide clear and thorough information about policies and programs. Each of the programs is clearly articulated and each has some form of capstone, research, or culminating project that would require graduate students to demonstrate their proficiency and knowledge at the end of the program. However, the learning objectives of programs are not always easily found or clear. The self-study states that when the programs undergo their 5-year reviews, they will be required to present their learning outcomes, and all new programs must include learning outcomes in order to be approved.

According to the self-study, physical space, staffing, and library resources are sometimes inadequate. Some of the problems identified in the self-study include the following: the graduate programs are expected to be self-supporting, are part time and are only offered in the evenings. In spite of these challenges, faculty who teach in the Graduate School express their commitment to the students and the programs and draw attention to their research and how their research enlivens their courses in a way appropriate to graduate study.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit

WSU adopted the NEASC Policy on Credits and Degrees in 2012. Currently, there is a lack of oversight of different modalities of instruction as it relates to hybrid and online courses. The university is beginning to address this problem. For example, the administration is in the process of disseminating their policy on hybrid and online courses to faculty and deans. Also, in 2012 the University Technology Services joined with the Center for Teaching and Learning to offer a webinar on academic integrity for online and hybrid courses, and other training sessions are being planned.

A university committee that examined day, evening, accelerated, online, and dual listed courses found that there was sometimes little course consistency across sections, and that some courses did not list learning outcomes, course objectives, and/or assessments tied to learning outcomes.

In Spring 2012, a syllabus template was submitted to governance for consideration, and, a syllabus template was sent to all faculty members for their consideration in the summer of 2012.

In the President's Direct Reports meeting, one member stated that the transfer of students from feeder schools needs improvement. According to faculty members, the Mass Transfer Block agreement works well in facilitating a smooth transition for transfer students, but faculty members expressed confusion in facilitating the transfer of students who do not come to the university under the Mass Transfer Block agreement.

Assessment of Student Learning

As the self-study reports, "A culture of assessment is beginning to emerge at WSU." In 2011, the university hired an Assistant Vice President for Assessment and Planning, and the Offices of Institutional Assessment and Institutional Research were merged to improve the assessment of programs. According to the Assistant Vice President for Assessment and Planning, her hiring and the merging of the two offices are evidence of the university's commitment to strengthen assessment across the campus.

The academic departments, with the support of the Office of Assessment and Planning, collect data and do their own assessments. According to faculty, every department has a curriculum committee and an assessment committee, but some faculty stated that it is sometimes difficult to get the information needed to conduct assessments. The team heard from administrators that some faculty members are reluctant to "buy into the assessment idea."

Some degree programs did not provide assessment data, including the programs in Geography, Natural Science, Health Sciences, Political Science, Sociology, and Urban Studies. Programs in Art, Music, Theatre, and Visual & Performing Arts did not provide learning outcomes. Furthermore, some assessments are more rigorous than others. Professional programs, such as Teacher Education, have more rigorous assessments likely because they must meet other accreditation requirements associated with licensure and their own professional accreditation standards.

While assessment of student learning is still rudimentary, efforts are underway to improve this effort. According to the self-study, an Assessment Exchange occurred in May 2012. The Assessment Exchange was an informal gathering meant to promulgate the importance of assessment and to demystify it. Invitations to attend the Assessment Exchange were distributed by the President's Office to signal the importance of the meeting. In fall 2012, faculty members had requested that another Assessment Exchange be organized, which the university intends to do. The Center for Teaching and Learning has also run workshops on assessment to try to engage faculty and to provide professional development. Many faculty members stated that, like many workshops conducted by the Center for Teaching and Learning, the workshops on assessment have been beneficial.

Institutional Effectiveness

As stated above, "a culture of assessment is beginning to emerge at WSU." There are concrete examples that the university is working to collect data on academic programs and to strengthen their use of assessments. Students spoke highly of their courses and their internships. This is due in large part to committed faculty. More support of faculty efforts in this area and clear policies at administrative levels would help to solidify the institutional effectiveness at WSU. The

university has made advances in the last two years to improve the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of academic programs, as seen in the formation of the Center for Teaching and Learning, hiring of the Assistant Vice President for Assessment and Planning, the expansion of the Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement, greater support for the Academic Success Center, the advances with the Liberal Arts and Sciences Curriculum, and the success of the university's Honors Program.

The university has been growing its online offerings and wishes to begin offering completely online programs. This will require training for faculty who teach online and a process to evaluate faculty who teach online courses beyond student course evaluations.

5. Faculty

Worcester State University has a dedicated group of faculty who are invested in the educational progress and personal development of their students. Faculty members speak proudly of the hard-working nature of their students, realizing that the students are invested in their education even while concurrently maintaining outside employment. Some members of the faculty struggle to convince students to take their academic studies seriously and aspire towards a more learning-centered culture at WSU. Student comments confirm that the majority of faculty members are invested in the students' personal growth, in part due to the low student-to-teacher ratio and small class size that the university seems committed to maintaining. There is also evidence of collaborative conversations among faculty about good teaching practices and productive mentorship of new faculty.

In light of WSU's mission of providing a high quality, affordable undergraduate education, the dependence on part-time faculty appears high. Currently, the university employs a total of 187 full-time faculty (66 full, 61 associate, 50 assistant, 10 instructor). The university relies upon a large number of adjuncts to deliver its curriculum (337 according to Form 5.1). The Health Sciences Department, for example, reports in conversation incorporating 70% adjunct instructors to teach their courses. Faculty members are occasionally given course reductions in order to perform administrative duties, requiring a part-time instructor to fill their courses. The need for the university to serve both a day and evening division seems to drive this employment of part-time instructors; on the other hand, non-academic professionals are often invited to teach in night classes, particularly graduate programs, which benefits pre-professional students by providing applied career knowledge.

The president has announced a hiring plan for the next three years to increase the number of full-time faculty by hiring 15 additional faculty members over the next three years. The goal is to hire 6 for fall 2012, 6 more for fall 2013, 3 additional for fall 2014. There is some vagueness regarding in which departments these faculty will be placed, as there are no guidelines to indicate new faculty allocations. One objective in hiring new faculty is to limit the number of adjuncts teaching English writing classes, but among a list of 17 new hires, none are in the English Department. Another objective is to have them teach First Year Seminars, a course designed both to introduce and retain students, but it is not clear how to entice more faculty to teach these seminars, which currently rely heavily on part-time instructors.

With respect to hiring procedures, faculty members participate actively in the search process for new colleagues; faculty state that there are clear guidelines for the procedures for searching and

appointing new faculty members. Faculty responsibilities are defined by the collective bargaining agreement with Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, which includes procedures for hiring and promotion, in coordination with the Office of Diversity, as well as statements on workload, scheduling, and course assignments. These guidelines are also provided in a 30-page guidebook prepared by the Office of Diversity, entitled "Personnel Search, Selection and Appointment Procedure." Uncertainty exists as to whether the recommendations for new hires go to the newly-appointed deans or the provost (the guidebook indicates the provost p. 10). Faculty did express a need to create a Faculty Handbook in order to provide junior faculty with information to be successful at WSU, but no specific plans for the actual content or projected deadline are indicated.

Goal #6 in the Strategic Plan (2010-2014) explicitly indicates "Increase faculty diversity" through recruiting and retaining high quality individuals, but there are no specific plans stated in writing (pg. 218). The self-study does not include statistics indicating the number of racial and gender minorities on campus; however, a Personnel Profile from the WSU Fact Book 2010 reveals the number of Hispanic (8), Asian (18), and Black (10) faculty members in comparison to the number of white faculty (144). The same report indicates the ratio of full-time male to female ratio of faculty is 84 to 97, suggesting an equal gender representation among the professoriate. The goal of the Office of Diversity is to have its faculty population more closely reflect the racial composition of the city of Worcester, although they have struggled to fulfill this objective. The Diversity Officer has expressed enthusiasm and dedication to increasing the diversity on Worcester State's campus, and offered creative ideas for attracting more minority faculty, such as initiating a minority post-doctoral teaching fellowship, housing allowances for minority recruits, or greater partnering with the Colleges of Worcester Consortium to co-hire minority faculty.

The institution clearly defines the responsibilities of faculty and the criteria for promotion and tenure; however, some faculty saw ambiguity surrounding the process of preparing their dossiers. In conversation they indicated that the imprecision behind the qualifications for research or the kinds of supporting documentation needed for their dossier creates anxiety. On the other hand, the chain of evaluation is well-defined, as the evaluation material moves from the department's Peer Evaluation Committee, to the chair, a campus-wide committee of faculty, the provost, and finally the president. It is not clear, however, what role the deans play in the evaluation process. Annual evaluations also provide faculty with thorough feedback regarding their performance, but more guidance could alleviate some of the ambiguity behind putting together the dossier.

While the faculty in general are demonstrably effective in fulfilling assigned responsibilities, the chairs did not feel assured in their work as faculty leaders in their respective departments. In brief, they are not clear about how to work with the newly-appointed deans. The chairs expressed frustration at the "top-down" approach to running the university, where directives were given from the provost, to the deans, to the chairs to pass on to the faculty, with no opportunity to ask for assistance upward. The fact that the chairs have no budgetary control – from purchasing pencils, to carrying funds over to the next fiscal year, to hiring adjunct instructors – limits their ability to guide their departments. One particular problem was the fact that chairs constructed zero-level budgets as required, but received no additional funding for assessing their department's budgetary needs. According to the faculty, the deans do not maintain independent budgets, which they feel would give them more authority to implement changes and make decisions, a belief the provost confirmed.

Several chairs expressed feeling “overwhelmed” or “in over their heads” regarding leading their departments due to lack of mentorship and feel they could use more direction and training in fulfilling their roles. A central concern was scheduling classes for each semester without possessing the requisite data for determining the number of sections for any particular class. The roles and responsibilities of the deans are indeterminate, and their relative inexperience with respect to WSU, due to their recent arrival on the campus, prevents them from providing much-needed guidance to the chairs.

Teaching and Advising

Worcester State University endeavors to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in several ways, primarily through distinct curricular programs, faculty development, and undergraduate research. By contract, the faculty teaching load is 12 hours of instructional credits per semester and the minimum advising load is 3 office hours per week.

The university is focused on advancing good teaching practices for its faculty, noting the Davis Educational Foundation grant to focus on high impact educational practices. WSU provides faculty with substantial and equitable opportunities for continued professional development chiefly due to the Center for Teaching and Learning. This center, run by one faculty member with a part-time course reduction and an assistant, identifies gaps in the university culture and finds methods to enhance faculty talents or improve their performance. The objectives of the Center for Teaching and Learning are to provide workshops, create faculty learning communities, offer faculty mentoring and scholarship funding, and provide instructional technology equipment. Two and three-day Winter and Summer Institutes provide faculty with pragmatic clinics on “Integrative Learning,” while workshops are centered around topics as “Grant Workshop,” “Writing Student Learning Outcomes,” or “NSSE Roundtable.” From listening to the various faculty members who use the center, the discussions seem instrumental at getting people to reflect about their teaching and support one another in their pedagogy.

Exciting curricular programs exist, such as the Honors Program for a select group of approximately 250 students or the First Year Seminar that permits faculty to engage in interdisciplinary teaching with a small-class size (20 students). Likewise, the “Theme Semester,” a program which coordinates classes, readings, and lectures around a common-theme campus-wide, (e.g. “Worcester in the World”) offers innovative programming, but may not continue beyond the current year due to unclear funding. There is a pattern across the academic program of smart curricular initiatives led by talented faculty that could be better funded.

Many faculty members believe that student evaluations are not useful in ensuring better teaching practices. While procedures are in place for evaluating faculty, the state-wide evaluation forms compare faculty not only from different disciplines, but from other, similarly-ranked universities in Massachusetts. The self-study, however, notes that there is no mechanism in place for using faculty evaluations, and there is little to no indication that the results of student evaluations are used to improve the teaching of those who receive poorer ratings. However, faculty did communicate that the mentorship they received from senior faculty and from peer-evaluations in the department regarding their teaching was instructive.

Good student advising, while necessary, unduly burdens some WSU faculty who feel they have too many students to advise; one professor spoke of having 100 to 130 advisees each semester

(the self-study notes the upper limit at 60 [pg. 107]). A new computer system, Starfish, has been adopted to “flag” at-risk students and notify their advisors, but it does not appear that all faculty are familiar with the system, nor is there a system for tracking down students or assisting them once “flagged.”

The faculty of WSU frequently involve students in scholarship and creative activity. The Center for Teaching and Learning offers Undergraduate Research Grants that support faculty-mentored student research projects. The annual “Celebration of Scholarship and Creativity” allows for student and faculty presentation of research and creative activity. The growth of undergraduate research appears to have outstripped the financial support provided for such activities. Several faculty shared stories of having to fund student scholarship, such as trips to conferences, out-of-pocket. They explained that while funds do exist, the once-a-year, early fall deadlines do not permit the funding of research projects that evolve naturally over the course of the academic year. Recently, the Worcester State University Foundation has requested that students concurrently fund any research grant money they receive with fund-raising projects, a proposal that faculty expect will dissuade students from applying for grants.

Of considerable need at the university is guidance in instructional technology. Faculty are designing and teaching on-line classes without guidance on how to create a course wherein the students’ only interaction with the university is through a computer; furthermore, as more and more educational delivery relies upon technology in the classroom, faculty require greater training in computer skills. Some faculty members suggested that an expressly-designated Instructional Technology specialist with skills in curriculum design would be instrumental in ensuring that faculty can effectively integrate technology into their teaching.

Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activity

Faculty are engaged with research, despite the heavy teaching load. The faculty with whom we spoke pursue scholarship designed to ensure they are current in the theory, practice, and pedagogy of their profession. The self-study indicates that a survey conducted in Spring 2011 show that faculty members at WSU authored 22 books, 253 journal articles, and made 523 conference presentations over a four-year period. In addition to a campus-wide newsletter that currently promotes faculty and student research, consistent, yearly data could be collected and maintained to establish longitudinal measurement of faculty research projects. The university plans to create reliable faculty databases for this reason, as well as to determine the number of part-time or adjunct faculty members currently employed at the university.

Faculty are provided with funds to present research at conferences, but there appears confusion over the source and stipulation of funding. Faculty members were given \$703 this year for professional development, an amount determined by dividing the pool of contractually-mandated funds by the number of faculty members. The Self-Study Report indicates that this is the only source of funding (pg. 106); however, the provost mentioned another pool of money -- the Faculty Professional Development Fund -- that provides money to faculty who are presenting papers at conferences. The provost would like to establish guidelines and create a faculty advisory committee to distribute the funds in order to reduce the current ambiguity surrounding the funds.

WSU advocates student involvement in faculty research; in the same 2011 survey, it was noted that 30 of the articles were co-authored with students, as were 169 of the presentations. Some

scholarship and instruction are supported mutually through Undergraduate Research Grants, which fund student research during the summer and provide faculty mentors with a summer salary. Several faculty members offered examples of relevant research projects that involved students: one conducted research with students within her statistics courses about secondary math education; the Psychology Department brought a group of majors to present at the Northeast Conference For Teachers of Psychology at nearby Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI); a biologist mentioned receiving an Undergraduate Research Grant to work with a student on snake histology; and a student spoke about his group project gathering data on incubator programs for small businesses.

Faculty receive sabbatical leaves on a regular basis, and there is no limitation to the number of leaves granted in any year. Currently there is no policy in place for faculty course releases during a semester, although the self-study suggests one is crucial (pg. 107). Some faculty members believe that to be effective in their fields and in the classroom, they should on occasion have access to release time to imbue their classroom teaching with new research and new pedagogical practices.

Institutional Effectiveness

The faculty are dedicated, enthusiastic, and creative in their teaching. They seem stretched due to the heavy teaching load and the expectations of research, but not to the point of inefficacy or discouragement. The team heard about stressful aspects of faculty life, including having to serve both the day and night divisions, working with a student population that may not be college-ready, and relying on part-time colleagues. A few initiatives are underway to create a more learning-centered campus, such as First-Year Seminars and increased appreciation for faculty research.

Faculty are given funding for scholarship and research, are given opportunities for professional development, particularly with respect to teaching, and have created cohesive collaborations across campus. However, the faculty's inability to arrange for release time from the 12-credit teaching load can have the effect of impeding research development and the implementation of high impact teaching practices. Finally, with the increasing reliance on technology for instruction and research, faculty members expressed a desire for designated support in this area.

6. STUDENTS

Worcester State University is one of nine Massachusetts state university campuses focused on undergraduate education; its current enrollment is 4,380 undergraduates and 391 graduate students. Located in the ethnically diverse city of Worcester, the second-largest city in New England, its student population closely mirrors the ethnic distribution of the state, except for a slight underrepresentation of Latino/a students. With a mission that emphasizes educating the people of Central Massachusetts, WSU serves predominantly first-generation college students from Worcester County.

The institution is clearly focused on students' needs and student success. An obvious example of this commitment is its building and renovation projects. The university recently reconfigured office space to coordinate and co-locate key student services on the first floor of the main administration building, improving access to those offices. Another example is the recent transformation of the first floor of the library from bland stacks and tables to a series of attractive

and technologically-equipped group study spaces. In addition, the administration is planning to add residential beds based on data that show a higher retention rate among resident students than among the commuter population, which has been dominant at WSU up to now.

Admissions

In keeping with recommendations offered in the SOS Consulting Group's organizational assessment (November 2011), the university formed a Division of Enrollment Management in January 2012. The division consists of the Admissions and Financial Aid Departments and the Registrar's Office. As a division, they are charged with creating a comprehensive recruitment and enrollment plan; focusing, as a matter of institutional priority, on retention initiatives; and, collecting and disseminating enrollment and retention data.

The division is in its infancy and operates under the direction of an interim vice president for enrollment management. This organizational structure has provided a more coordinated and synergistic relationship among the departments mentioned, and more focus on comprehensive enrollment planning. Interviews with faculty chairs pointed out that the original goals identified in the creation of the Enrollment Management Division have not been fully realized as yet, and, more specifically, the enrollment data they have requested is not easily obtained through software system Colleague. Greater coordination in the provision of information is planned to aid faculty chairs in identifying the number of course sections to be offered and faculty, full-time and adjunct, needed to fill the sections.

An additional concern, cited later in this report within the context of Standard 9, is the alignment of enrollment goals with financial planning for the institution. We found a direct example in the formal plan to construct a new residential facility that will house 400 students. On the one hand, many institutions within the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education System with which WSU competes for applicants offer a housing guarantee to their admits; until now, WSU has been unable to do so given the limited housing stock on its campus, and consequently has lost applicants; the new construction is expected to provide a boost to admissions efforts. It is unclear at this time, however, whether the university will be able to marshal the resources, particularly human resources, to address the planned increase in resident students.

Consistent with the mission of the university, the Admissions Office sets achievable enrollment goals, as evidenced in the Data First Self-Study reporting for the current and last three years. The university's strategy of growing by increasing the number of in-state students is thought to have reached a point of diminishing returns, , and, going forward, Admissions plans to explore out-of-state markets to sustain enrollment at its current level.

Admissions follows the dictates of the Massachusetts Department of Education in evaluating the recalculated GPA and SAT scores of applicants, but also includes other quality indicators as part of its assessment, such as recommendations and essays. Some faculty raised concerns about a diminution of quality in enrolled students as the number of undergraduates has increased, a fact recognized by Admissions officers who have changed their marketing themes from affordability to an emphasis on academic rigor and high caliber of faculty, a theme which they have documented is resonating more strongly with prospective students.

Retention and Graduation

As shown by the S-1 form, the university has strong rates of retention from the first year to the second relative to its peer institutions. After that, the rates track downward, with second to third year retention reported in the Self-Study as 58-64% over the last four years; this represents an improvement from 37% five years ago. Six year graduation rates have been stable at 45-47% since 2008. Administrators said that surveys of incoming students show that a substantial proportion enter WSU intending to transfer after two years, in effect treating the university as a community college. The institution is seeking ways to retain more of those students.

WSU has made a concerted effort to identify retention as an institutional priority, and, to that end, the institution's launch of "Succeed in 4," the creation of a data-driven retention plan supported by the Vision Project Performance Grant, and the purchase of early alert academic proficiency and deficiency report software are initiatives designed to achieve greater retention gains. Importantly, the hiring of a Director of Retention, currently housed in the Division of Academic Affairs, should provide for more systematic identification of impediments and remedies to the longer term persistence of their students, as well as more regularized review of student success metrics.

Student Services

A leader in institutional assessment practices both at WSU and external to the university, the Division of Student Affairs has developed a mission statement and an extensive matrix of student learning outcomes for each department within its purview. Performance in achieving these outcomes is benchmarked against the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education. This work has been supplemented by external reviews and concomitant attention to areas requiring improvement in student services. In particular, the review conducted in December 2010 for the Office of Career Services has demonstrated that the office is currently operating below the national averages for comparable institutions in both funding and staff (National Association of Colleges and Employers data). This condition pervades the student services area and is of concern in light of increased demands that will be placed on the broader arena of student services when the new residential facility comes on line. As documented in SOS Consulting Group's organizational assessment, limitations on staff office space are perceived to hinder confidentiality in counseling of students, the effectiveness of student organizations, and student-oriented programming opportunities.

The Division of Student Affairs is made up of traditional service areas in health, athletics, counseling, student activities, residence life and housing, public safety, disability services, wellness, judicial administration, campus ministry, dining, career services, and the bookstore. Students reported in meetings with the visiting team that they have excellent relationships with the Student Affairs offices generally. One theme that emerged in public meetings with students, mirrored in the SOS final report, was a problem with customer service particularly in the Office of Financial Aid.

Student leaders with whom the visiting team met indicated that they receive ample information, beyond the orientation program, about the array of available resources on the campus, and standards for their own ethical conduct are publicized broadly. Students also reported that they were very satisfied with the number of financial scholarship awards available to them, the diversity of the campus, the small class sizes, and they rhapsodized about the engagement of their faculty.

A “Students First” theme is embraced throughout much of the university, with few exceptions. The focus and activities of the Academic Success Center, the Multicultural Center’s Alternatives for Individual Development and Upward Bound Programs, the Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement, and strong student-faculty relationships are also successful examples of this commitment.

Oversight within the Division of Student Affairs of an active co-curriculum and NCAA Division III athletics program ensures their integrity and alignment with the institutional mission. Athletics undergoes an external NCAA review and assessment on a 5-year cycle as required for membership. Both the co-curricular and athletics emphases will get a boost from the planned construction of the new residential facility and the Wellness Center.

Institutional Effectiveness

In recognition of important demographic shifts in high school-aged populations in New England and the need to adapt recruitment and enrollment efforts to those shifts going forward, the university has acted strategically in reorganizing its administrative structure to include the consolidation of the Registrar, Financial Aid, and Admissions into a new Enrollment Management Division. The arrangement has begun to bring about more comprehensive and coordinated planning in marketing, recruitment, and admissions. Data collection and dissemination, however, remains hampered by existing software systems. The identification of retention of students as an institutional priority has resulted in the hiring of a Director of Retention, the initiation of a “Succeed in 4” campaign, the realization of a data-driven retention plan under the auspices of the Vision Project Performance Grant, the purchase of the Starfish early alert system, along with the continuous work of existing dedicated offices, should produce measurable improvements in persistence rates to graduation. Additionally, the commitment of professionals within the Student Services Division to a culture of assessment, inclusive of external reviews, has enabled them to learn from functioning assessment feedback loops and act upon service area improvements to the benefit of students overall. The right-sizing of services will be necessary, given considerable resource constraints, as 400 additional resident students will be added to their rosters. Overall, however, the culture of students first is delivered to the considerable appreciation of many students.

7. Library and Information Resources

Resources and Access

The Worcester State University Library envisions itself as the center of the institution’s academic life. It offers patrons a reasonable print collection (203,856 monographs and 300 journal and newspaper subscriptions), expanding digital resources (8,400 e-book titles, as well as aggregated and discipline-specific journal databases, such as JSTOR, Academic Search Premier, and Academic One File), and a variety of audiovisual content, including audiobooks, video, and image collections. Patrons identify materials by using two separate search functions through the public catalog, one for monographs and another for electronic resources. The physical library is being renovated, and the initial work has produced attractive common spaces, prominent circulation and reference areas, and a combined café and study area.

The college provides adequate financial support to maintain these materials. With new leadership in place, the proposed development of a strategic plan, and increased assessment of library

resources should ensure prudent growth resulting from data-driven budget analysis. Not only will this more accurately match materials to the curriculum, but it will also account for the annual price increases in library materials, which are often well above the rate of inflation.

Technology is an increasingly important component of the Worcester State University Library, with wireless access available to patrons throughout the building. There currently are six Online Public Access Catalog workstations available for research purposes, with ample room to add more as demand dictates.

The Worcester State University Library offers the academic community a wide array of digital resources closely tied to the curriculum, ranging from general periodical and newspaper databases, to critical holdings in music, business, English, science and mathematics, education, medicine, and psychology. In addition, the library provides access to such journal archives as JSTOR. These databases can be used in-house and, with the recent addition of a proxy server, from remote locations over the web. The latter requires username and password authentication.

In addition to offering in-person and remote reference services to its faculty, staff, and students, Worcester State University librarians collaborate with colleagues from the Worcester Public Library, Internet Public Library, and Librarian Internet Index to extend research assistance beyond the operating schedule of the physical library. Students also have borrowing privileges at the city's other academic libraries, including the College of the Holy Cross and Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

The library employs 9 professional librarians and 9 paraprofessionals. There are two searches underway, one for a Library Director and another for an Information Literacy Librarian. With the building open for 87 hours a week and library use on the rise, it appears that student-centeredness is a growing focus of library operations, and that the university is willing to provide the financial support necessary to further this direction.

Similarly, University Technology Services provides essential services to the operational life of the university, with a staff of 26.5 FTE. It maintains mission-critical enterprise systems (Blackboard, ExLibris, and Sharepoint), the university website, network infrastructure, and extensive computing facilities. The department supports the university's laptop initiative, troubleshooting and repairing staff and faculty machines used in the program. It also operates a help desk for general computing inquiries, which is staffed from 8:15 AM to 7 PM from Monday to Thursday, and 8:15 AM to 3 PM on Fridays. The self-study noted that these hours are insufficient, and since its completion University Technology Services has expanded its hours on weekends. Service, in general, has been a departmental focus, and recent efforts in this direction have been recognized by the college community.

Both departments are overseen by interim directors who have inherited significant challenges in policy, procedure, staffing, and budget. Searches are underway to find permanent leadership in these areas; the sooner they are completed, the sooner these departments can move forward to meet the research and service needs of the Worcester State University community.

Information and Technological Literacy

In order to ensure that students make the wisest use of scholarly resources, librarians deliver on-demand information literacy instruction by faculty request. The university recognizes that these

efforts would be greatly enhanced by a more formal curriculum. To this end, there is an institutional commitment to developing an information literate student body, as evidenced by the creation of an Information Literacy Librarian salary line, as well as a charge to librarians, faculty, and First Year Experience coordinators to develop and implement a comprehensive information literacy program. In a related initiative, librarians and faculty have been asked to formulate collection development policies and procedures that reflect the realities of the present curriculum and ongoing developments in academic publishing.

To further its education efforts, University Technology Services added tutorials on a range of topics and applications to its website, with particular attention paid to the use of Blackboard and other instructional technologies. For those who prefer in-person instruction, the department presents technology workshops for all the university's user groups. University Technology Services has proposed four new positions, several of which are responsible for instructional technology, online learning, and faculty outreach.

Lastly, the Center for Teaching and Learning performs an important function in promoting best practices for classroom and online pedagogy. Coordinated by a half-time director and an advisory board made up of faculty and administration, the center provides research materials, workshops and presentations, grant opportunities, and private consultations to faculty and librarians to foster new approaches to teaching and interdisciplinary collaboration. The center also sponsors faculty-led workshops on instructional technology. The director estimates that roughly 30 percent of the faculty participates in the center's offerings.

Institutional Effectiveness

The appointment of new leadership in the library and information technology reflects a growing institutional commitment to information literacy and instructional technologies at Worcester State University. This will prove even more meaningful when permanent leadership is in place. Both departments are making progress towards addressing the concerns raised in the self-study, which, for the library, would be the re-envisioning of information literacy instruction and collection development; mission, policy, and procedure creation; and an increased investment in data-driven decision-making. Mission, policy, and procedure revision figures prominently in the self-described goals for University Technology Services as well, and the new positions the department has proposed---with their focus on furthering technology in the curriculum---would be strategic additions to the institution. The Center for Teaching and Learning is encouraged to continue its good work, and to consider additional incentives to increase faculty participation in its programming. Given the ambition of these goals, the university should be aware that the success of information literacy and learning technologies efforts may require upgraded equipment, new systems, expanded facilities, and additional staff beyond what has been discussed above.

8. Physical and Technological Resources

With a combined graduate and undergraduate enrollment of 5,062 FTE students in FY '11 and employment of approximately 745 faculty and staff, Worcester State University has engaged in a number of significant capital upgrades over the past eight years and is in planning for two major capital projects that are expected to begin construction within the next 12 months. These combined capital projects are resulting in a positive transformation of the campus physical plant and property, a transformation that supports the mission of the institution and its ability to attract,

retain, and educate students. The changes are positively reflected on with pride by faculty, staff, and students.

The campus is located on 58 acres of well maintained state-owned property in the west side of Worcester, Mass. In addition, WSU has one off campus location for the Worcester Crafts Center owned by the Worcester University Foundation, has a long standing Memorandum of Understanding with the city of Worcester for use of Rockwood Park baseball and softball fields, and uses the Horgan Rink in Auburn for ice hockey. The campus master plan, developed by Chan Krieger and Sieniewicz in 2007, has guided the strategic placement and significant construction growth over the past eight years and is currently being updated. This plan has resulted in an organized placement and renovation of the campus facilities to include seven central buildings housing administrative, academic, laboratory, athletic, and performance spaces, three student residential structures with dining and student support spaces, and a parking garage. Current on-campus residential structures house approximately 1,185 students, a 79% increase in 10 years. Given its limited property footprint the university leadership will have to show substantial creativity and discipline to balance the needs for instructional and residential space with the desire to grow enrollment.

Construction projects over the past eight years totaling over \$115 million have touched on all areas of campus life and included significant upgrades to the 90 instructional classrooms, lab and faculty office space, improvements to student support services through cafeteria, bookstore, learning resource, and library study space renovations. Additionally, attention has been given to life safety and code compliance, energy efficiency and lighting, security, and athletic turf and track improvements.

Efforts to encourage students to bring laptops have enabled the campus to convert some computer labs into space for other use. Classrooms are equipped with technology. Despite the density of space, a study by Rickes Associates to inform WSU space planning discussions shows some available classroom and lecture hall facilities indicating that the campus is not at maximum capacity and can support some enrollment growth in strategic areas. Two capital projects in planning, a Health and Wellness Center and a new residential facility promise to provide significant benefit to student and community life. These projects position the campus for advancing the WSU strategic direction of increasing and supporting the population of residential students.

WSU has a demonstrated culture of planning for capital facilities. Campus senior management routinely assess facility conditions and set priorities for capital and maintenance needs of the University to guide the expenditure of limited institutional resources. Significant attention to facilities planning includes a seven year deferred maintenance plan that is updated annually, tracking life-cycle improvements, assessing need and measuring progress against peers, a five year academic space programming plan in 2007 that is being updated by the Academic Affairs Division. Most recently a Capital Planning Committee has been established with broad campus representation to identify upcoming funding requests to the Department of Higher Education and the Division of Capital Asset Management. The campus also works with the Massachusetts State College Building Authority. Financial resources are set aside in addition to budgeted resources annually to support capital projects.

A facilities assessment and benchmarking study conducted by Sightlines LLC documents that the WSU building age, compared to peer institutions is younger, with approximately 50% of the space under 10 years old. It also documents, however, that all academic/administrative and support space as square footage basis per FTE is the lowest of the peer institutions reflective of high use facilities. While the additional square footage added through construction has increased energy spending, energy consumption is constant with peer institutions. The university is named in the Princeton Review as a green college given its focus on sustainability with two of the recent building projects certified as LEED Gold.

The campus has exceeded the State Board of Higher Education's Capital Adaptation and Renewal Expenditure benchmark of 5% for the most recent years – FY '07 through FY '11, with the FY '11 ratio at 7.6%. The campus annual operating budget includes a budgeted line for facility renovation and refurbishment and utilities enabling spending close to peer institutions.

The Facilities Management Director reports to the VP for Administration and Finance, provides stewardship of the plant and property giving appropriate attention to safety and compliance requirements, and is supported by a staff organized to provide the necessary support to the institution. On -site inspections and surveys by Sightlines LLC indicate a "very effective" facilities operation.

A review of emergency planning protocols for WSU, including discussions with key personnel, show concentrated attention to preparing for emergency events. A number of measures have been taken to ensure immediate incident response and campus communications. All students and staff are captured on the emergency text messaging system (RAVE). The institutional staff in turn share their expertise with other universities and work to address changing requirements to the benefit of the student, faculty, staff and visitor safety.

Information Technology is administered by the newly formed University Technology Services. A search is currently underway for a permanent CIO. University Technology Services provides and supports university computing, networking and data resources. Some limited training is provided to faculty on the use of Blackboard and other multimedia technologies. Feedback from campus discussions indicates that UTS is understaffed in several critical areas that may negatively impact the ability of the campus to meet its institutional goals. These areas include providing the necessary network support, ensuring support for instructional technologies to include course redesign and faculty training in the use of new technologies, and the ability to advance on-line educational programs.

The WSU campus is wireless throughout all buildings and main campus property. The campus has recently significantly upgraded its bandwidth providing capacity which will support the long-term needs of campus users. The university uses Blackboard's One Card system which provides many areas of access for the students, faculty and staff. Through the Worcester State University Community System portal, students, faculty, and staff can access campus IT resources to include the WSU Global Web Advisor and the Blackboard Learning Management System. A master Data Center houses campus servers and provides scheduled backup and support as required. This centralization has been in place since 2007 and all areas on campus house any new device in the secure data center. A second backup data center has been recently established. University Technology Services maintains a help desk function and two computer labs. The university has directed some increased funding resources to strengthen IT.

In 2008 the State of Massachusetts conducted a comprehensive security audit of WSU's information technology practices and infrastructure as a part of a broader state institutional review. The development of a broad set of policies governing many aspects of information security was developed as a result of this audit. These policies are reviewed and updated periodically and cover the use, connection, and procurement of all computer hardware and software and network access. WSU monitors the network traffic to filter out spam, provides anti-viruses software and guards against security vulnerabilities. The institution contracts with a third party vendor to monitor network traffic and content and test for security vulnerabilities. Policies also include guidance on reporting a data breach should one occur.

Testing of the emergency system occurs routinely. In addition, through Public Safety, WSU has placed 23 blue light call boxes on campus and employs DataFetch software, which tracks after-hour visitors to the residence halls and connects to the police reporting system. A centralized text number is used and advertised so as to enable anonymous incident reporting. Campus IT initiatives are directed to focus on academic computing and include plans for an enhanced laptop replacement program for faculty and staff. Other recent initiatives include a records imaging program.

Institutional Effectiveness

WSU's planning involves both condition assessment and evaluation as to the institutional priorities and needs as it relates to the effectiveness of its physical and technological resources to ensure that financial resources are allocated to support both the current and future needs of the institution. Resources directed into the physical plant have resulted in a transformation of the existing campus. Additional resources dedicated to both the physical and technological resources as planned, promise to drive and support the positive trajectory of WSU's mission.

9. Financial Resources

A detailed review of WSU's financial resources demonstrates that the institutional resources are sufficient to "sustain the quality of its educational program and to support institutional improvement now and in the foreseeable future." This review also confirms that the Governing Board is informed and is routinely involved in strategic financial and budgetary decisions. Audited statements for Fiscal Years 2003 through 2012 were reviewed and are free of any material weaknesses. External Financial Audits are conducted and approved annually by the Board and reviewed by senior management.

It is clear through a review of WSU's financial statements that the university has worked hard to address and offset funding reductions by the state during the past ten years while maintaining a positive financial position. It is testimony to WSU's financial management and the campus community that the institution has improved its financial condition as measured by four key financial ratios while adjusting to the resource constraints imposed by declining state support. This improved condition is reflected in the Primary Reserve Ratio, the Return on Net Assets Ratio, the Net Operating Ratio and the Viability Ratio.

Starting with FY '04 and ending with FY '12, the Primary Reserve Ratio which is calculated using expendable net assets divided by total expenses shows an increase from a low of 18.5% in '05 to the current level in FY '12 of 44.6%. As stated in the most recent audit report "This ratio

provides a snapshot of financial strength and flexibility by indicating the percent of operating expenses that could be funded by expendable reserves without relying on additional net assets generated by operations.” The Department of Higher Education benchmark for institutions is 40%, thus WSU due to its financial planning with the funds placed in reserve for long term capital financing has exceeded this benchmark in FYs ’11 and ’12. More specifically, long term capital financing plans are in place for the new health and wellness center, parking garage, and new residential facility. A challenge for the institution will be to maintain its future financial flexibility while expending these capital reserves as the buildings are constructed.

The Return on Net Assets Ratio has been consistently positive over this same time period, with FY’12 at 1.49% and FY ’11 at 5.63%. This measure shows the percent increase in net assets as a measure of total economic return for the time period. As returns can vary significantly due to market conditions and inflation level, it is recommended that schools establish a real return target (adjusted for inflation) of 3% - 4%. The growth in the depreciation expense is a factor in recent years depressing the overall return in conjunction with reduced and flat state appropriations and uncertain market conditions.

From FY ’03 through FY’12 net assets have increased from \$44,922,218 to the current level at the close of FY 2012 at \$88,475,811 for an overall increase of approximately 97%. Net assets invested in capital assets (net of related debt) represent \$54,485,842 or 61.6% of the approximately \$88.5 million, and are a major contributor to this positive trend, again reflecting the strength of the capital improvements on campus. \$30,428,591 in unrestricted net assets in Fiscal Year ’12 is up 407% from the FY ’03 level at \$6,002,137 reflective of overall institutional growth. As a percent of total net assets, unrestricted net assets were 34.4% in ’12 compared to 13.4% in ’03. Again, the challenge for WSU is to maintain and grow the strength of these unrestricted net assets while engaged in significant transformational change and expansion while balancing the financial constraints in the years ahead.

The Net Operating Revenue ratio measures the financial ability of an institution to “live within its available revenues.” Generally, the larger the positive ratio, the stronger the institution’s performance is as a result of the current year’s activity. Industry standards recommend that this ratio of net operations to revenue fall between 2%-4% for colleges and universities. WSU’s operating ratio was at 1.72% and 5.81% for Fiscal Years ’12 and ’11 reflecting positive surpluses as a measure of operating results. The continued growth of student tuition and fee revenue from \$16,993,698 in FY ’03 to \$38,583,870 in FY ’12, combined with the restoration of some state appropriation in FY ’11 following significant decreases in ’09 and ’10 has assisted with this measure. Student tuition and fees net of scholarships in FY ’03 were approximately 32% of the total of operating plus non-operating revenue, while in ’12 net student tuition and fee revenue has grown to an estimated 51% of the total. This 51% reflects the increased reliance on student tuition and fee revenue by the institution, not unlike other public higher educational institutions which are adjusting to compensate in part to the loss in state appropriation. During this same time period state appropriations have decreased as a percent of the total of operating revenues plus non-operating revenues from 50% in ’03 to 33.7% in ’12. This decline, combined with the pressures of inflation and program growth result in the resource constraints being addressed annually by the institution as it balances the WSU budget to meet expenditure obligations.

Lastly, the Viability Ratio which reflects the ability of expendable net assets to cover debt shows at 1: 2.74 and 1:2.41 for FYs '12 and '11. This compares favorably to the desired benchmark of 1.1 and demonstrates prudent debt management which has characterized the institution.

Looking ahead to the future, the institutional leadership is committed to identifying and growing new streams of revenue while ensuring a maximum return from the existing programs and physical plant. Plans underway include increasing enrollment and the residential population on the campus, expanding educational programming for both undergraduates and graduates, and working to leverage the existing institutional capacity and expertise. In addition, having successfully completed an over \$15 million fundraising campaign, discussions are focusing on continued fundraising for scholarship endowments, capital equipment needs, faculty and academic priorities. WSU through its strategic planning process and resource realignment is working aggressively to shape new opportunities that will work to the financial benefit of the institution in support of its mission. This planning offers an opportunity for the university to fully implement a formal multi-year forecast in accordance with the intent of Standard 9.3 as a part of its financial and budgeting process.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the budget process itself at WSU changed last year to include a zero-based budgeting methodology. This effort involved the entire campus and was engaged in as a way to increase involvement and transparency. Feedback during the review given to the NEASC team members by different stakeholders suggests that stronger communications regarding the final integration of resources to the strategic plan would be beneficial.

Institutional Effectiveness

WSU has in place appropriate internal and external mechanisms to evaluate its fiscal condition and financial management and to maintain its integrity. This effort engages the full leadership and governance teams of the institution. Clearly, the institution uses the results of these activities for improvement. In the fall of 2011, WSU received an upgrade in its S&P bond rating from A- to A, an external validation of its fiscal effectiveness. It is recommended that formal multi-year planning for all operating and non-operating revenues and expenditures be added to the current long-term capital planning as an additional tool to inform decision making and increase institutional effectiveness.

10. Public Disclosure

Worcester State University is an institution committed to openness and transparency, as evidenced by it being a member of the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA), a program jointly sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. The primary aim of this effort is to provide students and their families an opportunity to compare crucial institutional statistics (demographics, student success, costs of attendance, financial aid awards, admission requirements, academic program offerings, institutional characteristics, classroom environment, student experiences, learning outcomes, student housing, campus safety) among similar colleges and universities. Available evidence indicates that Worcester State University also complies with all federal and state regulatory requirements and obligations.

The university considers its website an increasingly important source for information, as well as a vehicle for public disclosure. It provides a broad overview of the institution, but requires somewhat determined navigation skills. Once found, material on the site is often clear and concise. The site lacks some components of the student consumer information required by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, such as the expected amount of student debt upon graduation. Other critical information, such as VSA data categories, FERPA guidelines, transfer articulation agreements, and intercollegiate athletic information is readily available. The addition of meeting agendas and minutes from critical university committees, all located in a single repository, would add to the institution's push for transparency.

Among the available materials on the website is the course catalog, which also appears in print form. Worcester State University notes in its self-study that there are no standard policies or procedures pertaining to course listings, and as a result there is inaccurate information in both versions, some of which may be more than two years out-of-date. Related academic information, such as policies and procedures, support services, and the university's laptop initiative, is current and easily accessed from the website's "Academics" tab.

Additional university policies are available through the website but often require use of the search function. These are then linked to the departments from which the policies were devised. While this is entirely appropriate, a single link which leads to all college policies might prove useful for undergraduate end users and their parents, not to mention staff and faculty.

As Worcester State University's self-study forthrightly attests, the institution continues to wrestle with the most efficient way to keep web content current. The present model is a largely distributed one, where individual departments update their own areas of the site. As a result, material can lack a uniform tone, some sections can be badly out-of-date, and some dead links exist. In addition, some departments may work outside of established protocols to put their material on the web, compromising institutional branding efforts. The recent creation of a brand standards manual is an effort to minimize this problem. The university admits that it never developed or implemented policies for website governance promised in its last accreditation study, and clearly realizes this is a critical need moving forward.

Institutional Effectiveness

Worcester State University strives for a clear and accurate representation of itself online and in print, and it is mostly successful in these aims. There remains a need to collect and make prominent those data items for students and parents required by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, and to provide course listings that are complete and up-to-date.

The university's self-study identifies additional areas for improvement. Several are underway, notably the RFP process to replace the current website and its underlying content management system. Others have yet to be addressed, such as the appointment of a content manager to improve the currency and navigability of the existing website.

11. Integrity

Since July 2011, with the advent of new presidential leadership, a renewed commitment to transparency and integrity has been expressed and remains a vital work in progress. A period of closed communication and decision-making has been replaced by a vigorous attempt on the part

of the president to communicate more effectively, openly, and inclusively; however, the community is notably still in a state of repairing the divisions born of many years of exclusion. As noted particularly in Standard 3 of the Self-Study, increased communication, evaluations of senior administrators, and establishing accountability measures are paramount to reestablishing the good will and productive working relationships of various constituencies. Additionally, the integrity of the academic deans' positions needs to be shored up in order to provide clarity and greater efficiency to the management of academic departments.

WSU adheres appropriately to a multiplicity of federal and state regulations, and Massachusetts Department of Higher Education directives that govern fiscal management, hiring, other human resource-related activities, data security, copyright protection, certification in some fields of study, conflict of interest review, and crime statistics reporting, among many other areas. The university similarly upholds integrity standards required of faculty and staff and expressed through existing contract stipulations, and the Employee Handbook.

There is unevenness among the divisions, departments and programs with respect to developing and promulgating policies, standards, and guidelines related to integrity. One-third of the thirty-two units reporting have developed written policies governing ethical practice in areas such as diversity, affirmative action, fund-raising, and technology services. Also, not all faculty include academic honesty statements in or with their syllabi for distribution to students to emphasize the importance of ethical conduct in an academic community, though students do receive the statement of academic honesty in their Student Handbook.

Suitable processes are in place for the resolution of complaints or grievances registered by faculty, staff, and students, and, depending upon the nature of the complaint, might be addressed through union contracts, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, the Office of Diversity /Affirmative Action, and/or Human Resources. Importantly, however, administrators perceive the effectiveness of these processes in resolving matters of integrity differently from faculty and staff. While administrators who responded to the NEASC self-study-related integrity survey reported the satisfactory resolution of "virtually all" complaints, fewer than half of the faculty and staff respondents were satisfied with the resolution of their complaints. Though it may be accurate to suggest in the self-study that assigning validity to one view over another is not possible, another response might be to survey faculty and staff again to determine whether there are common themes that emerge in their descriptions of what they perceived to be unfair and unclear. This information could be useful in revamping or clarifying procedures and/or approaches to complaint resolution. Assessment of complaint processes is also necessary and currently not conducted.

The University informs students satisfactorily about academic policy matters, as 83% of students responding to a survey attested, but recognizes the need to improve the transmittal of information related to other policies and procedures in the areas of FERPA, Code of Conduct, grade changes, discrimination and personal safety. The institution adheres to non-discriminatory policies and practices throughout the university and fosters an environment that embraces and supports difference.

According to the self-study, the perception of undue influence by outside parties in admission and reinstatement processes and administrator involvement in securing grade changes, challenges the university's ability to ensure integrity in its application of policies and procedures.

This area should be addressed not only by systematic and formal investigations as issues arise, but also by clear policies preventing deviation from established ethical practices.

Institutional Effectiveness

In a survey of the faculty and students as part of the self-study process, both constituencies agreed that they have freedom to pursue their individual academic interests without impediment, for faculty in teaching and scholarship and for students in the pursuit of their fields of academic study. Additional periodic assessments, for example, a review of the formal policies and procedures of academic and administrative units, could help the institution attain more consistency in its policy environment.

Institutional Effectiveness Summary

Worcester State University has established several strong building blocks of institutional effectiveness in the recent past. The university periodically assesses the effectiveness of its organizational structures and makes changes to improve function and reporting as shown by the recent changes in the leadership groups that report to the president and the re-organization in academic affairs, which remains a work in progress. Evidence shows that a culture of assessment is beginning to emerge at WSU. There are concrete examples that the university is working to collect data on academic programs and to strengthen their use of assessments. The university has made advances in the last two years to improve the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of academic programs, as seen in the formation of the Center for Teaching and Learning, hiring of the Assistant Vice President for Assessment and Planning, the “Succeed in 4” program, the First-Year Seminars, and improvements to the advising and tutoring services. Additionally, the commitment of the Student Services Division to a culture of assessment, including external reviews, has enabled them to establish assessment feedback loops and use the information to improve student services. In recognition of important demographic shifts in high school-aged populations in New England, the university has acted strategically in reorganizing its administrative structure by consolidating the Registrar, Financial Aid, and Admissions into a new Enrollment Management Division. The arrangement has begun to bring about more comprehensive and coordinated planning in marketing, recruitment, and admissions. According to many informants, however, data collection and dissemination remains hampered by existing software systems.

The appointment of new leadership in the library and information technology reflects a growing institutional commitment to information literacy and instructional technologies at Worcester State University. WSU’s planning involves both condition assessment and evaluation as to the institutional priorities and needs as it relates to the effectiveness of its physical and technological resources to ensure that financial resources are allocated to support both the current and future needs of the institution. Resources directed into the physical plant have resulted in a welcome transformation of the campus. Additional resources dedicated to both the physical and technological resources as planned, promise to drive and support the positive trajectory of WSU’s mission. WSU has in place appropriate internal and external mechanisms to evaluate its fiscal condition and financial management and to maintain its integrity. Clearly, the institution uses the results of these activities for improvement. It is recommended that formal multi-year planning for all operating and non-operating revenues and expenditures be added to the current long-term capital planning as an additional tool to inform decision making and increase

institutional effectiveness. A final important step that remains to be taken is a review and reconsideration of the institutional mission, which is generally regarded as outmoded.

Affirmation of Compliance Summary

Worcester State University invited public commentary on its reaccreditation through a press release on August 27, 2012 which is also posted on the web site. The institution adopted the NEASC Policy on Credits and Degrees in 2012 and is gradually making progress toward implementing it across all types of classes. Currently the faculty members teaching online and hybrid courses report insufficient training to ensure consistent quality learning outcomes. Credit transfer policies are well documented in the undergraduate catalog and on the university website. The Mass Transfer Block agreement reportedly works well in facilitating a smooth transition for transfer students whom it covers, but faculty members expressed confusion in facilitating the transfer of students who do not come to the university under the Mass Transfer Block agreement. Student complaint procedures are in place and are well documented. A number of measures are in place to verify the authenticity of students' identities in online and hybrid courses, including network and system passwords, network security, and acceptable use policies. These were reviewed in an IT audit conducted by the office of the state auditor.

Summary of Institutional Strengths and Concerns

Since its fifth-year interim report in 2008 Worcester State University has emerged from a period of confusion and uncertainty into the current period of positive momentum with a spirit of optimism. The institution is in a rebuilding phase characterized by new top leadership as well as a new generation of emerging leaders among the faculty and staff. The highly inclusive process used in the preparation of the self-study is indicative of a growing atmosphere of collaboration and participation. The consensus on campus is that Worcester State University's new president has provided much needed leadership and vision for the institution. The team also recognizes that many of the recent gains are built on the foundations laid by long-term contributions of dedicated educational professionals throughout the campus.

Reviewing the evidence presented in the self-study, documents, and personal meetings, the team notes that Worcester State University excels in a number of areas. Its most prominent accomplishments are the following:

- Developing a student-centered philosophy, as exemplified by the creation of the Academic Success Center and other student-oriented supportive services;
- Nurturing supportive relationships between faculty and students, as demonstrated by strong scores on the National Study of Student Engagement;
- Hiring new faculty and assisting in their professional development, for example, through the Center for Teaching and Learning;
- Strengthening alumni and community support as demonstrated by substantial success in fundraising;
- Reimagining the physical campus to make it more attractive, comfortable, and conducive to teaching, learning, and community life; and
- Strengthening its financial position during a time of severe economic strain and reduced public support.

It is apparent that in recent years the WSU leadership has been compelled to tackle a number of institutional challenges simultaneously. Although there is evident progress in many areas, the campus community realizes that a good deal more work is necessary to fully achieve its goals.

Areas in which progress is apparent but as yet incomplete include the following:

- Implementing the current strategic plan while working toward developing the next plan;
- Strengthening the process of collecting, sharing, and using data to assess progress toward goals and make needed changes;
- Consistently engaging faculty in identifying curricular goals and monitoring student learning outcomes;
- Boosting student success and graduation rates;
- Transitioning to a more residential campus and providing appropriate facilities and services to support residential students;
- Developing new revenue sources to supplement state appropriations; and
- Improving the quantity and quality of information for both internal and external audiences published on the institution's web site.

The most critical areas of concern reside in the area of planning and resource alignment, including the following:

- Revising the institutional mission to reflect the current status and direction of the university prior to the adoption of the next strategic plan;
- Systematically aligning resources with the institution's strategic goals in a multi-year budgeting process;
- Fully defining the roles of academic deans and integrating them into the administrative structure of academic affairs; and
- Developing policies governing online and hybrid course offerings and providing adequate training and support for online teaching.

In sum, Worcester State University is a sound institution that in the team's judgment is achieving its mission and is well positioned to continue its institutional development.