

■ **Assessment of Student Learning at Western Connecticut State University**

A report to the Board of Trustees
of the Connecticut State University System

James W. Schmotter, President
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Section 1: Institutional Level Assessment

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

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

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

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

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

All WCSU degree programs have plans for the assessment of student learning outcomes. Assessment data support the university's Academic Program Review Process, which was approved by the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum and Academic Standards (CUCAS) in Fall 2007 and by the Graduate Council in Spring 2008. Implementation began in 2008-09. There are 55 degree programs, and 26 are in various stages of accreditation, including 15 currently accredited. All accredited programs require evidence of student learning. Of the 29 non-accredited programs, one has completed the program review process, nine will continue the process in 2010-11, and nine will begin the process in 2010-11. Of the 10 remaining programs, 2 are less than a year old (BA in Media Arts and BA in Musical Theatre), and one involves individualized plans of study (Contract major BA/BS), each of which must be approved by CUCAS.

C. *Salient activities and accomplishments in current year*

There were two especially notable achievements during 2009-10. First, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) accredited all teacher preparation programs. The use of TK20 software to track and organize outcomes for students enrolled in teacher preparation programs, now in its fourth year, supported the effort to achieve NCATE accreditation. Second, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accepted the Ansell School's application for pre-candidacy. All business programs, including Bachelor of Business Administration, Master of Business Administration, and Master of Health Administration, will be considered for accreditation. The Ansell School devoted the academic year to establishing processes to comply with AACSB assessment guidelines.

D. *Any significant progress on assessment issues identified by regional accreditation process*

In 2004-05 WCSU developed and implemented a comprehensive assessment plan in response to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) 2004 reaccreditation report. The NEASC Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) accepted the university's most recent Fifth Year Interim Report on November 20, 2008, and commended WCSU for progress made in implementing an assessment plan across academic units. No further actions were considered necessary. The next NEASC accreditation visit is scheduled for Fall 2013.

LOs = Learning Outcomes

Table 1. Assessment of Academic Learning

a. University-Wide Learning - Individual Programs

Category	# LOs Adopted and Date	# Measured (Current Year)	# Analyzed (Current Year)	# Used for Improvement (Current Year)	# Used for Improvement (Since Adoption)	Brief Description of Assessment Cycle and Process for Review (about 60 words paragraph maximum)
General Education	8 (July 9, 2008)	4 broad areas (Measured by MAPP Test)	4	0	None yet. (Critical Thinking, Reading, Writing and Mathematics)	Annual review, reported to Provost and Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum and Academic Standards (CUCAS). See http://www.wcsu.edu/committees/general/ ; and http://www.ets.org/proficiencyprofile/about . MAPP is "Measures of Academic Proficiency and Progress" (ETS).
Other Learning: Co-op Ed.	7 (June 9, 2009)	7 (Measured by surveys of co-supervisors and students.)	7	0	None yet. (Positive outcomes indicate no need for change in co-op program.)	Annual review, reported to Provost and VP for Student Affairs; see http://www.wcsu.edu/cdc/services/coop.asp . Cooperative Education is evaluated in conjunction with CAS Standards.

b. Undergraduate Learning in Academic Programs: School of Arts and Sciences - Summary of Programs

	# of Programs	% that have Developed LOs	% that have Collected Data	% that have Analyzed Data	% that have Used Results for Improvements	Assessment Review Cycle (Frequency, process and concise comments, or refer to Section 1.b)	Program Review Cycle (Frequency, process and concise comments, or refer to Section 1.b)
Non-Accredited	20	90	75	65	45	Annual review, reported in June to Dean, Provost and Assessment Committee	Every 10 years, per Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum and Academic Standards (CUCAS) 2007 document -- 20% were reviewed in 2009-10
Accredited	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Per accrediting organization's cycle (American Chemical Society)	

c. Undergraduate Learning in Academic Programs: Other Schools - Summary of Programs

	# of Programs	% that have Developed LOs	% that have Collected Data	% that have Analyzed Data	% that have Used Results for Improvements	Assessment Review Cycle (Frequency, process and concise comments, or refer to Section 1.b)	Program Review Cycle (Frequency, process and concise comments, or refer to Section 1.b)
Non-Accredited	6	100	83	67	33	Annual review, reported in June to Dean, Provost and Assessment Committee	* Business programs were admitted to AACSB Pre-Candidacy in August 2009; Justice and Law Administration BS will continue APR in 2010-11
Accredited	0 *	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Per each accrediting organization's cycle	
School of Professional Studies	# of Programs	% that have Developed LOs	% that have Collected Data	% that have Analyzed Data	% that have Used Results for Improvements	Assessment Review Cycle (Frequency, process and concise comments, or refer to Section 1.b)	Program Review Cycle (Frequency, process and concise comments, or refer to Section 1.b)
Non-Accredited	1	100	100	100	100	Annual review, reported in June to Dean, Provost and Assessment Committee	Preparations are underway for the Society of Public Health Education accreditation review of the Health promotion Studies BS.
Accredited	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Per each accrediting organization's cycle	
School of Visual and Performing Arts	# of Programs	% that have Developed LOs	% that have Collected Data	% that have Analyzed Data	% that have Used Results for Improvements	Assessment Review Cycle (Frequency, process and concise comments, or refer to Section 1.b)	Program Review Cycle (Frequency, process and concise comments, or refer to Section 1.b)
Non-Accredited	3	100	67	0	0	Annual review, reported in June to Dean, Provost and Assessment Committee	
Accredited	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Per each accrediting organization's cycle	

d. Graduate Learning in Academic Programs: Division of Graduate Studies and External Programs - Summary of Programs

	# of Programs	% that have Developed LOs	% that have Collected Data	% that have Analyzed Data	% that have Used Results for Improvements	Assessment Review Cycle (Frequency, process and concise comments, or refer to Section 1.b)	Program Review Cycle (Frequency, process and concise comments, or refer to Section 1.b)
Non-Accredited	10	100	50	30	30	Annual review, reported in June to Dean, Provost and Assessment Committee	Every 10 years, per Graduate Council 2008 document.
Accredited	6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Per each accrediting organization's cycle	

Table 2. Assessment of Student Learning Across Academic Programs/In Special Academic Programs (Please provide Web links with details when available)

a. Student Learning in First Year Experience Program (Up to three most relevant criteria and measurement, analysis, and/or actions based on university program in the reporting year)

Criterion 1	Summary of Measurement/ Analysis/ Action	Criterion 2	Summary of Measurement/ Analysis/ Action	Criterion 3	Summary of Measurement/ Analysis/ Action
Critical Thinking	Eleven LOs were identified by General Education Comm.; see http://www.wcsu.edu/committees/gened/fye/default.asp . Assessments are conducted annually by instructors of designated First Year (FY) courses.	Writing Proficiency	Work in progress.	Information Literacy	Work in progress.

Table 3. Assessment of Learning in Extra- and Co-Curricular Programs and Activities (Please provide Web links with details when available)

a. Student Learning in Counseling Center (Up to three most relevant criteria and measurement, analysis, and/or actions based on university program in the reporting year)

Criterion 1	Summary of Measurement/ Analysis/ Action	Criterion 2	Summary of Measurement/ Analysis/ Action	Criterion 3	Summary of Measurement/ Analysis/ Action
Accurate Case Conceptualization	Four broad measures of competency assessed at end of Externship Training program	Understanding of Transference and Countertransference	Positive outcomes indicate no need for change in Externship Training program.	Knowledge of Principles of Good Practice	Positive outcomes indicate no need for change in Externship Training program.

b. Student Learning in Career Development Center (CDC)

Criterion 1	Summary of Measurement/ Analysis/ Action	Criterion 2	Summary of Measurement/ Analysis/ Action	Criterion 3	Summary of Measurement/ Analysis/ Action
Basic Resume Writing	Workshops were effective in increasing knowledge of resume content. CDC will continue offering workshops to both beginners and advanced resume writers.	Advanced Resume Writing	Results support offering more specifically focused workshops.	Etiquette Program	Positive outcomes based on the three hour program with recommendations to stress an international approach to the global society.

c. Student Learning in Judicial Review Board

Criteria 1	Summary of Measurement/ Analysis/ Action	Criteria 2	Summary of Measurement/ Analysis/ Action	Criteria 3	Summary of Measurement/ Analysis/ Action
Understanding of the Judicial Process	Student leaders (judicial advocates) were surveyed, as well as students encountering the judicial process. Both groups gained an understanding of the judicial process (90 percent or more items rated positive).	Ability to Accept Responsibility for One's Behaviors	Positive outcomes indicate no need for change in judicial review procedures.	Knowledge of Student Code of Conduct	Positive outcomes indicate that students increased their knowledge of the code of conduct.

Appendix 1: Western Connecticut State University DHE-Approved Degree Programs

School	WCSU Program Name	Currently Accred.	Not Currently Accredited				Used Results for Improvement	Accreditation or Program Review Cycle
			Developed LOs	Collected Data	Analyzed Data	Used Results for Improvement		
A&S	American Studies BA/BS		1				Continue APR in 2010-11	
A&S	Anthropology/Sociology BA/BS		1	1	1	1	Begin APR in 2010-11	
A&S	Biology BA/BS		1	1	1	1		
A&S	Chemistry BA/BS	1					ACS Accreditation	
A&S	Communication BA/BS		1	1	1	1	Begin APR in 2010-11	
A&S	Computer Science BA		1	1	1		Continue APR in 2010-11	
A&S	Contract Major BA/BS						Individualized	
A&S	Earth and Planetary Sciences BA/BS		1				Continue APR in 2010-11	
A&S	Economics BA		1	1	1	1	Begin APR in 2010-11	
A&S	English BA/BS		1	1	1		Begin APR in 2010-11	
A&S	History BA/BS		1	1	1	1	Begin APR in 2010-11	
A&S	Liberal Arts AS							
A&S	Mathematics BA/BS		1	1			Continue APR in 2010-11	
A&S	Media Arts BA		1				New program in 2009-10	
A&S	Medical Technology BS		1	1				
A&S	Meteorology BS		1	1	1	1	Continue APR in 2010-11	
A&S	Political Science BA/BS		1	1	1	1	Begin APR in 2010-11	
A&S	Professional Writing BA/BS		1	1	1			
A&S	Psychology BA/BS		1	1	1	1	Completed APR in May 2009	
A&S	Social Sciences BA/BS		1	1	1	1	Begin APR in 2010-11	
A&S	Spanish BA/BS		1	1	1	1		
Arts & Sciences Summary - 21 Programs			18	15	13	9		
Ancell	Accounting BBA		1	1	1	1	AACSB Pre-Candidacy	
Ancell	Finance BBA		1	1	1	1	AACSB Pre-Candidacy	
Ancell	Justice & Law Administration BS		1	1			Continue APR in 2010-11	
Ancell	Management BBA		1				AACSB Pre-Candidacy	
Ancell	Management Information Systems BBA		1	1	1		AACSB Pre-Candidacy	
Ancell	Marketing BBA		1	1	1		AACSB Pre-Candidacy	
Ancell Business School Summary - 6 Programs			6	5	4	2		
SPS/A&S	Elementary Education BS	1					NCATE Accredited 2009	
SPS	Health Education BS	1					NCATE Accredited 2009	
SPS	Health Promotion Studies BS		1	1	1	1	Prep. for Soc. for Public Health Ed. Accred.	
SPS	Nursing BS	1					CCNE Accredited through 2019	
A&S/SPS	Secondary Education BS	1					NCATE Accredited 2009	
SPS	Social Work BA	1					CSWE Accreditation through 2012	
Prof. Studies (SPS) Summary - 6 Programs			1	1	1	1		

Appendix 1: Western Connecticut State University DHE-Approved Degree Programs (continued)

VPA	Art BA		1	1	1					NASAD Accreditation Sought
VPA	Music (Performing, Composition, Theory) B.Mus.	1								NASM Reaccreditation through 2019
VPA	Music BA	1								NASM Reaccreditation through 2019
VPA	Music Education BS	1								NASM Reaccreditation through 2019
VPA	Musical Theatre BA		1							New program in 2010-11
VPA	Theatre Arts BA		1	1						NAST Accreditation Sought
Visual & Performing Arts (VPA) Summary - 6 Programs										
A&S	Biological & Environmental Sciences MA		1	1	1	0	1			
Ancell	Business Administration MBA		1	1	1	1				AACSB Pre-Candidacy
SPS	Counselor Education MS	1								CACREP Reaccreditation 2009
A&S	Creative & Professional Writing MFA		1							
A&S	Earth & Planetary Sciences MA		1							Continue APR in 2010-11
SPS	Education MS	1								NCATE Accredited 2009
A&S	English MA		1	1	1	1	1			Begin APR in 2010-11
Ancell	Health Administration MHA		1							AACSB Pre-Candidacy
A&S	History MA		1							Begin APR in 2010-11
SPS	Instructional Leadership Ed.D	1								NCATE Accredited 2009
Ancell	Justice Administration MS		1	1						Continue APR in 2010-11
A&S	Mathematics MA		1							Continue APR in 2010-11
VPA	Music Education MS	1								NASM Reaccreditation through 2019
SPS	Nursing MSN	1								CCNE Accredited through 2019
SPS	Secondary Educ. MAT (Biology, Math, Spanish)	1								New program in Spring 2009
VPA	Visual Arts MFA		1	1						NASAD Accreditation Sought
Graduate Studies Summary - 16 programs										
		6	10	5	3	3	3	3	3	

Guide to Acronyms

AACSB = Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business

ACS = American Chemical Society

CACREP = Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs

CCNE = Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education

CSWE = Council on Social Work Education

LOs = Learning Outcomes

NASAD = National Association of Schools of Art and Design

NASM = National Association of Schools of Music

NAST = National Association of Schools of Theatre

NCATE = The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

Ancell School of Business

During the 2009-10 academic year, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accepted the Ancell School's application for pre-candidacy and the school devoted its efforts to establishing the processes for compliance with AACSB assessment guidelines.

The school's mission statement is being reviewed and revised. It will be used to guide the creation of a new strategic plan and to craft new learning objectives appropriate to the new baccalaureate (BBA) program, as well as master's programs (MBA and MHA).

The school's AACSB Steering Committee is assessing the learning outcomes of the BBA program. General education courses are also being studied to ascertain the extent to which learning objectives are met. In addition, a faculty committee is charged with assisting the school in implementing the assessment process by establishing rubrics, collecting data and "closing the loop."

The Ancell faculty approved an outline for a new MBA curriculum during 2009-10 by incorporating feedback from faculty, students, alumni, and area employers. The Steering Committee recommended that the MHA program adopt the MBA learning goals, including the following: effectively lead business teams; effectively communicate orally, in writing, and in presentations; effectively function in a global business environment; effectively analyze problems, make decisions, and execute solutions; and effectively incorporate ethical perspectives on business issues.

Finance Department

- Updated the senior survey to monitor student evaluation of the finance program more effectively.
- Began collecting data in FIN 330 to assess students' ability to apply basic analytical and quantitative techniques to solve complex problems, utilize computer-based analytics to make sound financial decisions and effectively communicate financial problems and solutions in writing.
- Revised its minor to include tracks in financial management and financial markets and created a new course, Fixed Income Securities.

Accounting Department

- Determined that comprehensive exams produce unsatisfactory results and stopped the practice.
- Instituted a "C +" prerequisite for Financial Accounting and a 2.30 GPA prerequisite for all 300 and 400 level accounting courses.

Management Information Systems Department

- Surveys of alumni and current students identified several needs: to develop a new course in security/networks/hardware, to construct an information security lab, to increase the use of flow charting in coursework, to increase simulations and to develop an advanced course in database SQL or Oracle.

Marketing Department

- A new assessment instrument combines multiple-choice tests and a set of short marketing cases to measure performance on the key learning objectives of the four required marketing courses. A task for 2010-11 is to review the validity and reliability of the instrument and to begin to itemize the findings for each objective.

Appendix 2: Selected WCSU Assessment Results for 2009-10 and Plans for 2010-11 (continued)

Division of Justice and Law Administration

- Assessment committees were established to review randomly selected thesis papers from the undergraduate seminar course and graduate thesis papers from the Research and Public Administration course for evaluation and comparison to previous assessments.

School of Arts and Sciences

In 2009-10, several departments “closed the loop” by implementing curricular changes based on previous assessments. The Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, and World Languages and Literature departments are using nationally recognized assessment instruments. In most departments, senior capstone projects are used to assess student learning outcomes.

Department of Social Sciences

- Faculty members developed a new course, Quantitative Research Methods in the Social Sciences as a result of assessment.

Department of Psychology

- Faculty members are assessing student skills in two required courses, Principles of Research Psychology and Psychological Statistics.
- In 2010-11, a CSUS Assessment Grant will fund the first phase of a three-phase assessment cycle. Pretests and posttests of general knowledge will be conducted.

Department of History and Non-Western Cultures

- The revised undergraduate curriculum, the result of assessment, goes into effect in Fall 2010. Its effectiveness will be evaluated by assessing student learning outcomes in three required courses.

Department of World Languages

- The assessment of students’ writing proficiency in all Spanish degree programs in 2009-10 indicates that changes made in course requirements have resulted in substantial improvements. Additional opportunities to practice writing in Spanish are largely responsible for the improvements.

Department of Communication

- Prerequisites for Senior Thesis were changed to include theory and research methods courses. These changes are expected to provide students with the background they need to complete their thesis projects in a more timely manner with greater success.
- In 2010-11, a CSUS Assessment Grant will assist in the utilization of three different methodologies for collection and analysis of student learning outcomes in core courses.

School of Professional Studies

Because of NEASC requirements and discipline specific accreditation standards, all of the school’s undergraduate academic programs continue to annually update their program’s assessment systems, collect student learning performance data, and make curriculum revisions based on the results of the data to continually improve their programs.

Health Promotion and Exercise Science Department

- A CSUS Assessment Grant for 2009-10 funded continued assessment of the new curriculum for the Health Promotion Studies BS program. This program has a strong focus on experiential learning, including work with community organizations, hospitals, university groups, or

Appendix 2: Selected WCSU Assessment Results for 2009-10 and Plans for 2010-11 (continued)

worksites. Faculty developed a new methodology for assessing group performance related to service learning.

- Seven changes were made to courses in an effort to enhance student learning and group process. For example, adding individual assignments that are due on the same day as group assignments, so that each member of the group spends time thinking about the material and is prepared to contribute to the discussion. This promotes a more equitable distribution of group member contributions and helps ensure each student is conducting a practical application of course content.

Department of Social Work

- The primary focus in 2009-10 was on revising program and course objectives, assessment tools, and procedures based on the new Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) standards.
- A Case Practice Evaluation measure was developed as part of the Senior Integrative Seminar project. Students are required to demonstrate practice skills across the CSWE's 10 core competencies and 41 practice behaviors. The application of the measure in Spring 2010 provided feedback on student knowledge gaps in understanding and applying conceptual frameworks, critical thinking and writing, and skills in assessment and evaluation design. These gaps will be addressed through curriculum redesign, both within and across courses.

School of Visual and Performing Arts

Concurrent with strategic planning efforts, the School of Visual and Performing Arts continues to assess student proficiency and use the results to enhance curricula and instruction.

Music and Music Education

- The department collected projects from the first class that went through the new four-year sequence with the capstone course and senior portfolios. In addition, sophomore assessments for performance majors were collected. Evaluations of the projects will be conducted before the Fall 2010 semester.

Graduate Studies

The sixteen graduate programs participate in assessment activities to varying degrees. Six of the programs are accredited by national bodies in their disciplines, and engage in rigorous assessment of student learning outcomes. Ten other graduate programs do not hold national accreditation, but all of them have developed student learning outcomes. Five of these have collected data, and three have taken the next steps by analyzing the data and using the results for improvement. Examples of these are:

- The Biology MA program has added preparation sessions for the comprehensive exam, and required a public defense for those students who choose the thesis option.
- The English MA program added the requirement of a public thesis defense.
- The MBA program conducted focus groups and comparative research, and redesigned the entire program proposal, based upon feedback on desired student learning outcomes.

Division of Student Affairs

Three years ago, the Division of Student Affairs mandated that every department begin the process of self study using the standards developed by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). To date, seven of the twelve departments have created action plans focusing on measuring student learning outcomes. Each of these departments is now in the process of developing student learning outcome measures using the six student outcome

■ **Appendix 2:** Selected WCSU Assessment Results for 2009-10 and Plans for 2010-11 (continued)

domains based on research presented in “Learning Reconsidered 2: Implementing a Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience,” Richard Keeling, ed., 2006.

Judicial Review Board

- In 2009-10, student affairs professionals assessed several groups of students: those encountering the judicial process for the first time; those who have been through the process; and student leaders from our judicial advocate program. Among the outcomes achieved, students gained a self-understanding of the judicial process, were able to accept responsibility for their behavior, could critique and subsequently learn from past experiences, and were knowledgeable of the Student Code of Conduct. The survey samples were randomly drawn from commuters, Midtown residents, and Westside residents. Between 90 and 100 percent of the respondents reported positive experiences on the key survey items.

Counseling Center

- During 2009-10, the center implemented an assessment of student learning outcomes targeted at the center’s externship training program.