

STANDARD IV

PROGRAMS AND INSTRUCTION

Overview (4.1-4.11)

Response to Fifth-Year Review: Following WestConn's fifth-year review, the NEASC Commission on Institutions of Higher Education asked that in its self-study for comprehensive evaluation the University emphasize the steps it had taken to "incorporate the perspectives and contributions of minorities and women and the new scholarship about them into the curriculum and co-curricular activities to achieve the institution's goals for diversity." (The Commission's second request, concerning library resources, will be discussed under Standard VII.)

Minorities: The University policy is one of inclusion of minorities in a commitment to multiculturalism. We believe that multiculturalism best reflects the broad spectrum of cultures represented by our student body and our faculty. At the same time, we recognize the perspectives and contributions of minorities and support student interests and needs both in the curriculum and in co-curricular activities.

In curriculum we offer an interdisciplinary Multicultural Studies Minor (Social Sciences), with an elective African-American focus. To complete the African-American focus, students take 12 semester hours in African-American studies, chosen from 27 semester hours of course offerings. AAS 100, *The Black Experience in America*, the lead course of the minor, is also available as a free elective and draws high enrollment. It is offered every semester and is taught by a leader in Connecticut public affairs and senior part-time faculty at WestConn.

An eight-course series in Non-Western Cultures, developed to ensure multicultural perspectives in General Education, is offered on a rotating basis every semester and is always fully enrolled. Cultures represented, in addition to African, include Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Middle Eastern, and Vietnamese. In addition, more than 50 courses incorporating minority and multicultural perspectives and contributions and the new scholarship in these fields are offered across the curriculum, and many others include minority and/or multicultural materials.

Many faculty across the University are strongly interested, engaged in scholarship, and teach in multicultural and minority fields. Recognized leaders include a cultural anthropologist who is the faculty advisor to the Multi-Cultural Studies Minor and active on the Advisory Committee to the Jane Goodall Institute at WestConn. A sociology professor whose research area is the Mexican immigrant experience, teaches the Latino Experience in the U.S. Social work faculty prepare students to work in community agencies characterized by the region's broad ethnic diversity.

In co-curricular activities, the University sponsors the celebration each February of Black History Month, with lectures, films, and performances. In February 2003 the chief activity was an African Film Festival that was so popular that plans are underway to make it an annual event. An annual awards dinner, *Tribute to People of Color*, was initiated in Spring 2000, with the first two honorees drawn from the WestConn faculty (one from Art, the other from Education/Educational Psychology).

Among student clubs and organizations, the InterCultural Advisory Council was named Student Government Association Club of the Year in 2002 and 2003. Other clubs include the Black Students Alliance, the Chinese-American Club, the Latin-American Student Organization, and the West Indian Club. All of the clubs welcome new membership and sponsor activities throughout the year.

The University's administrative structure reflects the priority given to multicultural and minority affairs. The position of Executive Assistant to the President for Multicultural Affairs and Disability Services was advanced to Management level (2000) and is regularly included in the President's staff meetings with the Vice Presidents of the University. The Coordinator of Minority Affairs reports to this office (2002).

Women: The University policy is one of equal opportunity and inclusion of women in all aspects of institutional life. Women have served with distinction as president of the University Senate and as chairs of key governance committees and academic departments, including Biology, Chemistry, Physics/Astronomy/Meteorology, and Mathematics/Computer Science. University offices offering direct support in employment and other issues, beyond the due process of the CSU/AAUP and other negotiated agreements, include the Ombudsman and the Executive Assistant to the President for Minority Affairs and Disability Services.

In curriculum an interdisciplinary Women's Studies Minor (Social Sciences) emphasizes "awareness and knowledge about women's achievements and contributions to society and about social concerns and issues that are of particular importance to women and to all minority groups." In addition, courses incorporating the perspectives and contributions of women and the scholarship about them are offered across the curriculum.

Faculty leaders include an anthropologist/sociologist (and co-founder of the minor) who has published research on women in the military in Canada and the US, and a professor of Communications and Theatre Arts (a co-founder of the minor), whose research area is women's issues in the workplace; she is also currently the president of the WestConn chapter of AAUP. A recently hired English professor was a leader in bringing Women's Studies into the curriculum of the English Department.

Co-curricular activities include the celebration in March of Women's History Month, with lectures, films, and performances. Among special events in the past year were productions of the *Vagina Monologues*, with student sponsorship, and of *Silent Witness* (domestic violence), in partnership with the Coalition of Jewish Women.

Women students hold leadership positions in clubs and organizations across the campus, including the Student Government Association *The Echo* (student newspaper), and WCXI (radio station). Residential students have the option of living in an all-female hall (Newbury Hall). They hold office and staff appointments in this and other halls and plan activities to meet residents' interests and needs.

Description

Over the past 10 years, WestConn has made substantial progress toward maturing as a university. The programmatic changes have been as striking as the dramatic improvements in the physical plant. Exciting new undergraduate programs have been developed as WestConn's focus has gradually but steadily shifted from being primarily an institution with an emphasis on teacher education, as it was at its founding, to a university offering undergraduate and graduate degrees in a variety of fields and particular niches within those fields. Many faculty members are engaged in applied and/or theoretical research that contributes to their disciplines, enriches their course offerings, and broadens

opportunities for our students. WestConn has also significantly extended its outreach to the community and beyond. Examples of changes include the following:

- The Department of Physics, Astronomy, and Meteorology has replaced its B.A. program with a B.S. in Meteorology. WestConn has the only operational weather center within the state of Connecticut to run, in real time, a suite of highly advanced, state-of-the-science, numerical weather prediction models that provide virtually uninterrupted simulated meteorological data for use in instruction, research, forecasting, outreach, and service to subscribers. The Department now has a pilot program in Weathercasting that offers students the opportunity to prepare for careers as television weather reporters as well as scientists in meteorology.
- In 1994 the American Chemical Society accredited WestConn's chemistry major; in 1996, the accreditation was extended to the biochemistry option. WestConn is the only public university in Connecticut with an American Chemical Society-approved program in biochemistry.
- The Jane Goodall Institute entered into an agreement with WestConn (1994) to establish an affiliation to promote environmental studies. The collaboration includes an annual visit and presentation by Dr. Goodall, the development of teacher-training workshops, and the organization and implementation of environmental education seminars.
- An M.F.A. Visual Arts has been established, making WestConn one of four schools in the state offering the degree (the other three are Yale, the University of Connecticut, and the University of Hartford). In 2000, the faculty in the program developed an informal visiting artist partnership with the Weir Farm Trust (the only national park in the country devoted to American painting).
- In December 2000, 21 Bahamian students graduated from the College of the Bahamas with a WestConn degree in Health Care Administration.
- Theatre students travel to Scotland every other year to participate in the Edinburgh Festival.
- An Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership received state approval in December 2002. WestConn will be only the thirteenth school in the nation to offer the degree.
- The University is awaiting approval from the Board of Governors for an M.F.A. in Professional Writing.
- The Social Work Department and the Department of Management have established a not-for-profit Executive Forum with a focus on building the capacity of area agencies to serve community needs.
- The Ancell School of Business created a CEO Forum for business executives in 1996. The forum offers area chief executive officers the opportunity to meet together in an informal atmosphere to discuss problems of mutual interest and concern.

Western Connecticut State University is authorized by the Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education to confer the B.A., B.S., B.B.A., and B.M. in a variety of academic and professional disciplines, and the M.A., M.S., M.S.M., M.H.A., M.B.A., M.F.A., and the Ed.D. at the graduate level. An A.S. in Liberal Arts is also offered.

The Connecticut State University System establishes program objectives for the system as a whole, and the programs and instruction for each of the individual campuses are aligned with those objectives. After campus approval at all levels, new degree programs must be approved by the CSU system-wide Council of Academic Vice Presidents, the CSU Board of Trustees, and the Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education. All programs follow the Connecticut State Department of Higher Education's official Program Inventory and are in compliance with the Rules and Regulations for Licensure and Accreditation of Institutions and Programs of Higher Education outlined by the state of Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education.

In the Mission Statement, the University has identified facilitating learning as its primary function. Three University Senate standing committees (the University Planning and Budgeting Committee, the Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum and Academic Standards, and the Graduate Council) are charged with ensuring that academic programs are consistent with WestConn's Mission, Principles, and Values. Specific procedures are in place to assist academic departments in curricular development, modification, and review. These procedures require detailed justification of proposals and successive approvals at the department, school, governance, and administrative level. A detailed summary of curricular procedures for undergraduate and graduate programs and courses may be found in the faculty handbook.

Each undergraduate and graduate program offering is clearly articulated. Policies and procedures for admission to programs are published in the appropriate catalog and online. Some programs have special criteria. For example, the Music Department requires an audition. Admission to degree status in the teacher education program follows the Connecticut Department of Education certification requirements.

Instructional methodologies are consistent with best practices in the disciplines and the instructor's approach to teaching and learning. The Fall 2002 Faculty/Staff Survey responses indicate that methods of instruction include class discussions, lectures, independent projects, cooperative learning, experiential learning and field studies, recitals, demonstrations, shows, group projects, and technology enhanced instruction (see Standard VII for additional information on technology).

A listing of required courses and goals for all undergraduate and graduate programs is published in the appropriate catalog, and each student is given an official program sheet that includes a listing of all prerequisites and course work in the major. The Registrar uses the fulfillment of these requirements to certify students for graduation.

Formally admitted students must enroll in a degree program. For the baccalaureate degree, undergraduates are required to earn at least 122 credits including the physical education requirement in order to graduate. At least 30 semester hours must be taken at WestConn and a minimum of half of the credits in the major must be earned at the University. The maximum number of credits by examination that may be applied to the bachelor's degree is 60; for an associate degree, the maximum is 30 credits.

Existing programs are periodically and systematically reviewed by departments, Schools, and governance. The Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum and Academic Standards (CUCAS), a standing committee of the University Senate, is charged with reviewing undergraduate programs; the Graduate Council is responsible for review of graduate programs. The Assessment Committee, a standing committee of the University Senate, reviews programs for assessment of student learning. Programs with external accreditation are reviewed by their accrediting bodies. In addition to accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, the Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education, and the Connecticut State Department of Education, several graduate and undergraduate programs (e.g., Chemistry, Counseling, Music, Nursing, and Social Work,) are accredited nationally and reviewed by discipline-related agencies. The quality of planning and evaluation activities for all programs has been enhanced by the establishment of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (1996) and the implementation of revised procedures for academic planning (1999).

Since 1993, the following changes involving discontinuance have been made in undergraduate programs:

- B.A. in English is now offered as a B.A. in English, American, and Comparative Literature
- B.A. in English: The Professional Writing Option is now offered as a B.A. in Professional Writing, with five options
- B.A. in Mathematics and Computer Science is now a B.A. in Mathematics and a B.A. in Computer Science
- B.A. in Meteorology will become a B.S. in Meteorology in Fall 2003
- The undergraduate honors program was revised and renamed “The University Scholars Program”

Similarly, new or revised graduate programs and options have been developed since 1993:

- M.A. in Biological and Environmental Sciences
- M.A. in Earth and Planetary Sciences
- M.F.A. in Visual Arts
- M.F.A. in Professional Writing (pending approval at the State level)
- M.S. in Justice Administration
- M.S. in Education with an Instructional Technology option
- M.S. in Education with a Special Education option
- M.S.N., with an Adult Nurse Practitioner option
- Post-Master’s Certificate, Adult Nurse Practitioner
- Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership (approved at the State level; awaiting NEASC review)

Special features include use of an apprenticeship model in the M.F.A. in Visual Arts Program, the low-residency program proposed for the M.F.A. in Professional Writing, theatre productions at the Edinburgh Festival every other year, and opportunities for astronomy students to spend time at the National Undergraduate Research Observatory at Northern Arizona University. Students regularly present papers at the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) and at other national meetings. WestConn has also put into place a Freshman Seminar that is being closely monitored for best practices and strategies for helping students to succeed in their academic programs.

Undergraduate and graduate program discontinuance procedures have been in place for over 20 years. As required by Board of Trustees regulations, arrangements must be made to ensure that if a program is eliminated, students already enrolled will still be able to graduate in a timely fashion. Between 1993 and 2002, the only undergraduate program that was discontinued was the option in Biotechnology (May 2000) offered by the Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences (it is still offered by the Chemistry Department). To better serve needs of students and the region, the following changes involving discontinuance have been made in graduate programs:

- M.A. in Oceanography and Limnology became the M.A. in Biological and Environmental Sciences (1996)
- M.B.A.: specializations are no longer offered
- M.S. options and concentrations in Child and Adolescent Study, Early Childhood Education, Earth, Space and Environmental Sciences, and Remedial Reading and Remedial Language Arts Certification are no longer offered

WestConn provides a variety of options in order to accommodate the diverse instructional needs of its students. In addition to the Fall and Spring semesters (15 weeks of classes scheduled throughout the day and evening, including some Saturday courses), four Summer sessions, Spring Break, and a Winter Intersession are offered. The instructional objectives, performance expectations, and learning

outcomes of the alternatively structured and scheduled courses are comparable to those of the traditional courses. Prerequisites and departmental requirements are identical. Assignments and assessment criteria are consistent with course objectives. The total number of hours of instruction is set by the collective bargaining agreement. Instructional support (library and information services, technology resources, audio-visual equipment, and the bookstores) is available for all sessions. Distance learning courses are offered in cooperation with our sister institutions (Central, Eastern, and Southern). Students enrolled in Distance Learning courses are issued an ID and are eligible to use campus facilities. Distance learning courses are taught by full-time as well as part-time faculty, and students may interact with faculty through a two-way audio system; the Picture-Tel video system, installed in 1998, enables two-way video.

Cooperative Education, combining formal classroom work with on-the-job experience in cooperation with business, industry, government agencies, and other employers, offers students additional opportunities for professional development, academic achievement, and personal growth. Cooperative education credit is available as a free elective on a Pass/Fail basis, or students may earn a letter grade in an academic area through the appropriate department (*Undergraduate Catalog*, 37). Some professional programs, including education, nursing, medical technology, and social work, require that students have community-based field experience. Essential student support on campus is provided to students on field assignments, but the University also enters into contracts defining the responsibilities of both parties when working with service agencies that regularly offer field placements.

A variety of conferences, institutes, lectures, workshops, and other enrichment activities are offered to the campus community and to the community at large. Offerings have included music programs, noted speakers, theatre presentations, art exhibits, and workshops that address specific issues. These activities are an extension of and are compatible with WestConn's Mission, Principles, and Values.

Individual faculty have the sole responsibility for awarding grades. (*Collective Bargaining Agreement*, 4.2.2, 13). The grading system and quality points grading system are described in the catalogs. Students may appeal a grade through a defined procedure published in the catalog. The Registrar's Office evaluates students' progress toward a degree. This information is also available to the students' advisers, authorized administrative and faculty personnel, and the students themselves through the Banner administrative software system.

The undergraduate and graduate catalogs (in print and online) provide information on transferring credits earned at other institutions, in the Armed Forces, through the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), or through prior learning via a contractual arrangement with Charter Oak State College. Such credits are applied to meet graduation requirements but are not considered in determining grade point averages. When appropriate, WestConn may use credential evaluation services for international students.

Although WestConn is part of the CSU system, the University retains responsibility for all credit-bearing courses, including course content and delivery, the selection and approval of faculty, admission, registration, retention, student evaluation, and the awarding and recording of credit. Instructional delivery is at the discretion of the instructor, subject to policies established by governance and published in the faculty handbook.

Academic personnel searches (full- and part-time) are conducted by the departments. The departments' recommendations are subject to the review by the School dean, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Executive Assistant to the President for Multicultural Affairs and Disability Services, the Dean of Human Resources, and the President.

Students confer with their advisers prior to registration. The academic progress of undergraduate students is closely monitored. At midterm, students who have been identified by faculty as academically at risk are offered support through their departments, the deans, and the residence halls. At the end of each semester, the School deans review students' records. Students whose G.P.A. falls below the 2.0 (1.7 for first-semester freshmen) required for Good Standing are placed on Academic Probation and are advised of the many resources available to help them. Their major departments are notified. If the students do not meet requirements by the end of the next semester, they may be placed on Academic Suspension. This means that they lose matriculation and may enroll only as non-matriculated students until their grades justify reapplication for admission to the University.

Graduate students confer with the Dean of Graduate Studies and their Graduate Program Coordinator prior to admission to a program and then are responsible for following their program sheet and checking with the appropriate coordinator periodically. The progress of graduate students is monitored by their respective Graduate Coordinators and the Dean of Graduate Studies and External Programs. A graduate student (except for M.B.A. students) whose G.P.A. falls below 3.0 is placed on Academic Probation. A graduate student on Probation who does not regain Good Standing within two semesters will be dismissed for unsatisfactory academic performance.

Faculty are required to take attendance and submit course grades. Procedures are in place to allow a student to add or drop a course in the first week of a semester or to withdraw without academic penalty until the end of the tenth week of a semester. Evaluation methods to measure student progress include competency-based grading, mid-term and final exams, quizzes, term and/or research papers, and student presentations. Individual instructors are responsible for determining final grades.

Appraisal

Overall, the University effectively fulfills its commitment to "facilitate learning" through programs that help students to "attain the highest standards of academic achievement" (Mission, Principles, and Values). There is a strong academic foundation in place and standards are applied consistently across Schools, departments, and programs. Resources are sufficient to support programs and instruction, although the current fiscal uncertainty in the state may limit opportunities for expansion and enhancement.

Faculty members at the University are dedicated and committed to learning and teaching. (For information on the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, please see Standard V.) Curricular procedures are clearly specified in the *Faculty Handbook 2001-2005* and assure that new programs or modifications of programs are congruent with the institution's Mission, Principles, and Values. Governance committees at the school and institutional levels act responsibly in their review and analysis of proposals, and the additional requirement of Administrative approval ensures that sufficient resources are available to implement programs.

Faculty leadership through membership on the departmental and School technology committees and the University-wide Instructional Technology Committee has led to a number of improvements and innovations in the integration of various technologies into course delivery in every discipline. Faculty who are successful early adapters have offered workshops on various software and multimedia packages for their peers. ERes, a user-friendly electronic reserve system that makes course materials available at any time of the day or night, is accessed through the library web page, and an increasing number of faculty in a variety of disciplines are taking advantage of the system to Web-enable their courses.

According to the Fall 2002 Faculty/Staff Survey, 93% of the full-time faculty respondents believe that the “need for remedial instruction is a growing problem at WestConn.” This is a national problem which we share. To address concerns about underprepared students, freshman to sophomore retention rates and graduation rates, a number of recommendations have been put into place. As a short-term measure, a Dean of Freshmen and Academic Support Services was appointed for the 2001-2002 academic year (renewed for 2002-2003). The Academic Advisement Center focuses on advising undeclared students. A large number of faculty members serve as advisers to these students, and a half-time staff adviser is also available.

A mentoring program for new faculty was established in 1995, and the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), established in 2001, has sponsored a number of sessions. (For additional information on CELT, please see Standard V.)

Since 1993, a number of initiatives have been undertaken to improve academic services and accountability. Systematic evaluation plans are in various stages of refinement, but all departments have developed an assessment plan. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, the Assessment Committee, and departmental evaluation committees are working with programs to improve evaluation, with particular attention to the “feedback loop” -- using data to make changes in curricula and/or instruction to enhance learning. (For detailed information, please see Standard III.)

Information about academic policies and procedures is widely disseminated, and print and online materials are reviewed regularly for adequacy, consistency, and accuracy.

Some faculty have concerns about online courses and programs that include: enrollment caps (which many believe should be lower for online than for on ground courses), problems with technical support at the System Office, and the decisions made at the System level about the choice of course management software. The administration has concerns about the costs of online programs and the fact that a faculty member who teaches an online course is not available to teach its on ground equivalent, complicated by the fact that there are contractual limits on the number of adjuncts.

Projection

A number of initiatives are underway that should enhance programs and services. For example, the Academic Policy Committee will be meeting early in the Spring 2003 semester to consider the responses from faculty, staff, and students to the question “What Gets in the Way?” The Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching is sponsoring a session on Richard J. Light’s book, *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds* (Cambridge, 2001), that is expected to begin a campus-wide discussion of issues that directly relate to program enhancement. During the Spring semester, appropriate Academic and Student Affairs personnel will also be reviewing the responses to the faculty and student surveys conducted in the Fall 2002 semester in order to look for areas that may need improvement.

Several promising interdisciplinary initiatives are underway. One is the Graphics Research Group, sponsored by faculty in Computer Science and Art. The GRG brings together students and faculty in a number of different disciplines to work on projects that involve both content and multimedia technology. Planning for an interdisciplinary post-baccalaureate certificate in gerontology is making its way through the curriculum proposal and approval stages.

The faculty will continue to integrate technology into teaching and learning, a process that has been underway for at least ten years. There are already a number of online and technology-enhanced courses, but many more will be added over the next few years once Campus Pipeline (the portal

software) and WebCT (course management software) are available. In the meantime, the number of faculty using ERes is expected to grow significantly.

Wherever appropriate, professional programs will continue efforts to obtain approval by external accrediting agencies.

The University will continue to develop and enhance graduate programs. Two new programs were approved through the State level during the Fall 2002 semester: The Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership was approved at the State level during the Fall 2002 semester. The M.F.A. in Visual Arts, already approved for licensure, received state accreditation. The M.F.A. in Professional Writing is a candidate for approval by the Board of Governors. All three of these initiatives hold great promise for the students and for the institution.

A review of the *Graduate Catalog* has been completed, and recommendations for revisions, changes, and deletions made in time for the 2003 edition. A similar close review of the *Undergraduate Catalog* is underway. In both cases, changes will also be made to the online versions.

As faculty receive more training and become more comfortable with the Banner Administrative Software System and as problems with the software itself are resolved, electronic access to student data will be facilitated and that aspect of advising improved.

The faculty and administration will continue to work on ways to be more creative and flexible in course delivery and structure so that students are best served and programs are competitive.

The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, the Assessment Committee, and the departmental assessment committees will continue to improve evaluation plans, to analyze results of assessment, and to put into place improvements based on those analyses.

Faculty and administrators will continue to seek external funding to support the development and enhancement of programs and courses.

Undergraduate Degree Programs (4.12-4.19)

Description

Each of WestConn's three Schools has developed a mission statement complementary to the University's Mission, Principles, and Values. Every academic program also has a statement of purpose aligned with both the University's mission and the appropriate department's statement. The *Undergraduate Catalog* lists the introductory coursework needed, the sequence of advanced coursework, the requirements for graduation, and the expected educational outcomes of each academic program. University documents, including the *Undergraduate Catalog*, departmental program sheets and brochures, and course outlines provide information about the relationship between academic curricula and the abilities and scholastic preparation required of students admitted to degree programs.

General Education at WestConn: As reported in the last self-study, revised General Education requirements, approved by the University Senate, were implemented in Fall 1993. The revision maintained a distributive structure for General Education, but changed from course-specific to disciplinary requirements and allowed students to complete some work at an advanced level, subject to departmental approval. In the approval process, the Senate reviewed the existing Nine Objectives

of the Common Core and reaffirmed the appropriateness of their application to the revised requirements.

Courses in the five areas of General Education (Communication Skills, Humanities, Social and Behavior Sciences, Natural Science and Mathematics, and Physical Education), and the new writing intensive requirement constitute more than a third of the student's undergraduate program. Placement in or exemption from skill area courses (mathematics, for example) is determined by tests. Students who do not meet the minimum standard in any skill area are required to take remedial courses (ENG 098 and/or MAT 098) that do not count toward a degree.

The *Undergraduate Catalog* lists all degree programs, majors, and concentrations/certificates alphabetically by School and department. Program sheets are designed to illustrate how the range of human knowledge (general education) and commitment to a particular area of inquiry (concentration, major, career field) are balanced in each program.

Associate Degree Requirements: The School of Arts and Sciences offers a 62-semester hour A.S. in Liberal Arts to students who have completed all general education requirements (42 semester hours) and 20 semester hours of unrestricted electives. Students must maintain a minimum grade point average of C (2.0) to receive the Associate in Science degree.

Baccalaureate Degree Requirements: Each undergraduate program in the University includes a general education requirement and a major to successfully complete the degree program. Changes in program sheets are made through an established process that is outlined in the *Faculty Handbook 2001-2005*. The official program sheets, maintained by the Vice President for Academic Affairs, identify specific information. A brief summary of program requirements for each major is printed in the *Undergraduate Catalog 2002-2003*.

Responsibility for reviewing course level requirements for new and revised degree programs lies with the departments and the School curriculum committees. The Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum and Academic Standards (CUCAS) reviews proposals approved by the School committees based on the program and course outlines submitted. Course numbering is described in the *Undergraduate Catalog 2002-2003* (37) with 100-level courses considered introductory and 400-level advanced. Additional resources needed for personnel, the library, or technology must be included as part of the course proposal.

In the major, students usually (Education majors are an exception) begin with introductory (100-level) courses and progress through the program to advanced courses, generally at the 300 level or above. The interrelatedness of areas of concentration (major, career field) may be seen on each program sheet. In the natural and social sciences, for example, the student is required to take courses in related areas as part of the major. Pre-professional programs (for example, nursing, education, and social work) include requirements stipulated by the professional accrediting agencies. General education courses offer students the opportunity to contextualize learning in the major within the broader spectrum of human knowledge.

In order to graduate, students must achieve a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher (with A = 4.0) for all credits earned at WestConn, as well as a grade point average of 2.0 or higher in the major. Some departments (Education, Communications and Theatre Arts, Health Promotion and Exercise Science, Nursing, and all undergraduate departments in the Ansell School of Business) require higher grade point averages for retention and graduation.

Appraisal

Alumni have been positive in evaluating their experiences at WestConn. In the Survey of Graduates 1999-2000, 93% of respondents would recommend WestConn to a friend and indicated that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of classroom instruction. Almost all rated their preparation at the University as adequate to excellent. A strong majority agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “My major program prepared me well for my current occupation.” They agreed or strongly agreed that their education at WestConn is well utilized in their present work.

Professional accreditation is evidence that WestConn students are receiving an education that is current and meets rigorous national standards in the disciplines. For example, the Ansell School of Business and the School of Professional Studies, as well as the Chemistry Department in the School of Arts and Sciences, have separate accrediting bodies that review programs for the standards of the profession:

- Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB; candidacy)
- Council on Social Work Education (CSWE; Baccalaureate Level)
- National League for Nursing
- Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP)
- National Association of Schools of Music (NASM)
- American Chemical Society (ACS)

Faculty and administrators at the University are making concerted efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of programs in preparing students for success in their graduate and professional lives.

The General Education requirement currently in place is congruent with the University’s Mission, Principles, and Values and with the goals established in 1986. In the Fall 2002 Faculty/Staff Survey, 72% percent of full-time faculty responding to the statement: “The general education requirements provide a strong liberal arts foundation for students in your program,” answered in the affirmative. Spearheaded by the School of Arts and Sciences, a multi-school, multi-disciplinary task force is currently conducting a review of the general education requirements.

Departments regularly revise their curricula to meet changes in the discipline as well as to respond to student course evaluations and alumni survey. The Department of English, Comparative Literature and Writing, for example, undertook an extensive revision of its undergraduate and graduate programs. The department has added a Professional Writing Major with five options: Creative Writing; Professional Writing: Business; Professional Writing: Public Relations; Professional Writing: Journalism/Freelance; and General Writing. A Writing Minor (Professional Writing, Journalism, and Broadcast Journalism) was also developed. The Nursing Department revised its curriculum in 1999 and the department is carefully monitoring the progress of students. The Music and Music Education Department was visited by a National Association of Schools of Music peer review team in the Fall 2002 semester; and has received NASM accreditation. The Counselor Education Program received full reaccreditation in 2003.

WestConn’s chemistry department is among only 15% of such departments nationwide with accreditation in both chemistry and biochemistry.

Eighty-five percent of the respondents to the 1999-2000 Current Student Survey indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “Most courses challenged me intellectually,” and a similar number thought that they had learned a great deal in their major courses. The percentages for seniors are very similar for the 2001-2002 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), with

most respondents evaluating their entire educational experience at WestConn as “Excellent” or “Good,” and indicating they would “Definitely” or “Probably” go to WestConn if they could start all over again.

These University-wide student and alumni satisfaction surveys are consistent with the Report of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) Peer Review Team in the Fall of 2001 which found that the Ansell School of Business had made a positive impression on graduates and current students.

Projection

The University will continue to focus on offering high-quality, intellectually challenging programs that prepare students for success in their graduate studies and professional careers.

Departments will continue to evaluate and enhance existing programs and to develop new ones to meet the requirements of students and the community.

The task force reviewing general education will make its report during the 2003-2004 academic year and can be expected to make recommendations based on a careful review of the goals, requirements, and assessment data.

The School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Professional Studies are working together to ensure high quality advising of secondary education majors.

Faculty will continue their efforts to integrate technology into their teaching. Additional faculty will be trained in the use of ERes (electronic reserves) and WebCT (the course management system), for example.

New emphasis will be given to developing interdisciplinary programs, making use of courses provided by different departments within Schools and across Schools.

Accreditation by external agencies will be continued and new accreditation sought wherever appropriate. The Department of Education and Educational Psychology, for example, is pursuing Connecticut State Department of Education reaccreditation with National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Standards.

The deans and the departments in all three Schools will undertake a systematic review of official course outlines, the documents that are the starting point for syllabi development. The course outlines will be updated or revised where appropriate.

The Macricostas Family Foundation has pledged \$1.1 million to WestConn (the largest pledge in the University’s history) to establish an endowed chair for Hellenic and Modern Greek Studies as part of the proposed new Center for Culture and Values. The gift will also establish and support the Macricostas Scholarship Endowment for foreign-born students, the Constantine S. Macricostas Lectures Series, and the Macricostas Entrepreneurial Endowment. (For information on the \$1 million Jason and Ellen M. Hancock Student Endowment Fund, please see Standard VI.)

Graduate Degree Programs (4.20-4.25)

Description

Academic degree programs at the graduate level have been designed to provide opportunities to pursue advanced study in the discipline. Graduate programs in the professions have the additional requirement of satisfying professional association and/or licensure criteria. The rationale and requirements for each program are clearly stated in the *Graduate Catalog* and are consistent with the role and scope statement for graduate programs.

Program objectives are listed in the *Graduate Catalog*. Students are expected to have appropriate undergraduate preparation and to build upon this competence in their graduate programs. All graduate programs have requirements significantly beyond those of undergraduate programs, and all require a culminating experience (thesis, research project, or comprehensive examination). The programs are rigorous, requiring both specialization and generalized knowledge of the field.

Resources: The terms of the current collective bargaining agreement do not provide for a separate graduate faculty. However, faculty members teaching in the graduate programs meet the qualifications set by the state Department of Higher Education's Rules and Regulations for Licensure and Accreditation.

Departments administer their budgets and provide support staff. A Dean of Graduate Studies and External Programs was appointed in the Fall of 2002.

Full-time faculty members teaching in the Ed.D. program will have a minimum of three to six credits per semester (or six to twelve credits annually) of reassigned time to pursue research and scholarship.

Most programs have a research component and research projects are directed by faculty with the requisite education and professional experience.

A variety of criteria are used to determine need for faculty and allocation of lines. Adjunct faculty are hired by almost every department to complement the strengths and expertise of the full-time faculty. A number of professional programs (e.g., business and nursing) offer courses taught by faculty who have clinical or professional expertise and experience in their respective disciplines (e.g., CPA, certification in oncology, studio art, rehabilitation, critical care, and neurological nursing).

Each graduate program has a faculty member assigned to coordinate and oversee faculty; the coordinators have programmatic responsibilities, as well. Coordinators also interview incoming students and advise and monitor students as they progress through a program. All program coordinators are members of the Graduate Council, which meets monthly to review and coordinate the University's graduate programs.

Master's Programs: The Master of Arts degree programs have been designed to offer students the opportunity for in-depth study of a specific field for professional advancement, personal development, or preparation for further study. The M.A. is offered in Biological and Environmental Sciences, Earth and Planetary Sciences, English, History, and Mathematics. Each program offers a minimum of 30 semester hours in the discipline. Students develop a basic understanding of research

appropriate to the discipline through course work, independent thesis research, a research project or a comprehensive exam.

The M.B.A., M.H.A, M.S. in Ed., M.S. in Music Education, M.S. in Justice Administration, and M.S.N. are all professional or practice-oriented degrees designed to help students develop the analytical and professional skills needed to practice and advance in their respective professions. Students are prepared to apply what they have learned to advance their careers in middle or upper management positions in business administration, criminal justice, health administration, nursing, and education.

The M.S. in Education secondary and elementary programs offer concentrations or options in Curriculum, English, Instructional Technology, Mathematics, Reading and Special Education. The M.S. in Counselor Education may be earned in Community Counseling or in School Counseling.

Assessment is in place for all Master's programs, based on comprehensive and cumulative projects or examinations to evaluate learning outcomes. All M.A. programs require a comprehensive examination or a thesis. The M.F.A. in Visual Arts requires a thesis exhibition. The M.S. in Education requires a thesis or research seminar and project. The M.B.A. requires a research project evaluated by external examiners.

Doctoral Program: With state licensure of a five-year pilot program (January 6, 2003) and NEASC authorization to proceed (May 21, 2003), the University has recruited students and assigned faculty to begin implementation of the Ed.D. program in Instructional Leadership. This program, one of thirteen of its kind nationally, is designed to address critical issues raised by the educational reform movement. Coursework for the degree will prepare classroom teachers to assume roles of instructional leadership within their school districts. Graduates will return to their schools prepared to address such issues as reaching disengaged students, mentoring student teachers, working with experienced colleagues to improve their instruction, and reaching low-income and underserved populations.

Response to NEASC Questions: In its letter of May 21, 2003, the Commission requested response to three questions regarding numbers of faculty, program content in relation to need, and assessment for quality and relevance:

1. To ensure a sufficient number of faculty to serve the projected numbers of students, the University conducted extensive evaluations. The decision taken, in accord with recommendations of the state visiting team, was to stagger cohort enrollment, admitting a new cohort every other year (1st, 3rd, and 5th year). This procedure will maintain a 1:8 faculty-student ratio, satisfactory at the doctoral level. Additional funding will be available annually to hire methodologists and other consultants should the need arise.
2. Program content was developed with specific reference to the needs of prospective students and the school districts in which they will work. The close collaboration between program planners and regional school administrators is evident in the membership of the program's Advisory Board: seven school superintendents and directors. The superintendents, directors, and other members of the Advisory Board met regularly with the Ed.D. Planning Committee to develop a shared vision of student competencies and program structure needed for a strong doctoral program in Instructional Leadership. School districts have made clear their need for graduates of this program.

3. To assess program quality and relevance in relation to goals, the Ed.D. Planning Committee constructed a Curriculum Alignment Chart that maps program objectives and explains how areas of expertise (instruction, curriculum design, measurement and evaluation, leadership and professional development, enhancement of student development and achievement, and use of technology) will be addressed course by course. Beyond this, the program Evaluation Plan examines research questions, sources and types of data, the data collection plan, and the expected outcome. This information will allow the faculty to assess the degree to which the program is meeting its goals and make curricular adjustments as appropriate.

For documentation supporting the responses above, please see the Ed.D. proposal and, more succinctly, the *WCSU's Response to Staff Report* (11/1/02), prepared for the Connecticut Advisory Board on Accreditation. Both the full proposal and the *Response* are available in the Team Workroom.

Appraisal

Since the last NEASC self-study, the University has made a number of changes in its graduate programs, eliminating or modifying some and developing new ones in response to identified needs. The addition of a doctoral program in instructional leadership is a good example of how the University continues to build on its areas of expertise. The program has been designed to be responsive to the changing relationships among teaching, learning, curriculum content, and technology. WestConn has taken the initiative in conceptualizing and assessing programs to support and develop the instructional capabilities of teachers through the Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership, approved at the State level. The number of graduate programs has grown from 8 in 1993 to 15 in 2002; two more programs have been approved and will be in place in 2003.

All programs in the Ansell School of Business, and some programs in the Schools of Professional Studies and Arts and Sciences have advisory boards with representation from professionals in the field. The Ed.D. program has an advisory board that includes, among others, six superintendents from the greater Danbury area school district, a Teachers College, Columbia University, faculty member, and the Supervising Superintendent, Chancellor's District, the New York City Department of Education. The advisory group meets regularly with the Ed.D. Planning Committee with a goal of continuously improving the content of the Instructional Leadership program.

The position of Dean of Graduate and External Programs was created to bring coordination and overall leadership to the increasingly significant commitment of the University at the graduate level.

Faculty continue to express concern about the workload of faculty who teach graduate courses because the Collective Bargaining Agreement does not distinguish between undergraduate and graduate workload. In 1993, the self-study noted that the "workload of [faculty] teaching graduate courses continues to be a problem since the same load credit is, at present, given for teaching graduate and undergraduate courses." Since there is a perception that this situation continues, all departments, at the request of the University Senate, have been asked to address the issue, but it is recognized that change from a 12-credit to a 9-credit load is a contractual issue. The AACSB Peer Review Team noted the standard teaching load (12 hours per semester with two or three preparations the norm), and considered this to be a "heavy load for a school trying to deliver a graduate business program as well as a full complement of undergraduate majors."

Projection

The University will continue to develop new programs (e.g., the proposed M.F.A. in Professional Writing and a certificate program in Gerontology) and to modify existing programs on the basis of data and needs assessments.

The new Dean of Graduate and External Programs is working with the administration and the Graduate Council to continue to identify areas that need to be strengthened (e.g., standardization of processes and procedures).

To address issues that have arisen as a result of the growth in the number of graduate programs, members of the Graduate Council are examining and updating (where appropriate) their bylaws and procedures.

There are plans to investigate new master's degree programs, for example, an M.F.A. in Musical Theatre to complement the master's programs in Visual Arts and Professional Writing. Also under consideration is an interdisciplinary graduate program in arts management. The new Center for Fine and Performing Arts, scheduled for completion in 2007, will offer an excellent venue for new programs.

To ensure program quality, the Ed.D. faculty and the administration will carefully monitor assessment data and will continue to work closely with the advisory committee.

As graduate programs at the four CSU system institutions continue to increase in number and enrollment, it is expected that workload issues for faculty teaching in these programs will be addressed in the next collective bargaining agreement.

Research and Scholarship (4.26-4.29)

Description

Scholarship is an integral part of the Mission, Principles, and Values of Western Connecticut State University. The first line of the WestConn Mission Statement says that the University is a "creative intellectual resource for the people and institutions of Connecticut." Faculty scholarly activities are vital and creative intellectual resources at the University.

Facilitating learning is the stated primary purpose of the University, and it is understood that faculty are therefore required to be "active scholars." Scholarly activity at WestConn has three components: (1) Research (discipline, applied, and pedagogical); (2) Scholarship; and (3) Creative endeavor. (*Faculty Handbook 2001-2005*, 136-7)

Eighty-seven percent of full-time faculty responding to the Fall 2002 Faculty/Staff Survey indicated that they had published or presented scholarly work during the last six years, and nearly all agreed with the statement that faculty scholarship in their department enhances instruction. The faculty profiles and the annual reports of the deans of the schools, and the Faculty Recognition Ceremony booklets indicate the variety of scholarly and research activities engaged in by faculty. The President's *Annual Report* also lists faculty scholarly achievements and grant/fellowship awards.

Faculty-Student Research: With faculty mentoring, students participate regionally and nationally in competitions such as the National Weather Forecasting Competition, the International Mathematical Contest in Modeling, and the Conference on Undergraduate Research. Many major programs require the preparation of a senior thesis. Some student research is published in *Clio*, *The Western Scholar*, and the *Western Connecticut State University Social Science Journal*, for example.

Resources: Research and scholarly and creative activity are supported by several CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Special Funds. CSU/AAUP grants offer up to \$5,000 per project and are available to all full-time faculty. A total of \$22,269.59 is available in 2002-2003 to full-time faculty and \$5,291.00 for part-time instructors to support curriculum-related projects applied for through the Faculty Development and Recognition Committee. Fifty-four hours of reassigned time for research is available through the Research and Development Committee. Retraining funds are also available.

As noted above, full-time faculty in the Ed.D. program will have reassigned time (six to twelve credits annually) to devote to research and scholarship.

Sabbatic leave to undertake scholarly and creative projects is available to tenured faculty who have at least six years of service, and funds are available to support full- and part-time faculty travel to professional seminars, workshops, and conferences. Faculty may also receive paid leave for such travel "at the discretion of the President...for up to five working days for each occurrence."

There are also School-specific resources available to faculty. The Ansell School of Business has an endowment that generates up to \$75,000 per year that may be used to support a variety of activities including travel funds to support faculty attendance at professional conferences or research-related travel. Through the generosity of an anonymous donor, the dean of the School of Arts and Sciences has had funds to support Student-Faculty Collaborative Research. Since 1995, more than 100 projects have been supported through this special program.

The Office of Grant Programs provides information about federal, foundation, and corporate funding sources available to support the research, scholarly, creative, and curricular interests of faculty. The office also provides assistance in proposal preparation and grant administration. Workshops on proposal development are provided to departments, classes, or groups upon request. The University is a member of the Grants Resource Center of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities which provides daily updates on grants and contracts, as well as an online database. As of Fall 2002, the Office of Grant Programs subscribes to SPIN, a database with thousands of federal and non-federal funding opportunities; faculty, staff, and students may also establish profiles that trigger the mailing of information relevant to their grant interests. In 2002, faculty and staff submitted \$613,000 in requests for external funding and were awarded \$387,588 to support research, scholarly, and creative projects. Faculty received an additional \$90,037 in CSU/AAUP funds for research for a total of \$477,625.

The Institutional Review Board (formerly known as the Human Subjects Review Committee) is responsible for ensuring compliance with state and federal regulations related to research with human subjects. The IRB reviews research protocols for all projects, funded or unfunded, involving human subjects. Everyone who does research with human subjects or supervises research with human subjects is required to complete online training through the National Institutes of Health web site. The University also has an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee responsible for reviewing protocols that call for the use of vertebrate animals in research. WestConn is registered as a Research Facility, in accordance with provisions of the Animal Welfare Act, by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Appraisal

In the review, tenure, and promotion process, WestConn has consistently recognized and rewarded excellence in the classroom. As the University has come to put greater value on research and scholarship, many recent faculty hires have earned their doctoral degrees at first-tier research

institutions. These faculty members come to WestConn with the expectation that their research and scholarly activities will be encouraged and supported. It is also the case that scholarship has assumed greater weight in the review process for renewal, tenure, and promotion, although clearly excellence in teaching remains the priority.

Resources to support research, scholarship, and creative work have increased over the last ten years, but time remains a problem for many faculty. In a survey conducted by the NEASC Subcommittee on Research and Scholarship, more than half the respondents identified time as the most limiting resource.

With an eye toward improving accountability, the Faculty Development and Recognition Committee and the Research and Development Committee have reviewed their respective guidelines for reporting the results of supported activities.

Having a full-time person in the Office of Grant Programs has meant that there is better support for faculty who are interested in seeking grants and fellowships. Forms have been revised and updated, and the Office has developed a web site; information and forms are available electronically from the web site and from the library's ERes site, as well. The subscription to the SPIN database provides a significant new resource for faculty. One SPIN workshop was offered in Fall 2002, but additional training is needed.

The Institutional Review Board (formerly called the Human Subjects Review Committee) has expanded its membership. The Board offered two workshops on human subjects issues to faculty and staff in 2001-2003, and members have reviewed forms, making changes and developing new forms where appropriate. The University requires that faculty, staff, and all others involved in human subjects research complete online training and follow federal, state, and institutional regulations governing such research.

The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) was not active in 2001-2002, but plans are underway to reconstitute the committee.

Projection

Continued growth and development of WestConn as a comprehensive university requires an increase in the amount of scholarly and creative activity by faculty. The University community will engage in an open dialogue to identify (1) what level of activity is appropriate given its Mission, Principles, and Values, and (2) an appropriate and effective strategy to achieve greater levels of scholarly productivity. The University will continue to hire new faculty who expect to be able to do research. Expansion of current programs to desired levels and development of additional quality programs must be balanced against the availability of state funding.

CSU/AAUP grants and reassigned time for research are two of the contractually mandated resources intended to support faculty scholarly activities. Greater accountability will be established to ensure appropriate levels of productivity by faculty who receive these grants and/or reassigned time.

Faculty and administrators are looking to develop more effective means of encouraging and rewarding faculty scholarly activities.

The Office of Grant Programs and the Fiscal Affairs Office will continue to enhance services to faculty and staff. Training and support in effective use of available technologies will be a priority.

The Institutional Review Board will continue its outreach activities to departments and divisions in order to ensure understanding of and compliance with Federal, state, and institutional policies governing research with human subjects.

The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee will be reestablished and workshops and tutorials will be offered to assure compliance with all regulations governing research with vertebrate animals.

Instruction (4.29-4.32)

Description

Consistent with WestConn's principle that "facilitating learning is our primary function," faculty at the University use a wide variety of instructional techniques including traditional lecture, technology-enhanced presentations, online courses, collaborative learning, and individualized instruction in appropriate laboratory and research settings.

During the past ten years, integration of technology into classroom instruction has increased significantly. Thirty-three classrooms are equipped with presentation technology (computers and LCD projectors, e.g.). Five of these classrooms have document cameras allowing for three-dimensional demonstrations. Every department has the opportunity to make use of multimedia in instruction. Each School has a technology committee whose chair is a member of the University-wide Information Technology Committee, a standing committee of the University Senate. Faculty members provide workshops on software and multimedia applications for their peers (these workshops were initiated by the School of Arts and Sciences Technology Steering Committee). Technology-equipped Learning Labs are available for students who need special assistance, and all students have access to 24-hour computer labs. Students are offered a number of workshops throughout the year to help them learn to use technology effectively.

There are now eleven departmental computer laboratories (compared to six in 1993) making it possible for students to have access to a computer during a class session. These classrooms are used extensively by the Music, Mathematics, Computer Science, Psychology, Art, English, Education, Finance, Accounting, and MIS departments. (For additional information on technology resources and workshops, please see Standard VII.)

Other instructional innovations have also been introduced. The new M.F.A. in Visual Arts uses an apprenticeship model. The M.F.A. in Professional Writing, when it is approved at the State level, will be a low-residency program, combining online courses and campus sessions. The discussion sections of the megasection Freshman English classes are led by graduate assistants under the close supervision of a member of the English Department faculty. Writing-intensive courses, in any area of the curriculum, fulfill a degree requirement. A psychology professor has received University support and external grant funding to do extensive testing and monitoring of students who elect to take the Freshmen Seminar. In an effort to bridge the gap between chemistry courses and chemistry as practiced in commercial and industrial laboratories, a Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) and Chromatography Data Systems (CDS) have been developed through a partnership between the Department of Chemistry and Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey businesses. The systems focus on integrated treatment of automated data gathering and handling, graphical method editing, and database management.

Honors Program: The University Scholars Program offers academically gifted students the opportunity to enroll in an Honors Seminar each fall. The seminars have an interdisciplinary theme or topic, and are designed to help students develop discussion, research, analytical, and writing skills.

In addition, students may take honors courses offered by any department or they may choose to work with a faculty member to develop an “enhanced course.” University scholars are also involved in community service, multicultural experiences, and specialized research and University events.

Contract Major: In consultation with a faculty adviser, a student may propose a program of study leading to the B.A. or B.S. degree. The contract major is intended to allow students whose academic interests extend beyond existing majors the flexibility to design a program of studies appropriate to their own educational goals. The proposed program must fulfill General Education and other University-wide degree requirements, with a major comprised of a minimum of 36 credits related to a specialized topic, theme, or area of concentration. Credits may be drawn from course offerings in one or more academic departments.

Honors Interdisciplinary Bachelor’s Degree Program: The Honors Interdisciplinary Bachelor’s Degree Program is a special kind of contract major. Highly motivated students may pursue a specialized course of study that examines a theme or idea from the perspectives of two or more disciplines. The program proposal is developed by the student with the assistance of a faculty adviser and must fulfill General Education and other University-wide requirements.

Study Abroad: WestConn students interested in study abroad may participate in the International Student Exchange Program (ISEP), a network of 225 institutions in the U.S. and around the world. Students’ tuition, room, and board costs abroad are the same as they would be at WCSU.

WestConn joins each year with the other three CSU institutions in offering spring and summer study abroad. The courses are taught overseas by CSU faculty and with CSU course designation, which makes it especially easy to transfer credits for work accomplished, observing the same academic standards and requirements as expected on campus.

Improving Instruction through Faculty Development: The University has the organizational mechanisms and the funds to create and promote faculty development directed toward enhancing learning and teaching. The Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) was established in 2001 to provide and promote programs and services to improve teaching effectiveness, and to serve as a forum for the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas and talents among faculty and staff, drawing on local, regional, and national resources.

The Office of Grant Programs is available to assist faculty and staff in preparing proposals for external funding to support innovation and curriculum development. The Faculty Development and Recognition Committee, a standing committee of the University Senate, is responsible for reviewing proposals and recommending funding for projects that develop and disseminate new teaching approaches, techniques, and strategies. Other resources include reassigned time, CBA-mandated funds (CSU/AAUP grants, e.g.), and travel funds to support curriculum development. A provision in the current faculty contract provides for funds to be allocated to support these activities. In 2001-2002, \$1,444,666 was available.

Assessing and Improving Instruction. Contractual procedures for faculty evaluation (renewal, tenure, promotion, professional assessment, and special assessment) remain unchanged since the 1992 self-study. (CBA, 4.11, 20ff.)

- Every six years, tenured faculty members undergo a “professional assessment;” for teaching faculty, the primary focus of the assessment is “to measure the member’s teaching effectiveness.”

- The principal criterion for assessments for tenure or promotion of teaching faculty is the quality of their teaching.
- The evaluation of non-tenured teaching faculty for renewal also relies heavily on assessment of the member's teaching.

In each case, the assessment process begins with the Department Evaluation Committee (DEC). The DEC's report includes a peer evaluation (usually based on at least one classroom observation) and course evaluations by students. The evaluations are returned to the instructor who is expected to use them to improve instruction. The appropriate School dean, the members of the Promotion and Tenure Committee, and the Administration also contribute to the decision.

New faculty have the opportunity to become involved in a voluntary mentoring program established in 1995.

Academic Advising: The primary responsibility for advising lies with faculty in the disciplines. A Dean of Freshmen and Academic Support Services was appointed for the 2001-2002 academic year (renewed for 2002-2003). This office served to coordinate the advising of students who have not declared a major. In Fall 2003 responsibility for the Advisement Center will be assumed by the Office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences. A number of faculty in a wide range of disciplines serve as advisers to undeclared students, but some students are advised by trained staff in the Advisement Center. The allocation of responsibility for an effective system of academic advising and procedures for carrying out these responsibilities are described in the collective bargaining agreement.

One semester before a student is expected to graduate, the Registrar's Office does an official audit of the student's progress toward a degree. To facilitate degree audits, advising information about the student's progress is available at any time to advisers and appropriate staff through the University's Banner system. At the graduate level the official audit is prepared by the Associate Director of Graduate Studies.

Those responsible for academic advising at the undergraduate level (virtually all teaching faculty) have ample information for carrying out these duties (program sheets, catalogs, *Student Handbook*, *Faculty Handbook*) and, in most cases, are prepared to discharge this responsibility. At the graduate level, the program coordinator takes responsibility for academic advising.

Appraisal

Undergraduate students in most degree programs have the option to take unrestricted electives, although the number of electives varies considerably among programs. Professional programs, particularly in Music and Education, have such a large number of requirements that there are few free electives available.

There have been problems posting transfer credits in Banner in a timely fashion.

Some printed program sheets need to be reviewed and updated.

Technology is critical to instruction on the WestConn campus. More than three-quarters of the full-time faculty responding to the Fall 2002 Faculty/Staff Survey agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "Technology is appropriately integrated into your curriculum." Two-thirds agreed that Media Services provides adequate technological support to the departments. Sixty-eight percent responded affirmatively to the statement: "Media Services provides equipment that functions properly," and a similar number agreed that Media Services provides appropriate technical assistance.

Remediation continues to be a concern. Of the class that entered in the Fall of 2002, 63% placed into Math 098 and 17% placed into English 098. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment has prepared a 13-year summary of remedial courses. Between 1990 and 1997, registrations in remedial English averaged 143 per academic year, of whom 81% passed the course. Of those who passed, 31% subsequently received a baccalaureate degree at WestConn. During that same period, an average of 443 were placed in Math 098 each year, of whom 70% passed the course and 46% subsequently graduated. (Numbers are available for 1997-2002, but it is too soon to calculate graduation rates.) Successful remediation, particularly in math, seems to be an indicator of subsequent academic success, but there are still many students who (a) place into remedial courses, (b) fail the courses, and (c) do not complete their degree programs at the University. The fact that there is no community college located in the Danbury area may partly explain the large numbers of enrolled students who fail the placement tests. These are often students who would have attended a two-year institution had one been available. Remediation in a university setting is an expensive and time-intensive process, and the faculty and administration are looking at alternatives.

More than two-thirds of the full-time faculty responding to the survey indicated that they believe their department has an effective system of academic advising, and a similar number of WestConn seniors rated the quality of academic advising as “Excellent” or “Good.”

Projection

Professional programs will continue to leave few opportunities for students to take free electives, but creative suggestions for addressing the problem may arise out of the General Education Task Force’s deliberations.

The faculty and administration will continue to work to enhance opportunities for students through the honors program, faculty-student research, study abroad, cooperative education, and career development.

When the campus portal (Campus Pipeline) and course management software (WebCT) become available, the integration of information technologies can be expected to increase significantly. Effective and widely available training and technical support will be key to successful implementation of these tools.

Academic departments, faculty advisers, and administration will give careful consideration to the report of the University Senate’s *ad hoc* committees on remediation and academic advisement (2001) and implement improvements that are economically feasible as quickly as possible.

Admissions and Retention (4.33-4.41)

Description

In Fall 1993, the total undergraduate headcount was 4,679, with an undergraduate FTE of 3,367 (FTE = 15 credit hours). In contrast, the Fall 2002 total undergraduate headcount was 5,274, with an undergraduate FTE of 4,085. The growth in FTE -- 21% since 1993 -- represents a major change for the institution. The growth began in earnest in Fall 1997, when 669 freshmen were admitted (496 the previous year), and accelerated in 2000 with the admission of 822 full-time freshmen.

The percentage of full-time undergraduates who self-identified as minorities rose from 13% of the total enrollment in Fall 1993 to 17% in Fall 2002.

Most graduate programs at WestConn were designed to be part-time. In Fall 1993, there were 59 full-time and 988 part-time graduate students, with a graduate FTE of 387. In Fall 2002, there were 44 full-time and 732 part-time graduate students, with a graduate FTE of 306 (FTE = 12 credit hours), representing a decline of 20.9%, with the FTE varying by program.

Admissions: Admissions policies and procedures are in compliance with state and federal regulations with regard to equal opportunity. The University's admission and retention policies are consistent with the CSU Board of Trustees' policies and WestConn's Mission, Principles, and Values. The policies are clearly stated in the *Undergraduate Catalog*, the *Graduate Catalog*, the student handbook, the University's viewbook, application materials, and other publications (in print and online). The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment reports enrollment data to the University community, the CSU System Office, and to Federal and state governments.

An Admissions Committee, composed of six faculty members (three elected, three administratively appointed), three students (selected by the Student Government Association), and the Director of Admissions (*ex officio*), has three areas of responsibility (*Faculty Handbook*, 26):

- To develop, review, and recommend to the University Senate and Administration policies that govern admission and readmission to the University
- To develop, review, and recommend to the University Senate and Administration policies that govern admission of transfer students
- To advise the Director of Admissions on action in relation to the admission or readmission of students who present special problems

The Committee meets at least once a month during the academic year.

The University has a number of programs to address identified needs of disabled and underprepared students; these programs are described in the catalogs and other University publications. The Office of Disability Services directs and coordinates services for students with disabilities. The Educational Achievement and Access Program (EA²P) offers under-prepared students a five-week summer program designed to enhance their academic skills. In addition, EA²P students have year-round access to the Writing Lab, the Math/Computer Science Clinic, the Study Skills/Reading Lab, individual and group counseling sessions, and special social and cultural events. (Please see Standard VI for additional information.) All entering freshmen except those with high SAT scores are given placement tests in English sentence structure, algebra, and college-level math. Students who need additional preparation are placed in remedial sections.

Admissions policies are in place for international students, veterans, guest students, readmitted students, and "fresh start" admission (students who previously matriculated, but whose GPA falls below 2.0 are eligible to apply for re-admission under certain conditions). Credit may be awarded for appropriate scores on standardized examinations (Advanced Placement Examinations, College Level Examination Program, or by taking college courses while still in secondary school; *Undergraduate Catalog*, 14).

Transfer: Undergraduate transfer applicants, defined as those who have previously earned 12 or more college credits, are required to provide an official transcript from each college or university attended. They must have a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.0 for all previous college-level work. Students with 45 or more credits must meet any special requirements for admission to a particular degree program or school. In evaluating credits for transfer, the Admissions Office uses standard guides and whenever appropriate consults with the chair of the relevant department; students

have the right of appeal. No more than 90 credits from an accredited four-year institution may be transferred into WestConn. To earn a WestConn baccalaureate degree, students must complete at least 30 credits at the University, including at least half the credits required in the major.

At the graduate level, courses for transfer credit (minimum grade of 3.0) are evaluated by the appropriate program coordinator and the Graduate Office. No more than nine credits may be transferred into most master's programs, with exceptions for credits from other CSU institutions and special requirements of the M.B.A. and M.S.N. degrees. To earn a master's degree from WestConn, students must complete at least 15 credits at the University.

In collaboration with the Connecticut Community Technical Colleges, CSU has established a Joint Standing Committee on Transfer and Articulation (see Public Act No. 01-165). WestConn has representatives on two working committees of this body. The CTC/CSU Committee on Nursing has forwarded recommendations to the Department of Higher Education; deliberations of the Committee on Business, Education, and Social Work are still in progress.

Retention: The University has a number of efforts underway designed to improve retention. The Writing Center, the Math/CS Lab, and the Study Skills Lab are available to students. There are programs (the EA²P, for example) directed toward improving underprepared students' readiness for college work. A freshman seminar is now in place. The Office of the Dean of Freshmen and Academic Support Services, created on a pilot basis, worked toward coordinating, complementing, and linking existing programs at the University. The goal is to provide students with the academic services necessary for a richer and more challenging experience at WestConn.

The retention rate of first-time full-time degree-seeking freshmen at WestConn, Fall 2001 to Fall 2002, was 69% (72% for females, 66% for males). The six-year graduation rate of first-time, full-time degree seeking students varies from a low of 35% (2002) to a high of 45% (1998), with the rate generally in the low- to mid- forties. The graduation rate for all CSU schools ranges from 38% to 42%.

By way of comparison, the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE), of which WestConn is a member, reports that for the 360 institutions that participated in its survey, 41% of students dropped out of college over a six-year period, with more than half leaving in the freshman year in 2002.

The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment has prepared a number of reports on retention, looking at many different variables, including SAT scores, high school rank, race, gender, whether or not the student was admitted through a special program (EA²P, e.g.), whether or not the student was a member of an athletic team, whether or not the student was placed in remedial English or Math classes, residential vs. commuter, etc. Using these data and other information, the University Senate's *ad hoc* Committee on Remediation made a number of recommendations for improving the remedial program at WestConn. Its main goal was to "*help under-prepared students get through college.*"

Freshman to sophomore retention rates for Black and Hispanic students have improved from 57% in 1992 to 65% for freshmen who entered in Fall 2001. The six-year graduation rate for Black and Hispanic students has stayed approximately the same:

- 26% for Black and Hispanic students who entered in 1992
- 25% for Black and Hispanic students who entered in 1996
- 44% for all students who entered in 1992

- 35% for all students who entered in 1996

In 1992, there were 70 Black and Hispanic students in the freshman class of 387; in 2001, there were 121 in an entering class of 848. Students who self-identify belonging to other ethnicities have remained at 4%.

The University has a number of initiatives underway designed to increase minority enrollment and persistence to the degree. For example, the Dean of the School of Professional Studies, members of the Education/Educational Psychology Department, and administrators and teachers from the Danbury Public Schools are working together on a program to interest minority students in teaching as a career. The Office of Minority Affairs is actively engaged in outreach to the African-American community in Danbury through the Concerned Black Men program. While the Educational Achievement and Access Program does not target minority students specifically, many of the participants, all of whom have been identified as at risk, are members of minority groups. The freshman to sophomore retention rate for EA²P students has varied over the years, but since 1998, when a full-time director was hired, the retention rate has risen from 53% to 60% for the class that entered in 2001. The Summer 2002 EA²P program had the largest enrollment (61) in its history; 98% of the students who began the program completed it.

The proportion of students of color (16.7%) is higher than the Census 2000 percentages for the seven towns from which WestConn recruits the majority of its students. In 2002, 93% of WestConn seniors responding to the NSSE survey indicated that diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs) were included in class discussions or assignments, and more than half thought these perspectives were included “very often” or “often.” Eighty-seven percent of seniors responded that their experience at the University had contributed to “understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds,” and more than three-fourths indicated that the University puts some emphasis on “encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds.”

On the 2001-2002, National Survey of Student Engagement, seniors were asked to indicate the extent to which their examinations during the current school year had challenged them to do their best work. The results show a very positive response. On a scale of 1 (very little) to 7 (very much), the percentages were as follows:

Very much	22.8%
6	33.3%
5	33.3%
4	11.9%
3	3.6%
2	0.5%
Very little	0.5%

Appraisal

A well-integrated enrollment management system is a key element in planning and evaluation of enrollment. While all of the pieces are in place at WestConn, it is not clear that they are as well integrated as they could be. It is likely that the vast amounts of data being gathered and analyzed by the University’s Institutional Research and Assessment Office could be used to effect change more quickly and effectively than is the case.

The report of the University Senate's *ad hoc* Committee on Remediation found that the proportion of students enrolled in the University's remedial courses more than doubled during the 1990s. In the Fall 2000 semester, nearly one-third of the 825 first-time, full-time students were enrolled in Math 098 or English 098 (the percentage rose somewhat in Fall 2002). The report also found large statistical differences between the SAT scores of students enrolled in remedial courses and those who were not. The committee noted that while "an individual's SAT score should not be (and is not) the only criterion by which the University assesses his/her readiness for college, low SAT scores do matter when it comes to teaching *groups* of students."

The University has a number of programs in place (EA²P, Freshman Seminar, the Learning Centers, the Advisement Center, and others) directed toward helping students succeed, but the resources of these programs are strained by the large numbers of under-prepared students. The *ad hoc* Committee on Remediation recommended hiring a full-time coordinator for the Learning Center.

WestConn will continue to work with the CTC-CSU committees established to develop recommendations for system-wide articulation agreements.

There are still some problems with the Banner Administrative Software System that need to be resolved in order to facilitate advising; ease of access to records of students' academic progress is an area that needs to be improved.

Projection

Admissions: The University plans to stabilize the size of the freshman class at its present level and to achieve further growth by recruiting larger numbers of transfer and graduate students and improving the retention rate. A new Westside residence hall will open in 2004, addressing the need to house the increasing numbers of students who want to live on campus.

The members of the Admissions Committee (faculty, students, and Admissions staff) will continue to collaborate on the recruitment and admission of students to the University. The Committee will also continue to be involved in developing, reviewing, and recommending policies related to admissions.

The transfer of students from community and technical colleges will be greatly facilitated by the system-wide articulation agreements scheduled for completion in July 2004.

Graduate Policies are being reviewed and revised as appropriate by the new Dean of Graduate Studies and External Programs and the Graduate Council. The Dean will recommend that application forms and other materials be made available on the University's web site to facilitate access to paperwork for graduate students, who are primarily part-time.

When it opens in 2004, the new science building is expected to attract larger numbers of students to the sciences. The new Center for the Fine and Performing Arts, scheduled to open in 2007, can be expected to bring about growth in the already well-subscribed programs in the arts fields. Task forces on the sciences and the fine and performing arts are looking at ways to increase enrollments in these areas.

New graduate programs, particularly the Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership, the M.F.A. in Visual Arts, and the M.F.A. in Professional Writing, will attract students at an advanced level.

Advising and Retention: The faculty, administration, and staff will review and discuss the recommendations of the *ad hoc* Committee on Retention. During the state's (and therefore the

institution's) current fiscal crisis, suggestions for doing more with less will receive careful consideration.

A number of initiatives for improving retention rates (particularly freshman to sophomore retention) are already in place and are being assessed for effectiveness. Programs will be continued, strengthened, or consolidated as appropriate. The University has set an ambitious goal of a 70-73% retention rate by Fall 2003.

The Banner administrative software system has the potential to facilitate advising and tracking student progress. Implementation of the campus portal (Campus Pipeline) and course management software (WebCT) should also contribute to success in these two areas. (For additional information, please see Standard VII.)