

Western Carolina University

Cullowhee, NC 28723

Dates of Committee Visit: April 2-4, 2007

Monitoring Report

**Submitted to the Commission on Colleges Southern
Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)**

September 05, 2008

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Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1. Institutional Effectiveness: The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas:

- 3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes
- 3.3.1.2 administrative support services
- 3.3.1.3 educational support services
- 3.3.1.4 research within its educational mission, if appropriate
- 3.3.1.5 community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate

Recommendation 1:

The Committee recommends that the institution demonstrate that it assesses educational support services and provide evidence of improvement based on the analysis of those results.

Summary of Visiting Committee Concerns (April 2007):

The Off-Site Committee's review found that Western Carolina University identifies expected learning outcomes for each of its academic programs as well as clear objectives for the administrative and support units. Achievement of these outcomes is evaluated annually and documented in assessment reports. They noted, however, that there is not always a clear or direct linkage demonstrating improvements based upon these outcomes.

The Committee further observed that the educational support services located organizationally within student affairs identified expected outcomes and reported program improvements; however, it is unclear that improvements are based on assessing those outcomes. Additionally, the educational support services located organizationally within academic affairs have identified outcomes; however, several of these units have not yet completed an assessment cycle and results have not been reported.

Summary of Institutional Response (September 10, 2007):

WCU acknowledges the On-Site Committee's recognition of progress made towards creating a campus-wide culture of assessment and reaffirms the University's commitment to advancing the assessment program as a meaningful and transparent institutional initiative. To that end, the University's planning and assessment processes continue to be refined to achieve a systematic and continuous planning and reporting framework. The current reporting framework and all planned improvements are designed to aid units in documenting the extent to which their programs and/or services are meeting their intended outcomes and objectives.

Beginning in 2007-08, academic and educational support units will move to a common reporting structure and timeline. Specifically, the Division of Student Affairs revised its assessment summary template to illustrate the correlation of assessment outcomes with program enhancements based on assessment results. This new reporting structure is now consistent with that of academic units. All units are required to report the explicit linkage between assessment results and planned improvements.

As of June 2007, educational support units in the Division of Academic Affairs completed an assessment cycle and results were reported along with recommendations for planned improvements based on assessment results.

In addition to the progress discussed above, a major new initiative at WCU, which will have a significant impact on our assessment reporting framework, is the development of the WCU Planning Database, designed by staff in the Office of Institutional Research and Planning in consultation with staff in key functional areas such as budgeting and assessment.

The Planning Database, initially designed in terms of an accountability reporting function to support the institution's strategic planning processes, will be piloted in 2007-08 by educational support units within the Divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. The Planning Database is representative of WCU's hierarchical planning and reporting structure and will allow users at all levels to map unit outcomes and objectives to college or division objectives and, ultimately, to reflect specific institutional strategic directions and goals.

The pilot implementation of the WCU Planning Database begins in Fall 2007 with all units in the Division of Student Affairs and with selected educational support units in the Division of Academic Affairs. Mid-year and final year reporting on progress made towards meeting the objectives will begin in January 2008. Staff in the Offices of Assessment, Institutional Research and Planning, and Budgets will monitor the effectiveness of the new database and will recommend expansion to other units, as appropriate.

Current Request from the Commission (January 9, 2008):

The University should demonstrate that the refinements it is making to its planning and assessment processes have produced "a systematic and continuous planning and reporting framework." Evidence should demonstrate that units identify expected outcomes and achieve them. Further, results of piloting the WCU Planning Database should be reported along with the plan for revisions and deployment across all units.

Institutional Response (September 5, 2008):

"The University should demonstrate that the refinements it is making to its planning and assessment processes have produced "a systematic and continuous planning and reporting framework."

The University has made a concerted effort to move from a static and sporadic approach to planning and assessment to an approach that is progressive in nature yet emphasizes regular reporting and integration across processes. Over the past two years, the University initiated a series of refinements to its planning and assessment processes to ensure that those processes were institutionalized, regular and ongoing, and perhaps most importantly, integrated into a meaningful reporting framework. These refinements include 1) initiation of focused assessments by external experts of critical University functions including retention and academic support services; 2) a revision of the academic unit assessment planning and reporting cycle; 3) implementation of common and

consistent reporting timelines and structures across the divisions of Academic and Student Affairs; and 4) the integration of assessment planning and reporting in academic units with the comprehensive program review process. Separately, these refinements might not have resulted in significant change, but together they have advanced the perception that planning and assessment at the unit level is a routine part of academic management at WCU. The University fully expects that the next two to three years will see further integration of planning and assessment processes across campus. Each of these refinements is discussed below.

Focused Assessments of Critical University Functions:

As part of its continuing commitment to systematic and meaningful planning and assessment, WCU commissioned focused reviews of two areas critical to the basic core functions of the institution including student retention services and student support services. Summaries of these focused assessments are offered below. Further, the University has committed to a regular 3-year cycle of focused assessments.

MGT and Pappas Assessment of Student Retention Services: In 2007, WCU contracted with MGT of America, Inc. to conduct an evaluation of student retention services. The complete WCU Student Retention Study can be reviewed at <http://www.wcu.edu/335.asp>.

The MGT study focused on an assessment of University policies and procedures; stakeholder perceptions; and unit effectiveness relative to service and responsiveness in key functions such as the One-Stop, advising, admissions, orientation, and transitions courses, including the First Year Seminar. MGT employed a range of assessment measures including situational analyses, focus groups and interviews, surveys of current and former students, and peer/best practices analyses in developing their recommendations.

Upon completion of the study, the University received an analysis of barriers to student retention (people, policy, and process), suggestions on surveys to be conducted on a regular basis, short and long term funding priorities, and a communication plan to obtain campus buy-in. MGT identified fourteen specific recommendations aimed at improving the student retention rates. A summary of the recommendations made and the action(s) that were taken at the institutional level can be reviewed in Appendix A.

As follow-up to the MGT Study, WCU commissioned in February 2008 the Pappas Consulting Group to provide a focused assessment of student success/access issues. Pappas convened a series of focus groups and interviews with key University personnel in student support services and submitted a report of its findings and recommendations to the Provost in April 2008. See Appendix B for a copy of that report.

Over the past eighteen months, the WCU Retention Steering Committee and Council on Undergraduates' Early Experiences has taken strategic action to address, and in some cases fully implement, the recommendations from the MGT and Pappas reports. As a result, the University's first year retention rate improved from 66% in fall 2007 to 71% in

fall 2008, fully meeting the institution's stated target. See Appendix C for a summary of actions taken.

In response to the summary of actions taken by the WCU Retention Steering Committee and Council on Undergraduates' Early Experiences, the Pappas Consulting Group provided an additional draft report in July 2008 outlining several new recommendations which are now being considered by the University. See Appendix D for a copy of that draft report.

STAMATS Study: Also in 2007-08, WCU commissioned STAMATS, a higher education marketing group, to conduct a brand study and to specifically assess the quality and role of student and academic support services in advancing the mission of the University. STAMATS focused primarily on assessing perceptions of the University using a range of data collected from key constituents such as students, alumni, donors, faculty/staff, community leaders, and prospective students and their parents via focus groups and surveys. **The study provided the institution with a comprehensive look at consistencies in perceptions of WCU that will allow the campus leadership to focus its efforts in strategic areas.**

Although the results from the STAMATS study are still being analyzed and are not yet publicly available, some preliminary findings and recommendations have been proposed and are being addressed. Below is an excerpt from the Chancellor's 2008 Opening Address that speaks to how the institution will act on the results of the STAMATS study.

Excerpt from Chancellor's Opening Address-August 13, 2008

"First, it is clear that most constituencies see WCU as in the "middle of the academic pack" with regard to quality. While that is not where we want to be, or where we should be in the next several years, it is much better than where we were in the late 1990s.

We are Western and we are doing better, but as we implement our QEP, the Stamats data give us some very specific indications of where we should be paying special attention.

As we implement the QEP we need to pay particular attention to several areas. First, faculty, staff, administrators and students are in agreement that our academic majors vary a great deal in quality. We need to pay special attention to assuring that all our programs are good if we are to both recruit and retain excellent students. We need to work to reduce the variability in programs.

Second, there appears to be significant concern on the part of students with regard to the availability of internships and co-op placements as well as the level of support for career counseling. Partly, this appears to be based on the feeling that our location provides few opportunities, but it may also have to do with the level of staffing and resources that we have committed to those areas.

The third academic issue on which there appears to be reasonable agreement is that we as faculty members vary a great deal in our orientation to teaching and to mentoring students.

These are the most important areas that we will need to address if we are going to improve our academic reputation. Don't get me wrong, I am very proud of the excellent work you do every day. But, the data show that we can continue to improve in these very important areas. We are Western, and we can do better.

What is most exciting about these findings is that our Quality Enhancement Plan will provide each of our programs the opportunity to document the quality of its work and it will give us a focus on improving student learning and mentoring.

Fourth, because of the importance of internship, co-op education, mentored research, and service learning for implementing our QEP, most of the concerns that are shared by faculty, staff, administrators and students will be addressed.

We not only are doing better, by implementing the QEP we will be able to document that we are doing better. This will make a major difference.

Because of the importance of the QEP for our continuing accreditation and because of the obvious links between the QEP and the Stamats and MGT research, I met with Provost Kyle Carter and the deans this summer and asked them to work with you to develop a schedule so that all departments have their version of the QEP ready to go by Fall of 2011. This timing will allow us to make enhancements to improve the quality of our programs, where needed, and it will allow us to have documentation for SACS as we prepare the newly required five-year update report."

Revisions to unit assessment planning and reporting cycle:

A major complaint about assessment planning and reporting at WCU prior to 2006 and a major impediment to buy-in on the part of faculty and program directors was that the process was perceived as cumbersome and burdensome. Program assessment planning and reporting processes mandated that programs develop an assessment plan and on an annual basis update that plan and report assessment results for all stated outcomes and objectives. Perceptions on campus were that these requirements were unnecessary and overlooked heavy work loads on the part of the faculty and staff. Moreover, the process left little time for reflection or concentration on key outcomes in a given year.

In 2006-07, WCU initiated a significant revision of the assessment planning and reporting process at the unit level; one that for academic units was integrated with academic program review (see separate discussion below). The process was reconceptualized as a five-year planning and reporting cycle. In the first year of the cycle, programs were asked to plan, that is, they were asked to identify the program goals and outcomes and identify the means by which they would measure attainment of those stated goals/outcomes. In subsequent years of the cycle, programs would report annually the assessment results for at least one of their stated outcomes. See excerpt from the *WCU Program Assessment Handbook* outlining the process below.

Excerpt from WCU Program Assessment Handbook

http://www.wcu.edu/assessment/documents/AssessmentHandbook_Sept06.pdf

“Program assessment at WCU is situated in an iterative 5-year cycle that is integrated with program review and other institutional processes related to planning and budgeting.

At the beginning of the cycle, programs are required to produce a comprehensive program assessment plan that includes the following components:

- *Program mission/purpose statement*
- *Articulation of how the program mission/purpose aligns with the college and institutional mission and vision*
- *Overarching program goals/objectives*
- *Intended student learning outcomes (and process/performance outcomes, if applicable).*
- *For each learning outcome, identification of courses/activities/experiences in the curriculum associated with outcome delivery (separate template).*
- *For each learning outcome, articulation of intended method of assessment. Must include at least one direct measure of student learning. Departments will be strongly encouraged to utilize multiple measures, both direct and indirect, that incorporate evaluation of student work products, attitudes, behaviors, satisfaction and perceptions.*

On an annual basis, programs are required to identify and assess at least one intended outcome. Although assessment of only one outcome per year will be required, all outcomes must be assessed prior to the program’s scheduled program review. The annual assessment report will contain the following components:

- *Intended outcome statement identified for assessment*
 - *Summary of assessment methods/measures to include brief explanation of methodology, persons responsible for data collection and analysis, and a summary of assessment results.*
 - *A description of the process used to disseminate assessment results to key stakeholders and summary of changes or improvements proposed based on assessment results.*
 - *A brief description of the plan and timeline for implementing the proposed change(s) and any resources needed to implement the proposed change(s), using existing resources already in place, reallocating existing resources from other areas, or allocation of new funds.”*
-

As of summer 2008, units have completed two years of the five-year cycle (see <http://www.wcu.edu/assessment/academicaffairs.html> and <http://www.wcu.edu/assessment/StudentAffairsAssessmentActivities.htm> for the most current assessment plans and reports) and **feedback from the units on the refinements to the process has been positive. Units understand better what is expected of them in terms of assessment planning and reporting and can plan appropriately and strategically within the five-year cycle to complete an assessment of all stated outcomes.** Further, in the context of a five-year reporting cycle units can concentrate on a smaller number of outcomes on an annual basis without fear of penalty.

Reporting timelines and structures in Academic and Student Affairs:

Over the past year and in response to the feedback from the SACS Visiting Team, the Division of Student Affairs adopted a common reporting structure and timeline in alignment with that of academic and educational support units within the Division of Academic Affairs. **The reporting template adopted by Student Affairs, while modified to meet the specific needs of the division, specifically requires units to link proposed programmatic changes to specific assessments in a manner akin to the template adopted by Academic Affairs in 2006.** See Appendix E for examples of both templates. Student Affairs completed the first assessment cycle using the new template in 2007-08 [see those assessment reports at <http://www.wcu.edu/assessment/StudentAffairsAssessmentActivities.htm>].

Under the revised timeline all units in both divisions are required to submit their annual assessment reports to the Office of Assessment no later than June 15th of each year. Units are prompted at the beginning of each year (in the fall semester) to begin implementation of their assessments and are prompted several times more during the spring semester at the end of the year. **Due dates and expectations relative to assessment planning and reporting are now incorporated in the project planning calendar that is routinely discussed at Council of Deans meetings.** See Appendix F for an example of the project planning calendar.

Integration of assessment planning and reporting with program review:

A major refinement of the academic assessment planning and reporting processes at WCU has been the integration of annual program assessment with comprehensive program review. Prior to 2006-07, program assessment planning and reporting was a separate process from academic program review, which resulted in less meaning and accountability for each. See a copy of the current program review handbook at <http://www.wcu.edu/assessment/programreview.html>. Under the new integrated system, program review standards specifically address program quality and evidence of student learning. This new emphasis on student learning in program review is coupled with the requirement that programs complete an assessment of all stated outcomes in their assessment plan prior to their five-year program review. Further, programs are required to include their annual assessment plans and reports as key documentation of program quality and student learning in the required self-study report. **As a result, annual**

program assessments have become meaningful within the context of program review and the program review process is more focused and accountable for documenting student learning as a core indicator of program quality. See examples of how different programs have incorporated annual assessment results into their program review at <http://www.wcu.edu/assessment/CurrentProgramReviewActivities.htm>.

Evidence should demonstrate that units identify expected outcomes and achieve them.

All academic and support units through the program assessment planning and reporting process identify expected program and learning outcomes and have developed means to assess the extent to which those outcomes are achieved. Completed assessment reports can be found for Academic Affairs at <http://www.wcu.edu/assessment/academicaffairs.html> and for Student Affairs at <http://www.wcu.edu/assessment/StudentAffairsAssessmentActivities.htm>. Additionally, programs document achievement of expected outcomes through the academic program review process. Recently completed program review reports can be reviewed at <http://www.wcu.edu/assessment/CurrentProgramReviewActivities.htm>. A few selected examples of how units have demonstrated achievement of their expected outcomes are offered below.

Examples of Unit Outcomes and Assessment Methods/Results

Environmental Health:

Outcome: Effective Communication

Assessment Methods/Results: Evaluations of communication skills assignments were audited by the two faculty coordinators for five ENVH courses and the following observations were made:

- Approximately 20% of students made significant progress over the two semesters.
- Almost 80% of the students showed moderate improvement in one or more communication skills.
- Less than 5% of the students demonstrated no improvement.
- The student peer evaluations were consistently higher than the faculty assessments.

Psychology:

Outcome: WCU students who receive a BS in psychology should:

1. understand the primary questions underlying modern psychology and the theoretical perspectives that psychologists bring to them.
2. have an understanding of selected content areas such as biological psychology, developmental psychology, social psychology, psychopathology, personality theory and assessment, learning and cognition.
3. understand methods used to investigate the thinking and behavior of humans and other animals, including the principles of experimental design, non-experimental methods, and basic descriptive and inferential statistics.

4. be able to access the research literature in psychology and communicate relevant research findings according to the principles specified in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.
5. be satisfied with their educational experience in the Psychology Department at WCU.

Assessment Methods/Results: Each semester the psychology department gives graduating seniors a department-designed outcomes assessment test. This is a 50 item multiple-choice test designed to measure knowledge in all areas of psychology. This year's results are consistent with past test scores. The average score for students taking the test this year was 78.

Engineering Technology:

Outcome: An ability to conduct, analyze and interpret experiments and apply experimental results to improve processes.

Assessment Methods/Results: Performance appraisal by faculty of student performance in ET141 (92% of students performing at acceptable level), local exam in ET 351 (87% of students perform at acceptable level), and survey of graduating seniors (63% responded they are proficient in applying scientific methods and using analytical skills).

Mathematics:

Outcome: Students will demonstrate an understanding of and mastery of the following fundamental concepts and skills in mathematics:

- understanding the derivative concept in terms of slope as well as “rate of change,” with procedural fluency in evaluating derivatives.
- understanding the definite integral as a limit process for evaluating sums, with procedural fluency in evaluating integrals.

Assessment Methods/Results: Students must demonstrate their mastery of evaluating derivatives and integrals by passing a “gateway” exam. In 2007-08, 100% of the students who passed Calculus I & II also passed the gateway exam.

Talent Search:

Outcome: 85% of college-ready seniors participating in Talent Search will complete a college application.

Assessment Methods/Results: Review of completed applications indicated that 95.9% of college ready students completed and submitted an application to college.

Multicultural Affairs:

Outcome: Participants in Project C.A.R.E., a mentoring program for African-American students, will show improved retention rates and express satisfaction with the program retreat and peer mentoring program.

Assessment Methods/Results: Documented retention rates indicate participants retained at higher rates than non-participants. Analyses of focus group results indicate high satisfaction with retreat and program overall, but satisfaction is greater with interactive activities and less with guest speakers.

Counseling and Psychological Services:

Outcome: Intervention services will result in improved learning, higher retention, and improved satisfaction with college experience.

Assessment Methods/Results: 73 students completed a 38-item evaluation with scales developed around learning, retention and satisfaction. 75% of students reported strongly agree or agree on the 8-item learning outcomes scale; 50% reported strongly agree or agree on the retention-related scale; and 80% reported strongly agree or agree on the 2-item satisfaction scale.

Admissions:

Outcome: The number of freshman applicants placing in the top 25% of their high school graduating class will increase as a percentage of the applicant pool and the mean SAT composite score of applicants, accepts, and deposited students will increase by five points.

Assessment Methods/Results: Analysis of applicant attributes indicated that the number of applications increased 57% over the previous year. The SAT quality metric for applicants increased 27 points on the composite score, and the accept composite score increased 18 points. The number of freshman applicants placing in the top 25% improved significantly, moving the University into a more selective tier.

<p><i>Results of piloting the WCU Planning Database should be reported along with the plan for revisions and deployment across all units.</i></p>

WCU encountered significant challenges during the pilot implementation of the Planning Database resulting in a major shift in direction regarding continued use of this application for assessment reporting. Initially conceptualized as a strategic planning and budgeting reporting application and developed in WCU's Office of Institutional Research and Planning, the Planning Database was modified to incorporate an optional module to allow mapping of unit level outcomes/objectives to divisional and institutional strategic priorities and to allow convenient electronic reporting of unit assessment results.

Initial use of the WCU Planning Database by the Division of Student Affairs resulted in few problems and most units in the division were able to input their unit objectives, map those objectives to divisional priorities and related CAS standards, and to identify their intended assessment measures and anticipated results. Similarly, units in Enrollment Management within Academic Affairs were able to input their unit objectives and map those objectives to their overall division priorities. A sample page from an Objectives Detail report for Counseling and Psychological Services is included in Appendix G.

A complete Objectives Detail report for the Division of Student Affairs can be found at <http://www.wcu.edu/assessment/StudentAffairsAssessmentActivities.htm>.

Objectives Detail reports for units in Enrollment Management can be found at <http://www.wcu.edu/assessment/EnrollmentManagement.htm>.

During the mid-year end-of-year reporting phases, many users encountered significant and persistent issues around security permissions to access the Planning Database, flexibility in modifying and choosing objectives on which to report assessment results, and a lack of technical assistance in using the application.

In subsequent discussions between the Office of Assessment and the Office of Institutional Research and Planning regarding the WCU Planning Database, several overarching factors were identified that are likely to contribute to ongoing technical problems with the application. First and foremost, the primary architect of the application left the University in spring 2008 and constraints on staff time and expertise in the Office of Institutional Research and Planning resulted in little availability for technical support. Second, demands on the Information Technology division preclude the transfer and support of the application through IT. And, lastly, there is emerging interest at the institutional level in pursuing a more robust, vendor-supported application that will provide the flexibility and functionality necessary to fulfill the increasing number of reporting requirements relative to planning, budgeting, accountability and assessment. The pilot implementation of the WCU Planning Database may in the end be most valuable as a beta test that allows the University to more discriminately select an appropriate vendor application.

In this context, the institution will delay expansion of the WCU Planning Database to additional units until the technical issues are resolved or until an alternative vendor application can be purchased and implemented. Assessment planning and reporting will continue as a regular and systematic process at WCU using the standard reporting templates noted above.

3.5.1. College-Level Competencies: The institution identifies college-level general education competencies and the extent to which graduates have attained them. (College-level competencies)

Recommendation 2: The Committee recommends that the University provide evidence that graduates have attained the competencies in all areas of the liberal studies program.

Summary of Visiting Committee Concerns (April 2007):

Western Carolina University has identified a set of competencies appropriate to the general education of its students, identified as its liberal studies program. The University has developed an assessment plan for liberal studies that extends from 2006-2011. The Committee found that the University lacked a full cycle of general education assessment since the current cycle is incomplete and an earlier cycle of assessment was not available for review. The current assessment plan is comprehensive and learning outcomes are appropriate for the twelve curricular areas – five core, the first year seminar, and six perspective areas. A significant challenge is the length of time, six years, required to complete the full liberal studies assessment cycle. From 2005-2006, the University completed the assessment loop for two core areas. A second assessment of two core areas will be completed at the end of the 2006-2007 Academic Year. The Committee compliments the University on the quality and depth of the four core areas assessed and the extensive work of the Liberal Studies Oversight Committee in this regard. However, since a full cycle of the current assessment plan has not been completed, the Committee sought data from an earlier cycle of assessment. Information regarding the assessment of liberal studies outcomes prior to 2005-2006 was not available. Given the strong start to the assessment cycle for the liberal studies program, the Committee believes accelerated attention to the assessment of the remaining eight general education areas is essential.

Further, in reviewing the assessment reports, the Committee noted some performance areas for which students may not have attained those competencies. This information shows where improvement can be made for subsequent assessment cycles. Additionally, there was a concern that all of the student work samples were not representative of all students taking the liberal studies courses.

Summary of Institutional Response (September 10, 2007):

In 2005-06, WCU developed a five-year plan to assess all core and perspectives areas of its Liberal Studies Program. As of June 15, 2007, WCU had completed a comprehensive assessment cycle for four core areas of the Liberal Studies Program: Writing, Wellness, Oral Communication, and Mathematics.

The Liberal Studies Oversight Committee developed a plan to expedite the assessment of the remaining 7 Core and Perspectives areas by July of 2008. The assessment process for the remaining Core and Perspectives areas will remain the same, but data collection and review by faculty assessment teams will be condensed to accommodate the accelerated schedule.

Current Request of the Commission (January 9, 2008): The University should present information on competencies and outcomes for the remaining seven “core and perspective areas” yet to be assessed and the program changes that have been made. Further, the University should present a plan with a timetable for assessing the eleven areas on a regular basis.

Institutional Response (September 5, 2008):

The University should present information on competencies and outcomes for the remaining seven “core and perspective areas” yet to be assessed and the program changes that have been made.

WCU approaches assessment of its Liberal Studies program from two levels of analysis. At the program level, WCU established and implemented an assessment process to determine the extent to which the goals and objectives of each Core and Perspectives area were being achieved. At the institutional level, WCU employed a range of measures that provides an indication of the extent to which its students demonstrate foundational skills and knowledge typical of a comprehensive program of general education, such as critical thinking, integration of knowledge, analytic reasoning, and problem solving. Both levels of perspective were critical in determining the overall effectiveness of WCU’s Liberal Studies program. An update of each is presented below.

Additionally in 2007-08, WCU framed and interpreted its assessment of the Liberal Studies program in the context of two separate, but interrelated campus initiatives: 1) the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) and its emphasis on integrated intentional learning and 2) a system-level strategic planning initiative (UNC Tomorrow) and its emphasis on the development of 21st century skills and knowledge. In this context, a need to clarify the role of the Liberal Studies program in the QEP and UNC Tomorrow has prompted the Chancellor to call for a revision of the definition and standards of liberal learning at WCU (See Appendix I). **As a result, the University anticipates that a substantive revision of its Liberal Studies program will be implemented over the next 2-3 years and is committed to report on the process and outcomes in its 5th year impact report.**

Program-Level Assessment of Liberal Studies

Program-level assessment of Liberal Studies is accomplished via a review of each Core and Perspectives area of the program. As noted in our previous response, the institution was engaged in a five-year review of each area and had successfully completed a review of the following Core areas: Writing, Wellness, Oral Communication, and Mathematics. In response to the Commission’s most current request, the institution moved quickly to expedite the review of the remaining areas of the Liberal Studies program. The Liberal Studies Oversight Committee (LSOC), the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Studies and the Director of Assessment commissioned faculty assessment teams to assess the remaining seven Core and Perspectives areas of the Liberal Studies program in 2007-08. Included in the current assessments were reviews of the First Year Seminar, the Physical/Biological Sciences Core, and the Perspectives areas of Social Sciences, History, Humanities, Fine & Performing Arts, and World Cultures.

Assessment reports from these faculty assessment teams as well as the resulting program development plans can be accessed at <http://www.wcu.edu/assessment/LiberalStudiesAssessment.htm>.

Process:

The process of the program-level Liberal Studies assessment in 2007-08 was an abbreviated version of the process outlined in the Liberal Studies Assessment Plan revised January 2008 (<http://www.wcu.edu/liberalstudies>) but adhered generally to the overall intent. In fall 2007 and early in spring 2008, the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Studies notified all faculty scheduled to teach a course in the Core or Perspectives area scheduled for assessment that they were to provide a syllabus and samples of representative student work that addressed the learning goals and objectives of that area. Additionally, the Office of Assessment, in consultation with the LSOC, administered surveys to students and faculty in the selected Core or Perspectives courses. The staff of the Division of Undergraduate Studies and the Office of Assessment collected the submitted course materials and the survey results and made them available electronically and in hard copy for the faculty assessment teams.

The appointed faculty assessment teams, composed of faculty from a variety of disciplines, consisted of 3-5 WCU faculty members, some teaching in the area under review and some not. The faculty teams reviewed all available assessment data and provided a report outlining their major findings, recommendations and suggestions for changes or improvements to the LSOC in January 2008 for the First Year Seminar and in June 2008 for the remaining Core and Perspectives areas.

Methods:

The faculty assessment teams employed a set of indirect and direct measures of student learning as part of their assessment of the remaining areas of the Liberal Studies Program.

Indirect measures included:

Syllabi Review – All syllabi used in Liberal Studies courses are required to include the goals and objectives of the overall Liberal Studies program as well as the specific Core or Perspective area. The faculty assessment teams reviewed submitted syllabi for compliance and assessed the extent to which course assignments as outlined on the syllabi reflected the Liberal Studies goals and objectives.

Faculty/Student Surveys – The Office of Assessment, in consultation with the LSOC, developed and administered a faculty and student survey designed, respectively, to determine the extent to which faculty address and assess the Liberal Studies goals and objectives and the extent to which students feel that they achieved those objectives. The surveys were web-based and responses were collected and tabulated by the Office of Assessment. A report of the survey results for each Core and Perspective area were made available to the faculty assessment teams.

Direct Measures included:

Review of Student Work Samples – The faculty assessment teams assessed samples of student work from each Core and Perspective area using a general holistic rubric that addressed the level of mastery demonstrated, i.e., below, at, or above the level of performance expected of a college graduate. Results of the reviews were aggregated to determine the extent to which students demonstrated achievement of the objectives established in each Core and Perspective area as well as for the Liberal Studies program as a whole.

Additional considerations of the faculty assessment teams included:

Review of the assessment process – As a supplement to their assessment of the remaining Core and Perspectives areas, the faculty assessment teams were also asked to provide recommendations and suggestions on the Liberal Studies assessment process. Although not a measure per se of the goals and objectives of the Liberal Studies program, this review was a critical piece of the overall assessment.

Dissemination of Assessment Results:

All assessment reports produced by the faculty assessment teams were disseminated to the LSOC, which addressed each in turn and proposed a program development plan in response to each report. Further dissemination of the results will be shared with the campus community beginning in September 2008 as part of an overall reflection year on the Liberal Studies Program at WCU.

Institutional-Level Assessment of Liberal Studies

WCU employs a range of measures to assess its Liberal Studies program from a broader institutional perspective. Data on students’ perceptions of their own skills and knowledge are captured via participation in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and an institution-specific Alumni Survey. WCU participated most recently in the NSSE in spring 2007 and 2008. Alumni Survey results from Fall 2007 are the most recent. A direct assessment of student learning at the institutional level was made via the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) administered to 100 freshmen and 100 seniors in fall 2007 and spring 2008, respectively.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE):

WCU administered the NSSE in 2007 and 2008. In the context of our Liberal Studies program assessment, only a few items (2a-e) are of critical interest as they reflect the extent to which students (first-year and seniors) perceive that their courses are emphasizing the core skills and knowledge that are foundational to our Liberal Studies program. A brief summary of those results is included below.

Table 1. Frequency distributions for NSSE items 2a-e.

Coursework emphasizes the following 'Quite a bit' or 'Very much'	First-Year		Seniors	
	2007	2008	2007	2008
Memorizing facts, ideas, or methods from your courses and readings	68%	70%	53%	68%
Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory	79%	81%	82%	85%
Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences	72%	72%	64%	79%
Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods	75%	76%	75%	81%
Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	77%	77%	82%	85%

WCU Alumni Survey:

WCU administered a survey to all its alumni who graduated in 2001-02 or 2005-06 in summer/fall 2007. Alumni who received a baccalaureate degree from WCU were asked to rate the extent to which WCU helped them develop core skills and knowledge as outlined in our Liberal Studies program. See Table 2 below for selected results from the 2007 Undergraduate Alumni Survey.

Table 2. Selected results from WCU 2007 Undergraduate Alumni Survey

To what extent did your experiences at WCU contribute to your skills and development in these areas?	% Responding 'Very much' or 'Somewhat'
a. Public speaking/oral communication	79%
b. Using technology responsibly	81%
c. Appreciating creative arts	48%
d. Writing skills	92%
e. Analytical reasoning	91%
f. Problem solving	92%
g. Leadership skills	90%
h. Working as part of a team	92%
i. Flexibility and adaptability	91%
j. Appreciating diversity	71%
k. Understanding the global economy	52%
l. Ethics and personal responsibility	79%
m. Personal development and learning	93%

Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA):

In 2007-08, WCU participated in a cross-sectional study of the Collegiate Learning Assessment. The CLA measures skills and knowledge foundational to any comprehensive program of general education including critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication. Participation in the CLA provided a direct measure of those skills and knowledge with the institution as the unit of analysis. A brief summary of WCU's results is included below.

Table 3. WCU's 2007-08 CLA results

	Freshmen		Seniors		Value-Added Estimate	
	<i>Percentile Rank</i>	<i>Performance Level</i>	<i>Percentile Rank</i>	<i>Performance Level</i>	<i>Percentile Rank</i>	<i>Performance Level</i>
Total CLA Score	44	At	53	At	56	At
Performance Task	30	At	66	At	88	Above
Analytic Writing Task	66	At	30	At	19	Below
-Make-an-argument	62	At	25	Below	17	Below
-Critique-an-argument	67	At	43	At	30	At

Dissemination of Assessment Results:

Results from these assessments are presented directly to several institutional groups such as the Council of Deans, the Provost's Council, and the Liberal Studies Oversight Committee and, where necessary, actions are recommended. Selected results are also made available to the campus as a whole via campus forums and, when appropriate, the Office of Assessment website¹.

¹ Although they have been shared with a variety of campus leadership groups, results from the Collegiate Learning Assessment and the Alumni Survey are still being analyzed and are not yet available to the entire campus community on the Assessment website.

Program changes made or recommended as a result of the assessments:

Upon review of both the program-level and institution-level assessments of Liberal Studies, the LSOC noted several key findings and proposed strategic actions to address each. See Table 4 for a brief summary of those findings and the status of the actions that were proposed in response (completed or in progress). A more detailed discussion of these broader programmatic changes is offered below. As mentioned above, these actions will have a profound effect on the structure and administration of the Liberal Studies program over the next few years.

Specific actions proposed for each recommendation that resulted from the program-level assessments of the Liberal Studies program can be reviewed at <http://www.wcu.edu/assessment/LiberalStudiesAssessment.htm>.

Table 4. Summary of Key Findings and Actions from 2007-08 Liberal Studies Assessments

Key Descriptors of Success	Key Findings	Actions Completed (C) or In Progress (P)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student work demonstrates attainment of Liberal Studies outcomes² ▪ Course syllabi incorporate Liberal Studies goals/objectives ▪ Faculty assess Liberal Studies goals/objectives ▪ Students report attainment of core/foundational skills and knowledge on the NSSE and Alumni surveys ▪ Students performance on the CLA performance task and analytic writing tasks is at or above expected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student work demonstrates most students have attained the specific outcomes established for each Core and Perspectives area ▪ Although students generally self report attainment of core/foundational skills and knowledge, review of student work indicates a persistent need to improve students' critical thinking, analytic reasoning and problem solving skills. ▪ Syllabi lack consistency in linking specific course assignments to Liberal Studies objectives ▪ Too few senior faculty teach in the Liberal Studies Program ▪ Need more First Year Seminar courses across disciplines ▪ University procedures are disincentive to teach First Year Seminar ▪ FYS courses not sufficiently distinguished from other Liberal Studies courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop faculty handbook for FYS faculty (C) ▪ Develop orientation/in-service for FYS faculty (C) ▪ Develop faculty handbook for all Liberal Studies faculty (P) ▪ Develop orientation for all Liberal Studies faculty (P) ▪ Revise budget procedures to avoid penalty for small FYS classes (P) ▪ Develop incentives for faculty to teach Liberal Studies courses (P) ▪ Develop common syllabus for FYS courses (C) ▪ Develop common attendance policy for FYS (C) ▪ Revise Liberal Studies goals/objectives to be more specific, measurable and attainable (P) ▪ Integrate the Liberal Studies program with the aims and intent of the QEP and UNC Tomorrow (P) ▪ Revise procedures on the submission of course materials (C) ▪ Revise Liberal Studies faculty and student surveys (P) ▪ Develop holistic rubrics for each Liberal Studies Core and Perspectives area (P)

² Details of the expected learning outcomes of the Liberal Studies Program are not included here for reasons of brevity. They can be reviewed at <http://www.wcu.edu/liberalstudies/documents/LSProgram5-7-08.pdf>.

Liberal Studies Faculty Orientation/Designation

Virtually all assessments of the Liberal Studies program found that many faculty assigned to Liberal Studies courses had little or no idea how their course(s) were expected to align with the Liberal Studies goals and objectives or how best to link their course assignments explicitly to those goals and objectives. In a few rare instances, faculty were not even aware that the course they were teaching was designated as a Liberal Studies course. The University requirement that all Liberal Studies course syllabi include the Liberal Studies goals and objectives, while followed by most faculty, was often fulfilled in a superficial manner with little substantive integration into the overall course objectives.

This finding resulted in a broad recommendation that the University develop and implement a regular system of orientation and professional development aimed specifically at Liberal Studies faculty. Further, it was recommended that Liberal Studies faculty be selected and appointed in a formal manner akin to that of designated graduate faculty.

In an effort to initiate an orientation program of a segment of Liberal Studies faculty, the Assistant Vice Chancellor of Undergraduate Studies and the LSOC initiated the first meeting of FYS faculty in fall 2007. At that inaugural meeting, FYS faculty were asked to identify the major obstacles they face in developing and teaching their FYS courses and to suggest processes that would improve their teaching effectiveness. As a result of that meeting, a faculty handbook was created as a resource for all FYS faculty that included best practices for teaching FYS courses. See Appendix H for a copy of the FYS Faculty Handbook.

In response to this recommendation from the remaining faculty assessment teams and the positive feedback from faculty who received the handbook during the summer, the Assistant Vice Chancellor and the LSOC plan to expand the concept of the FYS faculty meeting and handbook to all Liberal Studies faculty. The first meeting of all Liberal Studies faculty will be September 11, 2008. At that meeting, Liberal Studies faculty will have an opportunity to react to the assessments that were completed in spring/summer 2008 and to suggest means of sharing faculty experiences and expertise. It is expected that this faculty group will meet at least once per semester and will work with the LSOC and Assistant Vice Chancellor to develop and implement the recommended program of professional development.

The issue of a formal designation for Liberal Studies faculty is currently being addressed by the LSOC and the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Studies. It is anticipated that a process for application and designation will be completed by summer 2009.

Modifications of Liberal Studies Goals/Objectives

A recurring finding from the program-level assessments of the Liberal Studies program was that the stated goals and objectives for the Liberal Studies program and for the specific Core and Perspectives areas lacked specificity and clarity, which inhibited understanding by both faculty and students of what was expected in terms of learning in Liberal Studies courses. Further, this lack of specificity and clarity made discrete measurement of the goals and objectives difficult and subjective. Most of the faculty assessment teams recommended rewording or revision of the goal and objective statements to more clearly define what the expected learning would look like.

In response to this recommendation, the LSOC made a few minor modifications to the goal and objective statements (see specific program development plans at <http://www.wcu.edu/assessment/LiberalStudiesAssessment.htm>) and has further been charged with oversight of a major review and revision of the Liberal Studies program goals and objectives. That task will begin this year and is expected to conclude in fall 2009. A critical part of this review and revision of the Liberal Studies program will be an emphasis on developing learning goals and objectives that are specific, measurable, and attainable.

Alignment of Liberal Studies with Quality Enhancement Plan

Closely related to the findings regarding clarity and specificity of the Liberal Studies goals and objectives was the recurrent finding that the Liberal Studies program was not sufficiently integrated with the goals and objectives of the new Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). WCU's QEP specifically focuses on the integrated, intentional learning that students need to make connections between the curriculum and the co-curriculum. There is natural overlap between the goals and objectives of the QEP and the Liberal Studies program. As a result of the Liberal Studies assessments, it became increasingly clear that the University must aggressively pursue an alignment between the goals and objectives of these two critical programs in order to achieve optimum use of limited institutional resources and to achieve a seamless approach to student learning across campus.

To that end, the Chancellor has called for a comprehensive review of the Liberal Studies program (see Appendix I for an excerpt from Chancellor Bardo's address to the campus on August 13, 2008). He charged the LSOC with developing a process and strategies for the review in fall 2008 and with initiating the review in spring 2009. The first broad campus conversation on the review will occur at the Liberal Studies faculty meeting scheduled for September 11, 2008.

Refine the Liberal Studies Assessment Process

Most of the faculty assessment teams noted specific areas in which the process for assessing the Liberal Studies program should be refined. The overall process was generally seen as appropriate, but strategies for soliciting submission of the course materials, revising faculty and student survey items and the presentation of the survey results, increasing the survey response rate, and increasing the representative nature of the student work samples were proposed.

In preparation for the next cycle of assessments, the LSOC and the Office of Assessment have resolved to work more closely with the deans and department heads to ensure timely submission of the course materials, to pursue alternate modes of survey delivery including paper and pencil, and to expand the number and types of student work samples submitted by faculty to include a range of assignments for a representative sample of student. Further, the LSOC and the Office of Assessment will refine the assessment rubric used by the faculty assessment teams to evaluate the student work samples.

The University should present a plan with a timetable for assessing the eleven areas on a regular basis.

WCU undertakes a comprehensive assessment of each of its academic programs on a recurring five year cycle. The Core and Perspectives areas of the Liberal Studies program will be included on that recurring cycle. See Table 5 below for the next specific dates of review for each area.

Table 5. Liberal Studies Program Five-Year Assessment Cycle (2009-2014 and 2014-2018)³

Core/Perspectives Area	Dates of Review	
	1 st Cycle	2 nd Cycle
C1 Writing	2009-2010	2014-2015
C2 Mathematics	2009-2010	2014-2015
C3 Oral Communication	2009-2010	2014-2015
C4 Wellness	2009-2010	2014-2015
C5 Physical/Biological Sciences	2010-2011	2015-2016
P1&2 Social Sciences	2010-2011	2015-2016
P3 History	2010-2011	2015-2016
P4 Humanities	2010-2011	2015-2016
P5 Fine & Performing Arts	2011-2012	2016-2017
P6 World Cultures	2011-2012	2016-2017
First Year Seminar	2011-2012	2016-2017
Reflection Year	2013-2014	2017-2018

The process for the review of the Liberal Studies program will remain largely the same in that faculty assessment teams will continue to provide the review under the oversight of the LSOC and the Office of Assessment. Appointed faculty teams will be provided samples of student work, results from faculty and student surveys, and course syllabi to use as their main body of evidence. Specific aspects of the process will continue to be refined in light of the recommendations for improving survey instruments and response rates, ensuring timely submission of course materials, and expanding the representative nature of the student work samples as outlined in the prior section of this report.

³ This five-year timeline reflects the current assessment plan and process for the Liberal Studies program. This timeline may be modified in the context of the comprehensive review of the Liberal Studies program in 2008-09.

Appendix A. Summary of Strategic Actions Taken to Address Recommendations from MGT Retention Study

Recommendation	Actions Proposed/Implemented	Current Status
Identify WCU's brand or image and integrate that image throughout the campus and its publications.	Commission a branding study and implement resulting recommendations.	WCU contracted with STAMATS in 2007 to conduct a brand study. As part of this study, the institution developed a comprehensive marketing strategy including a new logo, brand statements, and criteria for promotional materials and publications. WCU expects to fully implement recommendations from the brand study by spring 2009.
Make enhancements to Advising.	-Hire a new Director of Advising. -Clearly delineate roles of professional and faculty advisors. - Implement Total Intake Model of advising.	New Director of Advising hired in summer 2008. Advisor role clarifications in process. Task force on advising constituted in fall 2008.
Reinstitute, enhance, and expand the Learning Communities program.	-Designate a coordinator to oversee program implementation and administration -Offer theme-based Learning Communities, including freshman-oriented communities, year-long (Spring and Fall) communities, and non-cohort based communities.	Learning Communities are being piloted as part of Western Peaks Program with oversight by Residential Living in Fall 2008.
Make enhancements and changes to the University Experience Course.	-Include activities where students interact with other students (possibly incorporating peer mentors) as well as administrators, faculty, and staff on campus. -Connect course content with career goals (perhaps using service learning) or integrate into Learning Communities.	USI course has been revised with a common syllabus and course sections are now organized around special populations/majors. First implementation of new USI course in fall 2008.
Enhance and expand undergraduate research opportunities.	-Match faculty and students with common interests. -Encourage students to express interest in research opportunities in order to pair students and faculty based upon interest.	WCU piloted the Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program in Chemistry summer 2008. WCU is ranked #6 in the nation at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research with 47 abstracts accepted; we have been in the top ten the last three years. For the second year in a row, we are #1 in the UNC system.
Revitalize the Strategic Enrollment Management Steering Committee	-Include active sub-committees such as a team devoted exclusively to new student issues to focus on key enrollment management issues.	Reconstituted a Retention Steering Committee and closely aligned with Committee on Undergraduates' Early Experiences Council

Recommendation	Actions Proposed/Implemented	Current Status
Reestablish a Cabinet to address first- and second-year student issues and student retention.	-Identify administrators, faculty, staff, and students with connections to student retention efforts to serve on the Cabinet.	Reconstituted a Retention Steering Committee and closely aligned with Council on Undergraduates' Early Experiences
Provide campus community with an annual update on student retention and graduation issues.	-Set achievable goals for the upcoming year. -Make student retention and graduation rates by academic department easily accessible by persons in each department.	Chancellor included in opening address
Allow initiatives time to be in place before assessing value to student retention and graduation rates.	-Delegate authority to a specific office or individual to be to provide continuity -Allow administrators and coordinators to take active roles in development, implementation, and measurement of effectiveness of the initiative.	Ongoing
Develop a Student Retention Plan (university and college/department levels) to strategically retain and graduate students enrolled at WCU.	-Include Goals, Strategies, Measures, Processes, and Implementation. -Integrate student retention and graduation goals into the strategic plans of colleges and departments. -Review strategic plans to ensure alignment with University goals and the seven impact points.	Chancellor charged all deans with developing College Strategic Plans in 2008-09
Reevaluate duties formerly held by the Associate Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management to house these functions under one person.	-Administrator would development of an Enrollment Management Plan. -Plan would include: Goals, Strategies, Measures, Processes and Implementation, Monitoring, and Processes for Improvement.	Created position of Assistant Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Studies in 2008
House Advising Center, One-Stop, Orientation, Student Support Services, Advising and Student Success, and Commencement as one unit.	-Directed by Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs -Unit would report to the Provost	All included in One-Stop under Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Create a University College comprised of Liberal Studies and the University Experience Course.	-Assign all undeclared students to this College. -Delegate responsibility of the University College (including development and oversight of WCU's student retention plan) to a new position of Assistant Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education. -Development of a student retention plan includes input from the First-Year Cabinet.	Liberal Studies Program and USI courses now under oversight of Assistant Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Studies

Recommendation	Actions Proposed/Implemented	Current Status
Develop a UNC System-wide measure assessing each institution's contribution toward the UNC's System graduation rate.	Recognize the contributions of institutions for students who began at their institution and graduate within six years from a different institution in the System.	UNC System adopted use of Voluntary System of Accountability and will report Success and Progress rates in addition to Retention.

Appendix B. Pappas Consulting Group Report on Assessment of Student Success/Access

MEMORANDUM

To: Kyle R. Carter, Ph.D., Provost, Western Carolina University

From: Alceste T. Pappas, Ph.D., President and CEO, Pappas Consulting Group Inc.

Date: April 22, 2008

Re: Highlights of March 31-April 1, 2008 Campus Visit

This memo serves to summarize the first campus visit in support of the Pappas Consulting Group Inc. proposal dated February 11, 2008 to address issues of undergraduate student success/access.

During the course of my two-day visit, I had the opportunity to meet with: the Enrollment Management Steering Committee; front line staff and the Directors of the One-Stop; academic department heads; new Deans; the directors of the Student Success Centers; the Director of Admission and the admission staff; the Director of Housing/Residential Life; senior members of the Student Affairs staff; the Provost and the Chancellor. In addition, I had the opportunity to take a tour of Killian Annex, the newly refurbished Office of Admission and observe a Liberal Studies student advising session.

Overall observations are next reported.

Overall Observations

There is much which is positive to report. Kudos to the Enrollment Management Committee and to Dr. Fred Hinson.

When the Pappas Group was initially engaged to assist the University to develop an enrollment management strategy and organizational structure ten years ago, there was a considerable degree of silo thinking and delivery of services to students. Staff in Admission, Financial Aid, the Registrar, Student Accounts/Bursar, the Student Success Centers, Advising, Housing, Student Affairs, and in the Colleges were territorial and rather incommunicative. This lack of service orientation was reported to us by students in a series of focus groups with an alarming degree of regularity and with a high level of frustration, and conviction to transfer out of the University as soon as possible.

I was most favorably impressed with the "can-do attitude" I heard most especially from those front-line practitioners of the One-Stop whose individual service ranges from 4 months to 30 years, with the preponderance of the staff having served in excess of 15 years or more. Those with whom I met were quick to point out the strides that they believed they had made in streamlining services to students and offering more "transparency" in that service delivery. To their credit, the staff were also quick to point

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where improvements still needed to be made. There was absolutely no complaining or whining. In addition, there seemed to be a genuine excitement about the new leadership in Admission and the collaborative manner in which One-Stop and Admission were working. This is, in no small measure, due to the care and tenacity of Dr. Hinson.

Department Heads and new Deans were also complimentary of the changes that Dr. Hinson has brought. To a person, the professionalism of Alan Kines' Admission operation was lauded. Comments included: "We finally have an Admission professional who knows what he is doing"; "It is about time we started asking for non-refundable tuition and housing deposits"; "We are confident that the incoming class will be better prepared than before and be more committed to staying at the University rather than transferring to another institution after a semester or a year."

Kudos were also expressed uniformly among the staff, department heads and new Deans for Keith Corzine and the Residential Life staff. Western Peaks, Big Brothers and similar retention focused student programs brought warm praise and appreciation among the students who participated in the student focus group.

While all of this is very positive and heartening, there are a number of areas requiring on-going attention.

Opportunities for Improvement

During the course of the sessions I had with students, staff, department heads, and new Deans there were areas cited for improvement. Among them:

- Advising – Although the role of the professional advisers who reside in the One-Stop has been re-defined to serve more of an "advising" role than a "generalist telephone responder and facilitator," there appears to be a series of issues that need to be addressed:
 1. the wisdom of encouraging students to declare a major as first-time freshmen.
 2. the "hand off" of students (or more appropriately the lack thereof) from professional advisers to faculty advisers.
 3. the absence of a "case management" approach to student advising.
 4. the need to differentiate between advising and mentoring while ensuring that both are accomplished on behalf of the student.
 5. the current design of the orientation program(s) and their focus.
 6. inadequate communication between and among those providing student advising mentor.

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- BANNER Implementation – Although there was relief expressed by staff and faculty that the on-going BANNER implementation appeared to go relatively smoothly (when compared to other institutional “horror stories” provided by colleagues at other institutions), incumbents expressed:
 1. the need for BANNER training in order to optimize the use of the system.
 2. frustration with errors in the Degree Audit module, thereby rendering accurate advising at a disadvantage.
 3. the need for technical, report-writer expertise.

- Activities that Comprise the One-Stop – The activities and functions that currently comprise the One-Stop are different from those originally envisioned by the Pappas Group.
 1. There appears to be better communication between Financial Aid and Student Accounts but the degree to which these activities are integrated rather than co-located is unclear and needs to be addressed in order to optimize work flow cycles.
 2. The degree to which Admission activity is fully integrated with the One-Stop is also unclear on surface, as Admission is physically separated from the One-Stop.
 3. Although complaints were voiced about the lack of service orientation among some staff in the One-Stop, it is difficult to discern, on surface, whether those staff report directly to the Vice Chancellor Administration and Finance or the One-Stop. No matter what the reporting relationship/s these issues must be addressed.

- Branding, Positioning and the Web-Site – Those with whom I met are eager for the STAMATS consultancy to make substantive recommendations with regard to branding and positioning Western and addressing the flow and content of the University’s web-site.

- Student Success Centers – The physical placement of the three Student Success Centers in either the Library or the math department is a real plus. Given the QEP efforts underway, and the academic nature of these functions, we recommend that these units report to the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Studies effective July 1, 2008, the beginning of Western’s new academic/fiscal year. This means the transfer of these units from the One-Stop operation. There appears to be uniform support for this recommendation among all parties at this time.

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The bottom line is that much has been accomplished in the last couple of years with regard to developing a student success/retention infrastructure and culture. There are many efforts of which to be proud. On the other hand, there are many efforts which need to be assertively undertaken. As a new Dean so ably said: "We need to connect all of the student retention dots."

I look forward to reviewing the contents of this memo with you on April 25, discussing several other matters with you, and exploring the focus of my next on-campus meeting. Feel free to share this memorandum with your colleagues on the Enrollment Management Steering Committee.

Appendix C. Retention Steering Committee and Council on Undergraduates' Early Experiences Summary of Activities for AY 2007-08

Retention Issue	Definition of Issue	Action Recommended	Action Taken
<p>Suspension/Probation of First Semester/Year Students</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Several first year students are suspended or placed on probation after the first semester; is this mandatory GA policy? 225, 240, students placed on probation and suspension, respectively, at the end of spring 2008; 28 placed on a learning contract. Can we improve our early intervention model at WCU? (see below) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review GA and WCU policies on suspension and probation; Determine status of constituent institutions 	<p>Analysis and discussion of the data are in progress by the co-chairs of the Suspension/Probation Committee and the Council on Undergraduates' Early Experiences.</p>
<p>Supplemental Instruction</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The opportunities for tutoring in subjects across the board is limited; Catamount Tutoring does not have sufficient funding to hire tutors for all subjects 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review current status of tutoring needs; Check financial viability of implementing supplemental instruction for courses with high D, F, rates, and others Review viability of using E (education) & T (technology) funds to support this effort 	<p>The Provost has instructed the deans to develop a plan for implementing supplemental instruction at the institutional level in the fall. Plan includes appropriate use of the E & T funds.</p>
<p>Printed Class Schedule</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns by some faculty and students about the lack of a printed course schedule to assist with advising and registration 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ascertain degree to which printed schedules are desired by faculty, students, and professional advisors Develop and disseminate printed class schedules (electronically and in paper copy) if recommended 	<p>Printed class schedule of Liberal Studies courses for fall 08 were disseminated to all academic departments, advising center, etc. in March; pdf class schedule of all classes posted on web</p>
<p>Early Alert System</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> How do we identify and intervene with students who experience academic or personal difficulties that will result in probation, suspension or attrition during the first two semesters? Beyond? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Assess usage and impact of the Early Alert System 	<p>Ongoing.</p>

Retention Issue	Definition of Issue	Action Recommended	Action Taken
Week of Welcome	1. Feedback on Welcome Week (WOW) activities has been mixed from students and faculty	1. Compare other institutions' WOW activities and update our offerings 2. Review day/time/purpose/topic for First Year Convocation	1. WOW Committee established in May 2. Committee has developed a comprehensive schedule of activities for the freshman class' first week on campus. Highlights include moving Convocation to move-in day so families can be addressed by the Chancellor and the creation of a Freshman Class Assembly where the entering class will gather to hear a motivational speaker and other messages about being successful Catamounts.
First Year Students' Participation in Student Organizations	1. Data indicate that FY students are not involved in student organizations to degree that would increase their engagement with the campus	1. Work with Student Organizations to make membership by first year students attractive/create incentives 2. Review current passport program in Leadership and Western Peaks programs and recommend for all first year transition courses 3. Create a first year government/council	Valley Ballyhoo is a campus wide event traditionally held immediately following convocation and served as the fall student organization sign-up fair. It will be on Saturday evening this fall, and will be supplemented by a second student organization activity fair on the following Wednesday. Our concern is that many freshmen might be distracted by the spectacle of Valley Ballyhoo and fail to take full advantage of the sign-up opportunity, thus having a second chance in a less intense context will enhance their participation in student organizations.
Director of First Year Experiences	1. First year experiences lack focus and oversight and are often fragmented	1. Create a First Year Experiences Director position to assure engagement by students, relate experiences to QEP, and coordinate activities/courses	1. Support to establish position from Chancellor, Provost, and Council of Deans 2. Job description drafted and submitted to UNC General Administration for approval
Academic Success Centers	1. The Academic Success Centers (Math, Writing and Catamount Tutoring) need to be aligned with academics to more directly support the QEP, Liberal Studies, and first year students' success	1. Reorganize Academic Success Centers (Math, Writing and Catamount Tutoring) to be a part of the Undergraduate Studies Office to more directly support the QEP, Liberal Studies, and first year students' success	1. Effective May 8, the Academic Success Centers are a part of the Office for Undergraduate Studies

Retention Issue	Definition of Issue	Action Recommended	Action Taken
Weekend Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. WCU's reputation as a suitcase campus promotes perception that students don't have anything to do in Cullowhee on the weekends, which affects retention of first year students 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the percentage of students who leave the campus on the weekends; 2. Review weekend activities sponsored by Student and Affairs 	<p>Student Affairs will continue to study the issue of students leaving campus on the weekends this fall. For example, a rough analysis of residence hall entry access logs indicates that weekend entries into residence halls typically decrease only 35-40% compared to weekday activity. Student Affairs will also continue looking at opportunities to provide innovative weekend programming and activities. The opening of the new recreation center will enhance our offerings. However, the growing resource demands on the student activity fee will increasingly constrain the funding available for any new programming, on the weekends or at any other time.</p>
Transition Courses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Courses such as USI 101 (honors forum), 130 (university experience), 140 (Western Peaks), COUN 140 (study skills), etc., have limited coordination at a university level leading to mixed results in fostering successful college transition 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyze number and content of the first year transition courses 2. Collaborate with leaders of the transition courses to share purposes and make recommendations for the courses 3. Create and disseminate lists of common elements for the transition courses 	<p>Three discussion meetings were held and a list of common elements for the curriculum of each course has been drafted; will share with coordinators in June.</p>
First Year Seminars	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Common perceptions on the part of students that the liberal studies first year seminars have limited applicability and value; confusing in purpose (MGT report results); 2. Erosion of positive faculty perceptions about the first year seminars 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess first year seminars from faculty and students' perspectives; 2. Develop recommendations to make purpose and content more accurate and relevant to students 	<p>Implementation of 19 recommendations generated from faculty focus groups are in progress; program development plan constructed from formal assessment is in progress; greater attention to section descriptions provided to incoming first year students during orientation; faculty orientation guide to teaching FYS developed.</p>

Retention Issue	Definition of Issue	Action Recommended	Action Taken
<p>Admission Standards</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The WCU applicant pool traditionally has included 300-400 students who have SAT composite scores of less than 900 on the critical reading and math sections. 2. The Admission Office traditionally has admitted 250-300 of these students to maintain an entering class size of between 1400-1500. 3. These students are poorly prepared for the academic rigor the University and, except for those students admitted to the summer Academic Success Program and/or served through Project C.A.R.E., have a high rate of attrition between the first and second years of study. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Admission Office will review acceptance criteria to better align students' admissibility with the academic rigor of the University. 2. The recruitment marketing plan will target only those students with an SAT composite score of 950 or greater. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The bottom 250-300 applicants as measured by the SAT were denied admission for fall 2008 entry. 2. The Admission Office has implemented a new recruitment marketing plan that has successfully recruited a more academically prepared pool of applicants as measured by the SAT. In the fall 2008 applicant pool, the average SAT composite rose 35 points (from 1028 to 1063 as of June 16, 2008), a major achievement in one year. 3. The combined summer 2008-fall 2008 average SAT composite for deposited students rose 12 points (from last year's final 1027 to 1039 as of June 16, 2008), another significant achievement. For fall only, the average composite SAT is 1054.

DRAFT MEMORANDUM

To: Kyle Carter, Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor, Western Carolina University

From: Alceste T. Pappas, Ph.D., President and CEO, Pappas Consulting Group Inc.

Date: July 11, 2008

Subject: June 17, 2008 Campus Visit

The objective of this visit was twofold: (1) to review the work of the Retention Steering Committee and Council on Undergraduates' Early Experiences (Summary of Activities for AY 2007-08); and (2) to review the organizational structure of the divisions of Student Affairs, Enrollment Management and Undergraduate Studies. To that end, I interviewed and/or met with:

- John Bardo, Chancellor
- Kyle Carter, Provost
- Melissa Wargo, Director of Assessment
- Alan Kines, Director of Admissions
- Clifton Metcalf, Vice Chancellor for Advancement and External Affairs
- Fred Hinson, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
- Sam Miller, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
- Carol Burton, Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Studies
- Retention Steering Committee

Findings

- I. The work of the Retention Steering Committee and the Council on Undergraduates' Early Experiences is laudable. Much appears to have been accomplished during the AY 2007-08. However, what needs focused attention during the FY 2008-09 is the development and implementation of so-called Dashboard or key five year trend data, most especially for students-at-risk and the interventions provided them.

- II. As it relates to the future organizational structure of Student Affairs, Enrollment Management and Undergraduate Studies (See Exhibits A, B and C for the current organizational structure of each of these divisions), we had thoughtful conversation with Chancellor Bardo about the need for the University to begin to undertake some thoughtful succession planning, keeping in mind that a handful of senior administrators will retire over the next 2-5 years. The joy is that the Chancellor and you have made some stellar appointments with regard to the Vice Chancellor Student Affairs and the Assistant Vice Chancellor Undergraduate Studies. This truly gives you the opportunity to begin to do some thoughtful and intentional reorganizational design over the next couple of years.

Appendix E. Academic Affairs/Student Affairs Assessment Reporting Templates

Academic Affairs

Annual Assessment Report - Instructions

The purpose of the Annual Assessment Report is to provide an update on the assessment of student learning outcome(s) identified in your 2006 Program Assessment Plan. You are not expected to provide results for all outcomes included in your assessment plan, but you must report results and planned changes/improvements for at least one.

Western Carolina University
(Program Name)
(Department)
(College)
Annual Assessment Report for 2007-2008

Primary Contact Name/Info:

Provide name and contact information for person responsible for submitting program assessment report.

Student Learning Outcome(s) Assessed in 2007-08	Method(s) of Assessment	Results of Assessment	Implementation Plan
State the learning outcome(s) that the program assessed in the 2007-08 assessment cycle.	Provide a summary of the methods used to assess the chosen outcome. Note any changes in the assessment measures from the program's official assessment plan.	Results must include a summary of major findings, interpretation of the results, and a description of how the results were disseminated to key stakeholders for discussion.	Identify what programmatic/curricular changes or improvements you will make as a result of the assessment. Each recommended action must be specific and relate directly to the outcome and results of assessment. A description of the timeline for action and the person(s) responsible must be included. In addition, please include a brief description of resources that will be critical to implementation of the actions proposed, if applicable.

Western Carolina University
Division of Student Affairs Program Plan 2007-2008

Program/Department Name:	Department Contact Name and Title:	Phone Number:	Email Address:
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Date Submitted:

Program/Department Mission Statement (include date of last revision):

Program Goals/Objectives:

Intended Outcome	Type of Outcome	Departmental Strategies	Assessment Methods	Assessment Criteria
Please indicate a Measurable statement of the desired output or effect upon completion of the program.	<i>Program Outcome:</i> What is the intended or desired effect of your program or service? OR: <i>Learning outcome:</i> What will students know or be able to do as a result of their involvement in the program or service?	Please identify the specific ways in which the effect of the program or service will be manifested, or the participants will acquire the skills/knowledge identified in the outcome.	Please identify responsible parties, type of data to be collected, and a timeline for data collection and analysis. Attach copies of instruments to be used.	Performance Indicators: What is an acceptable measure of success for this outcome?

Appendix F. 2007-08 Project and Process Due Dates for Colleges (activities related to assessment planning and reporting are highlighted.)

Due Date	Document/Task	Format	Recipient
August COD workday	Academic Affairs Action Plan	Revise action plan based on budget allocation	Provost Office
September 1	Committee members from colleges	Update Committee 08-09 spreadsheet in COD share drive folder	COD share drive folder—then COD Updates—then Documents Due—then Committees for 08-09 (excel spreadsheet)
September 1	Strategic Planning Committee begins discussion about Institutional Funding recommendations		
September 26	Spring/Summer Schedules uploaded into Banner	Banner	
October 1	Faculty names for attending commencements	Electronic list of names for December, May, & August commencements (1/3 of faculty in each department at each commencement)	Hinson@email.wcu.edu
October 1	Applications for Fall Graduation due to Registrar's Office (deans' offices need to make their due dates to accommodate the registrar due date)	Signature copies	Registrar's office from Colleges
October 15-November 1	Catalog-graduate and undergraduate	Academic units make editorial changes to catalog—copy and past catalog sections into a word document and <u>track changes</u> —then send to Nancy Carden via email	Nancy Carden, Office of the Provost
October 15	Proposals for fees	Electronic proposal/request	AJ Grube agrube@email.wcu.edu
November 1	Identify Institutional Funding Recommendations		
November 1	Academic Planning Report	Update electronic document on COD share	
November 1	Grove Park Inn Holiday Luncheon	Discuss with the Deans and Provost your plans for sponsoring a table at the luncheon	
December 7	Curriculum changes for next online and printed catalog	Approved by the Faculty Senate by this date	
January	Department Budget Requests	Hard copy or Electronic attachments	Dean's Office
January COD workday	Develop institutional priorities for Academic Affairs Action Plan using Academic Planning report analysis	discussion	
January COD workday	Develop Academic Affairs budget priorities based on university strategic plan and academic planning report	discussion	

February	Fall Schedule uploaded into Banner	Banner	
February 1	Request for use of roll-up funds	Electronic spreadsheet provided by AJ Grube	AJ Grube agrube@email.wcu.edu
February 28	Applications for Spring Graduation due to the Registrar's Office (deans' offices establish due dates to accommodate the registrar's due date)		
March	College Staffing Plan—requests for new and replacement positions	Electronic Attachment	Dean's Office
March	Enrollment Projections Due	TBD	TBD
March 1	Requests for college/department reorganization	Memo from dean explaining request and specific changes	Provost
March 15	Budget requests due to Provost	Electronic – Forms are on H: drive.	agrube@wcu.edu
March 15-April 1	Budget hearings with Provost (optional)	Schedule 30-minute meeting through Anne Aldrich	Anne Aldrich
April 1	All faculty/College Reorganization has to have final approval in order to get university systems updated by July 1	Memo with <u>approved</u> request and attached changes (department titles/new locations for faculty positions, budget line adjustments, etc)	Administration & Finance AJ Grube/Beth Lofquist HR
April 1	Program Director summer pay requests—document in COD share folder	Electronic update in share folder document with tracked changes	Dean's Office
April 4	Department Collegial Review Documents due to the Provost Office from Deans	Electronic copy	Beth Lofquist byson@email.wcu.edu copy Kari Hensley khensley@email.wcu.edu
April/May	AFE letters finalized and communicated to faculty	Signature copy	
April 1 (see COD attachments for 3-6-07 meeting)	DH Leadership Institute nominees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 may attend on May 30-31 • 3 may attend on June 5-6 	Email	Beth Lofquist byson@email.wcu.edu
April 1	Notification to time-limited employees concerning employment for contract renewal the next academic year	AA7s developed and submitted to the Provost Office	
April 15	College Award winners (faculty)	List sent to be included in Awards Ceremony Program	Kari Hensley khensley@email.wcu.edu
May 1	Department report on Post Tenure Review (form attached)	Electronic attachment	Dean's Office
May 15	Department responses to AA Action Plan (AA Action Plan on share drive)	Electronic attachment	Dean's Office
May 31	Dept. Program Assessment	Electronic attachment	Melissa Wargo

	Plans (only if changes are made to the plan)		wargo@email.wcu.edu
June 2	Applications for Summer Graduation due to Registrar's Office (deans' office need to make their due dates to accommodate the registrar's due date)	Registrar's Office	
June 15	Program annual assessment reports	Electronic attachment	Melissa Wargo wargo@email.wcu.edu
June 15	Faculty Rankings for Merit Pay due to Provost from Deans	TBA	Anne Aldrich aaldrich@email.wcu.edu

Appendix G. Sample Page from Objective Detail Report in WCU Planning Database

<i>Department Name</i> Counseling & Psychological Services			
<i>Fiscal Year</i>	2007-2008	<i>Priority Rank</i>	1
<i>Length of Objective</i>	Long Term	<i>Objective Type</i>	Learning Objective
OBJECTIVE DETAILS			
<i>Statement</i>	Provide quality counseling		
<i>Desire Result/Need</i>	Provide quality counseling and crisis sessions to promote personal, cognitive, emotional, and academic growth		
<i>Activities Being Undertaken</i>	Counseling/psychotherapy sessions provided to students		
<i>Expected target/results</i>	Personal/Psychological Development Psychological/Emotional Well Being Cognitive Development Learning Process Enhancement Social/Interpersonal Development Communication Development Values and Diversity Enhancement Counseling Satisfaction Counselor		
<i>Instruments/methods employed</i>	Learning Outcomes questionnaire Counseling Satisfaction questionnaire		
<i>Strategic Goal</i>	Facilitate and encourage a healthy, wellness-minded lifestyle.		
<i>CAS Standards</i>	Chooses behaviors and environments that promote health and reduce risk; Articulate the relationship between health and wellness and accomplishing life long goals; Exhibits behaviors that advance a healthy community.	Shows self-respect and respect for others; Initiates actions toward achievement of goals; Takes reasonable risks; Demonstrates assertive behavior; Functions without need for constant reassurance from others	Writes and speaks coherently and effectively; Writes and speaks after reflection; Able to influence others through writing, speaking or artistic expression; Effectively articulates abstract ideas; Uses appropriate syntax; Makes presentations or gives per
<i>Learning Outcomes</i>	Students will recognize behaviors and choices that affect lifelong well-being by knowing and valuing health and wellness benefits, identifying and practicing sound health and wellness activities, and understanding the role of leisure and lifestyle factors	Students will communicate clearly in an oral format appropriate to an audience in interpersonal, small group, and basic public speaking contexts.	
<i>GA Core Measures</i>	Retention	Quality and value added as Measured by expected general skills	Graduation (Including community college transfers)
<i>Professional Standards</i>	Engages students in active learning.	Helps students develop coherent values and ethical standards.	Sets and communicates high expectations for learning.
<i>Student Affairs Strategic Emphasis</i>	Student Learning		
<i>Tuesday, August 05, 2008</i>			
			<i>Page 2 of 116</i>

Welcome to the First-Year Seminar

Liberal Studies Program

Western Carolina University

Created by Dr. Laura Cruz, Coulter Faculty Center,
and Dr. Carol Burton, Undergraduate Studies, Provost's Office



Congratulations on teaching this important and interesting course! Teaching first-year seminars is not like teaching any other course. You will have opportunities to teach outside of the confines of traditional course and programmatic structures and to form lifelong bonds with entering students. It is a teaching experience that is fun and challenging to even the most seasoned faculty member.

This packet will serve as a guide as you design and teach your first-year seminar. Even if you've taught this course before, our guide contains examples of successful strategies across a broad range of disciplines that should be useful to you as you fine-tune your course for a new semester.

Contents:

1. FAQs	p. 2-3
2. Designing your First-Year Seminar	pp. 3-8
3. Teaching your First-Year Seminar	pp. 8-10
4. Assessing your First-Year Seminar	pp. 10-11
5. Contacts and Resources	pp. 11-12
6. Sample Syllabi	pp. 12-21

SECTION 1: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is a first-year seminar?

First-year seminars are core courses in the liberal studies program that are taught in a variety of disciplines. As the name suggests, these courses are usually taken the first semester a student enters WCU as a freshman (transfer students are not required to take the first-year seminar). The primary goal of the first year seminar is to introduce students to intellectual life at the university level. First-year seminars are smaller than most classes, with the enrollment normally capped at 22, and are always numbered 190-199, e.g., PSY 190. The first-year seminar's focus is the development of academic rigor and intellectual dispositions. The use of a common text or theme provides students with an opportunity to see faculty modeling intellectual learning habits by considering a topic that might be outside of the faculty member's area of specialization.

2. What are the university guidelines for first-year seminars?

The liberal studies program has its own learning goals (for more information see <http://www.wcu.edu/liberalstudies/>), but the first-year seminar objectives are to

- Teach students the importance of liberal studies in a university education.
- Discuss how reasoning and communication skills are the foundation for life-long intellectual and professional growth.
- Demonstrate that cultural, social, economic, and political issues of a global society are not limited to one academic discipline or profession.
- Discuss serious ideas and develop rigorous intellectual habits.

Students with 0-15 credit hours are required to take this course; students with 15.1-29.9 credit hours are eligible to enroll, but it is not required; students with 30 or more credit hours are not eligible to take a first-year seminar. When a student is not required or eligible to take the first-year seminar, it is considered waived, and the liberal studies hour requirement will be reduced from 42 to 39 (total hours for the degree are not

reduced). The first-year seminar cannot be repeated and, therefore, it is not possible to replace a grade received in this course. Grading for all first year seminars must be A, B, C, I (“incomplete”), W (“withdrawal”) or U (“unsatisfactory”). Those students receiving a “U” grade must take three credits of liberal studies electives to make up for the unearned credits from the first-year seminar.

3. How do students select their first-year seminars?

In most cases, incoming students select three seminars from a list of topics distributed during orientation. They rank their top three seminars in order of preference, and their advisor registers them accordingly.

4. What is the difference between a first-year seminar course and WCU’s USI 130 (The University Experience)?

The first-year seminar is a course with content drawn from a particular instructor’s expertise. It is designed to serve as a gateway to other content-based courses as students progress through their undergraduate studies. The USI course, the most common of our transition to college courses, is a broader introduction to the opportunities available at Western. The university is considering integrating the functions of these two courses more explicitly. Furthermore, not all students take USI 130 or some other type of transition course, while the first-year seminar is a requirement for completion of the liberal studies program.

5. What kind of students can I expect?

Freshmen today are part of the millennial generation, a confident and optimistic group that tend to respect authority and appreciate educational success. They tend to be technologically savvy, socially oriented, and interested in community service. At WCU, a relatively large percentage (approximately 13%) are first-generation college students. Most graduated from a high school in North Carolina and headed straight to Cullowhee. More information on statistics about the incoming class is available at the [Admissions Office Web site](http://www.wcu.edu/15.asp) (www.wcu.edu/15.asp)

SECTION 2: DESIGNING YOUR FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

The first-year seminar is designed to introduce students to the differences between college and high school-level work. As the instructor, you are their mentor, teacher, coach, and their referee. Experienced instructors suggest that when you design the course you keep in mind these multiple roles and plan time to work on skill-building and confidence activities and to be explicit about what you are doing and why. First-year students who understand the purpose of this course and see its relationship to their education are more motivated to participate at a high level in your class.

The first step in designing a first-year seminar is **choosing a topic**. Although you should certainly choose an area of your own expertise, first-year seminar instructors are encouraged to think of non-traditional topics, especially those that may cross disciplinary divides. They are also encouraged to be creative and think of titles for their topics that are catchy and appealing.

A good topic for a first year seminar

- Clearly explains what the course will be about.
- Does not duplicate courses being taught at other times/in the discipline.
- Gives the instructor room to be innovative and interactive.
- Engages students from other intended majors.
- Encourages critical thinking, debate, and/or discussion.

Here are some examples of first-year seminar topics that have been taught successfully in the past:

Biology 193 – Forensic Biology Seminar

Computer Information Science 195 – Information Society at Work

Education, Curriculum, and Instruction 190 – The Great School Wars

English 190 – Literature about Peace

English 190 – The Culture of Embarrassment

English 190 – Exploring Southern Culture

English 191 – First Year Seminar in Creative Nonfiction Writing: Tapping into the Truth

Geology 191 – Geology, Landscapes, and the Human Psyche

History 190 – The Atlantic World

History 190 – Crime and Criminals

Music 190 – The Moravians: Their Music, Lives and Faith

Philosophy and Religion 190 – Freedom, Culture, and Utopia

Contact the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Studies, Carol Burton, who will be happy to talk about topics with you as you develop your course (burton@wcu.edu; 828-227-7497).

SECTION 2: DESIGNING YOUR FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR (cont' d)

DEVELOPING YOUR SYLLABUS

After you have selected your topic and it has been approved by your department head, you can begin to design the syllabus for your course. Most first year seminars are captured under a general category for your department/program, e.g., ENGL 190; PAR 191, so it is not necessary to develop an entirely new course, just create a theme that fits in with your program/department's first year seminar.

Like all liberal studies courses, your syllabus must contain your objectives for the course. These objectives should incorporate the stated objectives for first-year seminars in some way, but the connections need not be verbatim (i.e., cut and pasted).

Reminder: There is a difference between learning objectives and learning goals. Goals are broader, intangible, or abstract. For example, it might be important to you that your first-year seminar students become comfortable with university life. This goal is great, but it is not an easily measurable outcome, so it remains a goal, not an objective.

Learning objectives should be

- Concrete, specific, and/or measurable.
- Clear to your audiences, from faculty to students.
- Process oriented and/or specify an end.
- Linked to other elements in the course (assignments, assessment, etc.).
- Realistic, given the time frame of the course.

Course Learning Objectives – Examples

1. GEOL 191 – Geology, Landscapes and the Human Psyche

By the end of this course, students will

- Explain the geologic origin and geologist processes of mountain belts, deserts and rivers.
- Analyze how landscapes affect the practical aspects of how we live, the things that Ralph Waldo Emerson calls commodity.
- Identify how people connect with the land. What inspires them? Is there an inherent difference between writers and artists from the desert southwest and those from the Southern Appalachians? How do culture and landscape intersect (if they do)?

- Define a landscape. What is real about a landscape and what is constructed? In other words, what aspects of a landscape are consistent with its physical properties and what is inherited from a writer?
- Explain the kind of myths and metaphors. Are these natural features? Do they reflect the processes that created them?
- Assess how geologists, artists, and writers all examine a landscape. Are there inherent differences in how we all see the same phenomenon? Is one more accurate or less accurate? Do writers over focus on biota and not concentrate on geology?

Courtesy, Dr. Dave Kinner, Geosciences

2. ENGL 199 – Southern Appalachia Through Words and Pictures

Course Goals

- Improve reading and analytical skills with a variety of materials including film, music, and more traditional texts.
- Write informally about what you read in a variety of contexts—journals, discussion lists, etc.
- Write a more formal academic paper in which you develop an area of interest into a research project including a paper and oral presentation.
- Develop an appreciation of the culture and diversity of art from the region.
- Develop a more informed historical perspective of this area and the major contributors to Appalachian literature and art.
- Develop informed concern about contemporary social issues.
- Consider how place intersects with identity
- Build a sense of identity as a student in an academic setting—e.g., what am I doing here? What do I hope to accomplish in this class? In my time as an undergraduate?

Courtesy, Dr. Mae Claxton, English

3. HIST 190 – Crime and Criminals

Course Goals

- To become proficient in the use of historical evidence.
- To create and present original and compelling arguments.
- To critically apply criminological theory.
- To understand how crime has changed over time.
- To relate historical cases to present day issues.
- To synthesize history, theory, and changing perceptions of law.
- To gain the ability to use literature as an historical source

Courtesy, Dr. Laura Cruz, History

SECTION 2: DESIGNING YOUR FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR (cont' d)

REASONING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

One of the goals of the first-year seminar is to impart **reasoning and communication skills**. Keep these skills in mind when designing your course and choosing assignments. Many successful first-year seminars incorporate both written and oral communication skills. Writing is an essential skill for future success and is a cornerstone of the first-year seminar experience. Bear in mind that your students will come to the course with a wide range of experience and comfort with writing. For assistance in incorporating writing into your seminar, please see the communiqué from Barbara Hardie, Director of the University Writing Center, accompanied by your desk copy of *The Transition to College Writing* by Keith Hjortshoj.

First-year seminar instructors have become increasingly creative in how they incorporate writing into their courses. See following example.

PAR (Philosophy and Religion) 190 - Freedom, Culture, and Utopia

Critical Analysis Paper: Each student will turn in a critical review of Huxley's *Brave New World*. In this review, I expect to see signs of critical engagement with the text, some awareness of other utopian visions that we have read throughout the semester, and your own alternative utopian vision that you offer. Do not merely download an Internet review of Huxley's work – plagiarism will earn you an F for the course, and will be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs. To help you avoid plagiarism and cite sources correctly, I also have required a supplemental textbook, *Writing with Sources* by Gordon Harvey. This project is an opportunity for you to be creative in your thinking and writing about what we have read and to offer your own reflections on what constitutes an ideal society.

Courtesy, Dr. Daryl Hale, Philosophy and Religion

Reasoning skills are a bit trickier. In education theory, there is a model known as the **Perry Model of Intellectual Development**. According to Perry, students begin their college education thinking that there are right answers to every question, i.e. that the world is very black and white. As they progress through their education, they progress through three more stages. After the black/white stage, they then begin to understand that there may not be right answers for every question—yet. In the sophomore stage, they are confident that right answers will eventually be found, such as a cure for cancer. The third stage is where they come to realize that for many questions there are no right answers, only shades of interpretation or reasoned opinion. This stage can be one of the most difficult stages for students to work through, and many find that they miss seeing the world in terms of dichotomies and right answers. In the final stage, students learn to navigate these choices, to select one interpretation, and to defend it against competitors. This last stage, according to Perry, is ultimately the goal of a liberal studies education. Many first-year seminar instructors incorporate this model into the structure of their classes and try to help students move from the first stage toward the second, third, and final stages of their intellectual development.

The Perry Model of Intellectual and Ethical Development

	Stages of Cognitive Development	Transitions in Cognitive Development
#1: Dualistic Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students generally believe knowledge is certain and unambiguous: black/white, right/wrong. • Questions have immutable, objective answers. • Students generally believe authorities possess valuable wisdom that contains eternal truths. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certainty yields to uncertainty and ambiguity.
#2: Multiplicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students come to believe that where uncertainty exists, knowledge and truth are essentially subjective and personal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students come to recognize that mere opinion is insufficient because specific criteria help evaluate the usefulness and validity of knowledge claims: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • methodology • empirical evidence • explanatory power • predictive power • logical consistency • positive vs. normative conclusions
#3: Contextual-Relativism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students come to believe that even where uncertainty exists, people must make choices about premises, frameworks, hypotheses, and theories to apply; policy conclusions are not self-evident. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may come to recognize that even in a world of uncertainty, they must make choices (whether about ideas, hypotheses, theories, or policies). These choices require methods of critical thinking.
#4: Context-Appropriate Decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may come to acknowledge that choices require analysis <i>and</i> values. Knowledge, theories, and 	

	methods are imperfect and uncertain, thus personal choices require acknowledging personal responsibility that follows from personal values.	
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Source: model modifications by Nelson (1989), with additional comments by Thoma (1993)

Thoma, George A. (1993). "The Perry Framework and Tactics for Teaching Critical Thinking in Economics." *Journal of Economic Education*, Spring: 128-136.

An example of incorporating reasoning skills into the first-year experience follows:

PAR 190 (Philosophy and Religion) - Freedom, Culture, and Utopia

Utopias are generally understood as ideally perfect places, ones where the social and political conditions work to the advantage of most members of society. Thomas More invented the word, punning on the Greek words, **ou** [English: 'no' or 'not] and **topos** [English: 'place']. More also played on the Greek adjective **eu** [English: 'excellent' or 'good'] to speak of his **eutopia** as a good place. Since that time, many have taken More to be critiquing his own society, and thus providing us with a description of a **dystopia**, a bad place. So from this brief etymology, we should pay close attention to 3 things connected with utopian thought: a. utopias are ideal societies, i.e. they don't actually exist, though b. they are always combined with a **topos**, some location in time and space other than the present; so, c. utopian schemes are always visions that criticize current socio-political conditions. The earliest utopias are described for us in terms of religio-poetic myths – a Golden Age, an Arcadia, an Eden, or an Isle of the Blest; more recent ones envision constructive (or, destructive) changes brought about by current science and technology.

This course will examine, from a historical-philosophical perspective, several utopian visions in Western thought – one from the classical Greek, one from medieval Christianity, and one from the early modern Enlightenment period, along with some more recent versions of the scientific utopian experiment. As we study each utopian scheme, we will also read a critique or satire of each of these visions. We will begin with Plato's philosophical vision in the *Republic*, and then will examine Aristophanes' comic representations of Platonic ideas. Then, we will read the late Roman Stoic philosopher, Epictetus. Next, we will read St. Augustine's Christian utopian vision of a City of God, as presented in his *Of True Religion*, along with a contemporary critique of Augustinian thought. In our concluding utopian vision, we will read Rene Descartes' *Discourse on Method* as representative of a modern scientific utopian vision, along with some critics of Enlightenment thought. Finally, we will conclude with Aldous Huxley's well-known *Brave New World*.

Some of the questions that will arise as we read these sources are: How does human freedom get impacted by utopian idealism? What roles are permitted historically disadvantaged groups or minorities in such utopias? Are such idealistic schemes feasible? What sorts of restrictions must occur to some people in society so as to insure unity or community in such ideal societies?

Courtesy, Dr. Daryl Hale, Philosophy and Religion

SECTION 3: TEACHING YOUR FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

You have developed your theme and written the syllabus for your first year seminar. Now, you're ready to meet the students. Enrollment in the first-year seminar is intentionally kept low (capped at 22), so that the students can interact intensively with the instructor. By the end of the semester, you will get to know your students in a way that larger courses often do not allow. Students will be interesting, aggressive, passive, petulant, excited, dismissive, challenging, creative, verbose, quiet; in short, this is never a dull class to teach.

The literature on millennials (i.e., the generation born largely in the 80s and 90s) shows that they place great value on meaningful relationships with others. Many successful teachers of the first-year seminar find that they have to become more personally involved in this course than they do in others. This personal involvement means inviting students to get to know you just as you get to know them.

Some suggested tactics/principles from experienced instructors include

1. Icebreakers

Your class may very well be the first college classroom your students have ever entered, and for many, this event can be a bit disconcerting, and even intimidating. The tone you set on the first day of class can go a long way towards alleviating anxiety. Experienced instructors use a variety of icebreaker activities to encourage students to become comfortable with each other, with the college classroom environment, and with the instructor. It is likely that you will have students, for example, who are not even really sure what a syllabus IS so just going over it on the first day may not be enough. A variety of icebreakers are available at the Curriculum Resource Laboratory in Humber Library.

2. Availability

Make yourself available to the students as much as possible by phone, e-mail, or office hours. One warning: this generation is also called the 'one-click' generation, though, because they often want instant service, so do set limits on your availability or it is likely that you will spend all of your time with them. Some instructors have had luck with other forms of availability, including WebCAT discussion boards, Facebook and other social networking software, and instant messaging. You could also form a cell phone

network and communicate with your students by text-messaging, the preferred mode of communication for the generation. For help with learning how to text-message via network, contact the Coulter Faculty Center.

3. Transparency

Many of these students are very unfamiliar with the college setting. They want college to be different from high school, but without help in understanding the differences, they can revert to high school tactics and behavior. It is your privilege and responsibility to help them acclimate to their new environment. Most experienced first-year seminar instructors report that it helps a great deal to be explicit about assignment goals and expectations. If you give an assignment, for example, put all information on a handout and be very clear about what you expect, why you expect it, and how students will be graded. When you give a lecture or introduce a class exercise, explain to your students the reason you have chosen to do this and why you chose this method. The more students see implicit ideas become explicit, the more they become comfortable with and committed to participating in the process of a meaningful education.

4. Interactivity

The first year seminar provides an environment that supports the development of students' confidence in their application of skills. Studies show that confidence in learning is derived more from active rather than passive learning. This dynamic is reinforced by research on the millennial generation, which recommends the use of active learning techniques to engage students. Active learning can be as basic as peppering lecture delivery with pertinent questions and as expert as incorporating interactive exercises that remove the instructor from the center of the classroom. Interactivity can reinforce the relationship between the student and the instructor and can also contribute to the development of reasoning skills. For help with active learning techniques, contact the Coulter Faculty Center.

5. Variety

Though many departments like to use first-year seminars to recruit new majors, the fact remains that the majority of your students will likely not become majors in your discipline. Bear in mind, then, that you are acting as a gateway to a wide array of knowledge, skills, and orientations not distinctive to your own discipline. A variety of approaches and assignments can suit this function very well and allow students to discover skills they may not have known they had or to develop new ones. Many first-year seminar instructors emphasize variety in their methods of delivery, choice of assignments/readings, and in the skills they look for from their students. Don't try to be a juggler if you only have one hand, but don't be afraid to mix it up either. Your first-year seminar may be one of the few opportunities where you have this kind of flexibility as an instructor. For help with incorporating variety, contact the Coulter Faculty Center.

SECTION 3: TEACHING YOUR FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR Cont' d

THE LEARNING-CENTERED CLASSROOM

Higher education is undergoing what some have called a shift to a learning-centered paradigm. This term is fancy education-speak for a move towards trying to understand how students learn and figuring out what we as instructors can do to make their learning more permanent, meaningful, or authentic/deep. This shift is not

occurring without controversy, but if you have been considering trying some of the new strategies and techniques that have resulted from it, the first-year seminar is a great place to experiment and to work with alternatives to traditional lectures and assignments. The use of learning-centered strategies is strongly encouraged and is often an essential element in the success of the first-year seminar experience. There are a number of fascinating and intriguing methods and projects available to sample. Which would you like to see in your classroom?

- A. Service learning
- B. Multimedia Projects
- C. Experiential learning
- D. Role-Playing Exercises
- E. Debates/Trials

See the resources and contacts section of this packet for more information on incorporating these methods in your teaching. (Service learning resources are available from the Center for Service Learning; incorporating multimedia, experiential learning opportunities, role-playing, and debates/trials, is available through the Coulter Faculty Center.)

SECTION 4: ASSESSING YOUR FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

Good assessment of learning is, of course, essential to any successful course. Like all courses at WCU, your syllabus has to include learning objectives, a grading scale, and a list of assignments and their relative weight, but the creativity and innovation fostered by the seminar format often leads to assessment challenges.

Some tips from seasoned faculty:

1. High school typically gives many graded assignments. Students are often unaccustomed to having so much weight on single assignments. You can break your larger assignments down into many smaller assignments and/or use your course to teach them about the importance of single assignments in college assessment.
2. It is often helpful to do a pre-test in which you assess what students know when they enter your course. This strategy gives you a sense of where your baseline lies. If you also do a post-test, you can get a sense of the contributions of your course. There are multiple tools available for designing and administering these tests (see Coulter Faculty Center resources at the end of this document).
3. Constructive comments are particularly important at this stage. Rather than simply assigning a grade, explain to students what they need to do to perform at a higher level and why. Much of the seminar

approach is formative, i.e., designed to help the students improve along the way, rather than summative, i.e., designed to be a final evaluation of their work. It is not uncommon in first-year seminars, for example, for instructors to allow students to submit papers multiple times.

4. Grading non-traditional and/or oral projects can be very tricky, particularly when some of these can be tied to self-image, not just academic performance. Students at this level haven't always figured out the difference, so remember your own emotional vulnerability as a first-year student when you design your assessments.
5. Grading group projects continues to pose problems for some faculty. While this issue is beyond the scope of this document, there are numerous tried and true techniques available for evaluating group projects. Do not try to reinvent the wheel; avail yourself of the experience of others, including other instructors of first-year seminars! Contact Carol Burton for help identifying other faculty who might assist you.
6. There has been some movement towards using rewards (the carrot) rather than penalties (the stick) in first-year seminars. This practice is not for everyone, but some have found it very useful. For example, instead of penalizing students for absences, some faculty provide bonuses for students who have exemplary attendance.
7. The objectives for the first-year seminar include introducing students to the rigor of college academic life. While the seminar is intended to be formative and constructive, it is not an easy course, nor should it be assessed as such. Students need to know where their work stands in relation to the criteria of college-level work. On the other hand, the course is not inappropriately difficult.

The preceding examples are intended to serve as suggestions. As the Perry Model reminds us, there is no dualistic choice between the right way and the wrong way! Go for context-appropriate choices based on your temperament and preferred teaching style.

SECTION 5: CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

Administrative Contacts:

Assistant Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Studies: Carol Burton (Office of the Provost)

(227-7497; burton@wcu.edu)

Chair, Liberal Studies Oversight Committee: Peter Nieckarz (Anthropology and Sociology)

(227-3237; pnieckarz@wcu.edu)

Chair, Faculty/Faculty Senate: Richard Beam (Stage and Screen)

(227-3800; beamr@wcu.edu)

Pedagogical Support:

Coulter Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching (227-7196; Hunter Library)

Anna McFadden, Director (227-2093; amcfadden@email.wcu.edu)

Robert Crow, Instructional Designer (assessment and educational technology)

Amy Martin, Instructional Designer (writing and assignments)

Debra Randleman, Associate Director (assessment and course design)

Laura Cruz, Faculty Fellow for Teaching and Learning

The Coulter Faculty Center has an extensive library of reference works for teaching and learning. The catalog is accessible from their website: www.wcu.edu/facctr.

Center for Service Learning (227-7184; Scott Hall-East Wing)

Glenn Bowen, Director (gbowen@wcu.edu)

Melanie Clark, Assistant Director (mrclark@wcu.edu)

Faculty Fellows and Liaisons in each of the Colleges and Schools provide support to faculty who are interested in incorporating service learning into their courses. To access additional resources about service learning please go to their website: http://www.wcu.edu/studentd/service_learning/

Student Academic Support

Student Technology Assistance Center (227-2497; Hunter Computer Lab)

Phillip Garrison, Director (pgarrison@email.wcu.edu)

The STAC provides help with computer software (word processing, spreadsheets, databases, electronic presentations), campus network tools (MyCat, WebCT, WebCat, etc.), or the Internet (web browsers, newsgroups, and university email). For more information, visit www.wcu.edu/techassist.

Catamount Academic Tutoring Center (227-2274; Hunter Library 30)

Chesney Reich, Director (reich@email.wcu.edu)

The CAT center provides academic skill workshops and small-group tutoring for many 100- and 200- level courses. In addition to subject-specific tutoring, the staff is trained to offer resources and strategies for effective studying and efficient time management. Visit www.wcu.edu/catcenter for more information.

Mathematics Tutoring Center (227-3830; Stillwell 455)

Nory Prochaska, Director, Prochske@email.wcu.edu

The MTC provides drop-in help for all lower-division math and computer science classes, as well as individually scheduled tutoring appointments and workshops. For more information, visit www.wcu.edu/mathlab.

University Writing Center (227-7197; Hunter 161)

Barbara Hardie, Director (bhardie@email.wcu.edu)

Maryann Peterson, Associate Director (mpeterson@email.wcu.edu)

The UWC provides one-on-one help with any part of the writing process, from brainstorming to avoiding plagiarism to revising a final draft. Visit www.wcu.edu/writingcenter to find extensive resources for both instructors and students.

Student Support Services (227-7127; Killian Annex 138)

Carol Mellen, Director (mellen@.email.wcu.edu)

Student Support Services provides academic advising, counseling, tutoring and academic mentoring for students who are first-generation college students, students who meet income guidelines, and/or students with disabilities. For more information, visit www.wcu.edu/cap/sss

SECTION 5: CONTACTS AND RESOURCES (cont' d)

SAMPLE SYLLABI

Sample Syllabus 1:

English 190: *The Victorians in Love and in Film*

Fall 2007, Section 16, 12:20–1:10, MWF Coulter 104

THE COURSE:

Welcome to Western Carolina University, and welcome to English 190. This semester we are determined to do three things: 1) Give you a chance to experience intellectual life at a place of higher learning; 2) Develop skills in reading and writing and thinking and communicating verbally that will set you on a path for success at the university and for the rest of your lives; 3) Enjoy accomplishing the first two goals. There will be three major texts for this class: Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. We will also watch filmed versions of these stupendous novels, and we will also discuss your summer reading selection, Ron Rash's *The World Made Straight*. In

this class you will become a better reader, a better writer, and a better thinker, all of which depend upon a key primary task—learning to love learning. I am thrilled to have the chance to introduce you to this important way of making knowledge, here at the beginning of your academic journey at Western Carolina University—Welcome!!

English 190 satisfies the Liberal Studies Requirements for the First-Year Seminar. The primary goal of the First-Year Seminar is to introduce students to intellectual life at the university level. In these courses you will also:

- Learn about the importance of Liberal Studies in a university education.
- Consider how reasoning skills and communication skills are the foundations for life-long intellectual and professional growth.
- See that cultural, social, economic and political issues of a global society are not limited to one academic discipline or one profession.
- Discuss serious ideas and develop rigorous intellectual habits.

INSTRUCTOR:

Dr. Brent E. Kinser

office: 423 Coulter

email: bkinser@email.wcu.edu

hours: 9:00–10:00 MWF, or by appointment

phone: 227-3933

TEXTS:

RENTAL:

Morgan, Meg, Kim Stallings, and Julie Townsend, eds. *Strategies for Reading and Writing about Literature*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2007 [ISBN: 0-13-093853-X].

PURCHASE:

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Ed. Donald Gray. 3rd ed. New: Norton, 2001 [ISBN: 0-393-97604-1].

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Ed. Richard J. Dunn. 3rd ed. New York: Norton, 2001 [ISBN: 0-393-97542-8].

Hardy, Thomas. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Ed. Scott Elledge. 3rd ed. New York: Norton, 1990. [ISBN 0-393-95903-1].

ASSIGNMENTS:

We will, of course, discuss all of the following assignments more fully in class as they appear on the horizon.

Response Papers:

For each of the novels we read, you will write an argumentative response paper that is 2-3 pages long. This paper should represent a focused response to an aspect of the novel of your choice. It may or may not require outside sources, depending upon the nature of your argument.

Presentation:

You will give a formal presentation on a contextual aspect of the novels we read for class. The idea here is to understand an issue relevant today in terms of the 19th-century context of the novels. Possible topics include gender, war, class, religion, education, etc. You will of course want to be more focused than these general ideas. You will be assessed according to a rubric that will be in your possession well in advance of the presentations.

Writing Journal:

You will keep a writing journal that will consist of your responses to the readings, to the films, and to the class activities. Unlike a private journal, this writing journal is a public text that should remain focused on the course. It is not an appropriate venue for deeply personal topics. I will read the entries on occasions to monitor that you are keeping up with the assignment. You will also be asked to read periodically from these journals in class. You should write in your journals often, at least 2 or three times a week. It will be a great way to get ideas down on paper that you may want to use in the more formal response papers, on the message board postings, or in your presentations. The writing journal entries are intended to be low-risk forms of writing and presenting. I will not grade them as I do the response papers. I want you simply to engage and to respond to the material. Do the work. Have fun with it. And earn all of the points!

My Cat Message Board:

You will post at least TEN short responses (100-WORD MINIMUM, no maximum) on the My Cat Message Board for this course. The idea here is to have an intellectual discussion in which you can do some risk-free writing and perhaps generate some ideas for your response papers. The only way this assignment can hurt your grade is if you do not do it. The first 5 postings must be finished by the day of the mid-term exam; the last 5 postings must be finished by the last day of classes (see the Calendar). I suggest that you write your responses in Word and then copy and paste them into My Cat. Word is more flexible in terms of editing your postings, and it does not time you out and cause you to lose your work.

Reading Quizzes:

There will be at least two short quizzes, which are intended solely to check that you are doing the reading and to give you an idea of what the mid-term and final exams will look like. Should the need arise (i.e., it is obvious that the class is not keeping up with the reading), I will reserve the right to administer unannounced quizzes, so keep up with the reading!

Mid-Term Exam:

The mid-term exam—a mixture of identification, short answer, and essay questions, will give you an opportunity to show me that you are engaging with the material, which means that you are familiar with the reading, the class activities, and the ideas with which we are wrestling. You will know what the exam will look like and what I expect of you ahead of time. I am more interested in learning what you know than in what you do not know. Do the work and succeed!

Final Exam:

The final exam will be given on Tuesday, 12 December, from 12:00–2:30, in 303 Coulter and will be similar to the midterm. Again, you will know what is coming well in advance. Do the work and succeed!

PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE:

Attendance is a major component of the participation grade, in terms of which I do not make a distinction between excused and unexcused absences—if you are not in class, you are not participating. If you miss class more than infrequently (twice), for any reason, your grade will suffer, depending on the frequency and nature of the absences. Most of the persons who fail my classes do so because of poor attendance. I am not unreasonable, but **COME TO CLASS**. If you must miss class, because of illness or tragedy, please let me know, and I will do everything in my power to help you.

GRADES:

Response Essay I	10%	Response Essay III	10%
Response Essay II	10%	Reading Journal	10%
		Message Board	5%

Presentation	5%
Participation	15%
Reading Quizzes	10%
Mid-Term Exam	10%
Final Exam	15%

SCALE:

A	91.0–100%
A–	90.0–90.9%
B+	89.0–89.9%
B	81.0–88.9%
B–	80.0–80.9%
C+	79.0–79.9%
C	71.0–78.9%
C–	70.0–70.9%
D	60.0–69.9%
F	0.0–59.9%

Percentage points are equal to the number of points that each assignment is worth. Thus, there are a possible 100 points for the class.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

I support the University's policy for Academic Integrity as it is stated in your Student Handbook. In addition, please see <<http://catalog.wcu.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=26>> for the University policy and in particular the following statement of my rights and obligations in cases of academic dishonesty:

Instructors have the right to determine the appropriate sanction or sanctions for academic dishonesty within their courses up to and including a final grade of 'F' in the course. Within 5 calendar days of the event, the instructor will inform his or her department head in writing of the academic dishonesty charge and sanction.

Should you be confused at anytime about what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please come and see me, and I will be glad to help you to understand both what plagiarism is and what you need to do to avoid committing it, even accidentally.

RESOURCES:

The University provides many excellent, free services if you want or need extra help!

From August 27 until December 7, except for Labor Day, Advising Day, Fall Break, Thanksgiving, and Reading Day, the University Writing Center (UWC) will be open M–R from 9am–9pm and F from 9am–5pm. To make an appointment, please call 227-7197, or drop by the center in Hunter 161. To assure yourself a spot, make your appointment well in advance of when you want it. Visit the brochure stand outside the UWC front door for useful handouts, or visit the web site at <http://www.wcu.edu/writingcenter> for on-line versions. We wish you the best this semester and look forward to working with you.

Although I am not a trained, professional counselor, I do care deeply about your welfare and success. Being a college student can be utterly overwhelming. Should things begin to seem like they are “too much,” you are more than welcome to come and see me, and I also encourage you to seek out the Office of Counseling and Psychological Services (227-7469), 225 Bird Bldg., <http://counselingcenter.wcu.edu/>. Here you will find wonderful, dedicated professionals who are trained to help you with whatever personal problem you might be having.

Western Carolina University is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for students with documented disabilities. Students who require disability services or reasonable accommodations must identify themselves as having a disability and provide current diagnostic documentation to Disability Services. All information is confidential. Please contact Kimberly Marcus for more information—phone: 227-7234; email: kmarcus@email.wcu.edu.

Also, the Catamount Academic Tutoring Center, located in 135 Killian Annex, offers free learning resources, academic skill workshops, and small-group tutoring for most 100 and 200-level courses. Tutoring sessions are facilitated by trained peer leaders in a relaxed, informal setting. Visit the CAT Center website at <http://www.wcu.edu/catcenter/> to schedule tutoring appointments and find information about workshop offerings in areas such as Time Management, Note Taking, Reading Comprehension, and Exam Preparation.

CALENDAR:

Readings should be completed IN TIME FOR CLASS the day they are listed.

M 20 Aug. Introductions, Syllabus, Strategies for Reading -- *The World Made Straight*
W 22 Aug. *Strategies 3–7*; Discuss *World*
F 24 Aug. *Strategies* skim 63–94; read 95–101 -- Prepare, Discuss Inventories for *World*

M 27 Aug. *Pride and Prejudice* (3–41); **Film I**
W 29 Aug. Experiencing Cultures Past -- Letter Writing in the 18th Century
F 31 Aug. Read Letters -- *Pride and Prejudice* (41–89); **Film II**

M 3 Sept. LABOR DAY -- NO CLASSES
W 5 Sept. *Pride and Prejudice* (89–124); **Film III**
F 7 Sept. *Pride and Prejudice* (124–58); **Film IV**

M 10 Sept. **Finish Film** -- Inventories Draft Due -- Personal, Authorial, Contextual
W 12 Sept. *Pride and Prejudice* (158–90) -- Experiencing the Past -- the Card Games of *P&P* -- Whist
F 14 Sept. *Pride and Prejudice* (190–220) -- **Quiz 1**

M 17 Sept. *Pride and Prejudice* (220–54) -- Farewell to Austen -- Readings from the Reading Journals
W 19 Sept. **Response Essay I Due**; *Strategies* (27–53)
F 21 Sept. *Jane Eyre* (5–44); **Film I**

M 24 Sept. *Strategies* (119–40) -- Turning In
W 26 Sept. *Jane Eyre* (44–79); **Film II**
F 28 Sept. *Strategies* (141–58) -- Turning Out

M 1 Oct. *Jane Eyre* (79–120); **Film III**

W 3 Oct. *Jane Eyre* (120–54); **Film IV**

F 5 Oct. *Jane Eyre* (154–187); **Finish Film**

M 8 Oct. *Jane Eyre* (187–219); Mid-term Review

W 10 Oct. **MID-TERM EXAM**

F 12 Oct. NO CLASSES: FALL BREAK

M 15 Oct. NO CLASSES: FALL BREAK

W 17 Oct. *Jane Eyre* (219–305);

F 19 Oct. *Strategies* (159–80) -- Planning to Write

M 22 Oct. *Strategies* (181–99) -- Drafting, Revising, Editing

W 24 Oct. *Strategies* (201–28) -- Research

F 26 Oct. *Jane Eyre* (305–49); **Quiz 2**

M 29 Oct. *Jane Eyre* (349–85); Farewell to Brontë: Reading Journals

W 31 Oct. **Response Paper II Due;**

F 2 Nov. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1–42); **Film I**

M 5 Nov. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (42–79); *Strategies* (236)

W 7 Nov. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (79–108); **Film II**

F 9 Nov. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (108–40); *Strategies* (279)

M 12 Nov. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (140–77); **Film III**

W 14 Nov. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (178–208); **Film IV**

F 16 Nov. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (208–38); *Strategies* (353)

M 19 Nov. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (238–71); **Finish Film**

W 21 Nov. **NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING**

F 23 Nov. **NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING**

M 26 Nov. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (271–314); *Strategies* (541)

W 28 Nov. **Presentations**

F 30 Nov. **Presentations**

M 3 Dec. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (317–38); Farwell to Hardy: Reading Journals

W 5 Dec. **NO CLASS: READING DAY**

F 7 Dec. Last Day of Classes; **Response Paper III Due**; Review; Evaluations; Farewell!

T 11 Dec. **FINAL EXAM** Coulter 104, 3:00–5:30

SAMPLE SYLLABUS 2

HIST 190: CRIME AND CRIMINALS FIRST YEAR SEMINAR



Course Description:

This class looks at crime in the history of Western Civilization, from ancient times to the present day. It is not a history of crime but rather a historical look at changing attitudes towards crime and criminals especially the status of criminals, the motivations for crimes, and the changing concepts of justice and law.

Course Objectives:

- *To become proficient in the use of historical evidence
- *To create and present original and compelling arguments
- *To critically apply criminological theory
- *To understand how crime has changed over time
- *To relate historical cases to present day issues
- *To synthesize history, theory, and changing perceptions of law
- *To gain the ability to use literature as an historical source

Liberal Studies Objectives (for the entire program)

This course is a Liberal Studies course. The learning goals of the Liberal Studies Program are for students to:

- Demonstrate the ability to locate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information;
- Demonstrate the ability to interpret and use numerical, written, oral and visual data;
- Demonstrate the ability to read with comprehension, and to write and speak clearly, coherently, and effectively as well as to adapt modes of communication appropriate to an audience;
- Demonstrate the ability to critically analyze arguments; demonstrate the ability to recognize behaviors and define choices that affect lifelong well-being;
- Demonstrate an understanding of
 - Past human experiences and ability to relate them to the present;
 - Different contemporary cultures and their interrelationships;
 - Issues involving social institutions, interpersonal and group dynamics, human development and behavior, and cultural diversity; scientific concepts and methods as well as contemporary issues in science and technology;
 - Cultural heritage through its expressions of wisdom, literature and art and their roles in the process of self and social understanding.

First Year Seminar

This course is a **First-Year Seminar**, one of the Core courses in the Liberal Studies program. The primary goal of the **First-Year Seminar** is to introduce students to intellectual life at the university level.

In this course you will:

- learn about the importance of Liberal Studies in a university education;
- consider how reasoning skills and communication skills are the foundations for life-long intellectual and professional growth;
- see that cultural, social, economic and political issues of a global society are not limited to one academic discipline or one profession;
- discuss serious ideas and develop rigorous intellectual habits.

Course Texts:

There is no textbook for this course, as it is pretty unique. We do have some required supplementary texts. These are available for purchase at the WCU bookstore. The first two are also available as e-texts (i.e. fully on-line versions) if you really want to read them that way.

This is a history and literature course, so your readings will be fiction.

The remaining readings will be available on course reserve at Hunter Library.

Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*

Oscar Wilde, *The Portrait of Dorian Grey*

Frank Miller, *Sin City: The Hard Goodbye*

Instructor:

Laura Cruz, Assistant Professor of History

Office: 222C McKee

Office Phone: 3909

Office Hours: MW 3-5 or just come by

E-Mail: lcruz@wcu.edu

Home Phone: 828-235-2939

Course Assignments:

Participation 10%

Written Assignments:

Creative Project 15%

Trial Report 15%

Book Project 15%

Justice Paper 15%

Mid-Term Exam 15%

Final Exam 15%

Grading Scale:

I use a standard 10-point grading scale, with +s and –s.

93-100	A	
90-92	A-	
89-88	B+	
87-83	B	
82-80	B-	(and so forth)

For more information on grading scales at WCU, please see your student handbook.

Course Policies:

1. Students with disabilities:

Western Carolina University is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for students with documented disabilities. Students who require disability services or reasonable accommodations must identify themselves as having a disability and provide current diagnostic documentation to Disability Services. All information is confidential. Please contact Carol Mellen for more information. Phone: (828) 227-7127; E-mail:mellen@email.wcu.edu.

2. Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:

I do not tolerate plagiarism in any way. If you are not sure if material is plagiarized, please consult either the WCU Writing Center guidelines (<http://www.wcu.edu/WritingCenter/isource.asp?page=aplgiarism.html>) or cite it just to be sure. If you willfully plagiarize material, you will fail this course automatically and your conduct will be reported to Student Affairs for inclusion in your record. The following statement is WCU's policy on academic integrity. If you'd like further information, please see your student handbook.

Western Carolina University, as a community of scholarship, is also a community of honor. Faculty, staff, administrators, and students work together to achieve the highest standards of honesty and integrity. Academic dishonesty is a serious offense at Western

Carolina University because it threatens the quality of scholarship and defrauds those who depend on knowledge and integrity. Academic dishonesty includes:

- a. **Cheating**—Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.
- b. **Fabrication**—Intentional falsification of information or citation in an academic exercise.
- c. **Plagiarism**—Intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of someone else as one's own in an academic exercise.
- d. **Facilitation of Academic Dishonesty**—Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help someone else to commit an act of academic dishonesty, such as knowingly allowing another to copy information during an examination or other academic exercise.

Instructors have the right to determine the appropriate sanction or sanctions for academic dishonesty within their courses up to and including a final grade of "F" in the course. Within 5 calendar days of the event the instructor will inform his/her department head, and the Associate Dean of the Graduate School when the student is a graduate student, in writing of the academic dishonesty charge and sanction.

3. Late Submissions:

I will accept late submissions under certain conditions. The most important of which is that you talk to me about your circumstances BEFORE the due date for the assignment. Late submission handed in without prior consultation will not be accepted.

4. Attendance:

I do not take attendance as a general rule. Because most of the exams are based exclusively on lecture material and because participation is a significant percentage of your grade, I do expect you to attend every class. If, over the course of the semester attendance becomes a problem, I reserve the right to take attendance at any time. The University does have an attendance policy, which has been recently revised. This policy is in your student handbook.

5. Difficult Subject Matter:

This course will contain material and activities that some people might find controversial. If you find yourself feeling uncomfortable with a particular topic, reading, or activity, please discuss it with me. Alternative arrangements are possible.

Course Calendar:

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
Introduction		
1 Mon, Aug 20	Skills: Sam Smiley	
2 Wed, Aug 22	History: Silas Deane	
3 Fri, Aug 24	Theories: Lizzy Borden	
Part 1: Crime and Justice		
4 Mon, Aug 27	Definitions	
4 Wed, Aug 29	Crime in the Ancient World	
5 Fri, Aug 31	What is Justice?	Hammurabi's Code (hand-out)
Mon, Sept 3	LABOR DAY-NO CLASSES	
6 Wed, Sept 5	Roman Law	
7 Fri, Sept 7	Is it a Crime?	Oedipus Rex (Supplement)
Part 2: Crime and Society		
8 Mon, Sept 10	Crime in the Middle Ages	
9 Wed, Sept 12	Seven Deadly Sins	
10 Fri, Sept 14	What is a witch?	Witchcraft Packet (Course reserve)
11 Mon, Sept 17	Crime and Numbers	
12 Wed, Sept 19	Old Bailey	
13 Fri, Sept 21	Heroes or Villains?	Medieval Outlaws (Course reserve)

14 Mon, Sept 24	The Ancient Constitution	
15 Wed, Sept 26	Applications	
16 Fri, Sept 28	Mock Trial	Mock Trial Packet (Course reserve)
17 Mon, Oct 1	Mock Trial	
18 Wed, Oct 3	Mock Trial	
19 Fri, Oct 5	Debriefing	
20 Mon, Oct 8	MID-TERM EXAMINATION	
21 Wed, Oct 10	Field Trip	
Fri, Oct 12	FALL BREAK-NO CLASSES	
Mon, Oct 15	FALL BREAK-NO CLASSES	
	Part 3: Natural Law	
22 Wed, Oct 17	The Birth of the Prison	
23 Fri, Oct 19	Enlightened Crime	Beccaria (Course Reserve)
24 Mon, Oct 22	Natural Law	
25 Wed, Oct 24	Pirates	
26 Fri, Oct 26	Is it a Crime?	Oscar Wilde, Portrait (Supplement)
27 Mon, Oct 29	Organized Crime	
28 Wed, Oct 31	Crime and the State	
29 Fri, Nov 2	J'Accuse	Emile Zola, J'Accuse (Course Reserve)
30 Mon, Nov 5	Police and Detectives	
31 Wed, Nov 7	Forensic Science	
32 Fri, Nov 9	Field Trip	Book Selection (list to be handed out)
33 Mon, Nov 12	Social Contract	
34 Wed, Nov 14	Law and Responsibility	

Appendix I. Excerpt from Chancellor’s opening address to the campus regarding review of the Liberal Studies Program, August 13, 2008.

“Now, I want to return to our own programs again. As a part of our SACS review, we spent significant time analyzing Liberal Studies. We were required to provide SACS with a focused follow-up report that is due this September. Since the visit by SACS, we also have completed phase I of UNC-Tomorrow. Both of these studies suggest that we need to better align our liberal studies programs with the requirements of SACS—including our QEP--and with the requirements of UNC-Tomorrow. Therefore, I am asking the Liberal Studies Committee to begin reviewing the program this year with special emphasis on the following questions:

- *What are the specific learning outcomes that we expect from any generally educated student and how are we assessing each of these outcomes? This has to be much more than course grades if we are to meet the external standards that are being expected.*
- *To what extent can the Collegiate Learning Assessment—with which we are experimenting as required by the UNC system—act as a key indicator of liberal learning?*
- *What are the minimum standards for liberal learning assessment that must be included in each student’s educational briefcase? While it is clear that departments must have great flexibility, the national and system moves to accountability will require us to have some elements in common. What will they be and how will they be measured?*
- *There is great interest from UNC-Tomorrow in including “soft skills” that were not traditionally measured by liberal studies. These skills include the ability to work in groups; a strong sense of ethics; the ability to work across cultures; personal responsibility; and citizenship. How will these so called “soft skills” be incorporated in general education and how will we assess students’ abilities to perform in these areas?*
- *Under the QEP, all students are required to develop life plans, to have experiential education, and to engage in reflection. Since these elements are required of all students, how will they be linked to general education?*
- *Finally, is it time for us to look at general education differently? That is, should there be a core of courses that all students have to take and then can—or should—there be options based on where the student majors?*

Because we have to finish UNC-Tomorrow phase II by December, I am asking the Liberal Studies Committee to use fall semester to develop a review strategy and to begin the formal review in the spring. This is a very important review and it cannot be rushed. At the same time, it is critical that we align general education, the Quality Enhancement Plan, and UNC-Tomorrow.

As we examine all of these academic issues together, we need to be cognizant of the importance of students being able to complete their degrees in four years—including their required experiential education courses. Room will need to be made in the curriculum for the terminal requirements, including internships and co-op placements. Now, it should be possible, if your program includes full-semester internships or co-op placements to have enrollment options that allow a student to complete a degree in five years including two semesters of co-op education. That could have impact on many of the ways we normally think about students’ progress and course scheduling. There are, however, a number of excellent examples of these types of programs nationally and we should be able to draw upon their experiences.”