

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students
of
WESTFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY
Westfield, Massachusetts

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

Prepared after study of the institution's
self-evaluation report and a visit on
April 1-4, 2012

The members of the team:

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

COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

New England Association of Schools and College

Preface Page to the Team Report

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

Date form completed: 4/4/2012

Name of Institution: Westfield State University

1. **History:** Year chartered or authorized: 1838 Year first degrees awarded: 1854
2. **Type of control:** State City Other; specify:
 Private, not-for-profit Religious Group; specify:
 Proprietary Other; specify:
3. **Degree level:**
 Associate Baccalaureate Masters Professional Doctorate
4. **Enrollment in Degree Programs** (Use figures from fall semester of most recent year):

	Full-time	Part-time	FTE	Retention ^a	Graduation ^b	# Degrees ^c
Associate						
Baccalaureate	4773	481	4948	80%	58%	1044
Graduate	186	358	314			139

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

5. **Number of current faculty:** Full time: 221 Part-time: 248 FTE: 312
6. **Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year:** (Specify year: FY2011)
 (Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions; e.g., \$1,456,200 = \$1.456)

Revenues		Expenditures	
Tuition	\$52.811	Instruction	\$29.529
Gov't Appropriations	\$26.241	Research	\$0.000
Gifts/Grants/Endowment	\$13.112	General	\$38.264
Auxiliary Enterprises	\$2.437	Auxiliary Enterprises	\$19.378
Other	\$1.180	Other	\$2.177
Total	\$95.781	Total	\$89.348

7. **Number of off-campus locations:**
 In-state: 1 Other U.S.: International: Total:
8. **Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:**
 Programs offered entirely on-line: 4 Programs offered 50-99% on-line:
9. **Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?**
 No Yes; specify program(s): Vocational Education
10. **Other characteristics:**

Introduction

The Evaluation Team appreciated and enjoyed the reception it received during its visit to Westfield State University. All members of the community with whom we met were candid in their comments, and all requests for additional data or dialogue were handled with efficiency and openness. Westfield provided ample working space and appropriate technology for our deliberations and writing. Maps and directions aided the team in navigating the campus.

The team met, both in groups and individually, with members of the university's leadership team and with middle level administrators responsible for areas such as residence life, intercollegiate athletics and development. The visit's first day began with a lengthy dialogue with Westfield's Dean of Institutional Research to establish collective understanding of data elements in the Self-Study and to identify areas where clarification was required. Members of the team met with three members of the university's Board of Trustees as well as a representative sample of student leaders. Open forums were held with faculty (25 attended), staff (30 attended) and students (10 attended). Informative meetings were conducted with the major university committees to better understand Westfield's strategic planning, governance, assessment and curricular change processes.

As the pages that follow will indicate, the team was impressed by the energy and by the uniformity of purpose that characterize Westfield's university community. No matter the question at hand, a focus on the centrality of students and their educational experience came through. This focus was reinforced through administrative practices, facilities development and vocabulary employed in describing the university.

This pervasive organizational culture enables Westfield to deal with broader issues such as aging academic facilities and the implications of directives reaching the university from the state's Board of Higher Education. While both matters were of concern to Westfield colleagues, they approached neither with a sense of crisis or resignation. This impression suggests that the university has confidence in its ability to adapt to challenges and continue to evolve to meet its strategic goals.

The insights gathered during this most productive visit, Westfield's Self-Study, and a panoply of published and electronic public information form the basis for the information and evaluative judgments contained in the eleven sections of this report, which addresses the Standards for Accreditation of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

This evaluation of Westfield State University is a comprehensive evaluation following a fifth-year Interim Report submitted and accepted in 2007 and the acceptance of a report indicating that a proposed online Bachelor of Science degree completion program in business administration be encompassed within the institution's accreditation.

1. Mission and Purpose

Westfield State University's current mission statement reflects its progress on a 174-year journey from the nation's first coeducational teacher training institute to the comprehensive public regional university that it is today. Founded in 1838 as Westfield Normal School by educational reformer Horace Mann, the institution offered Bachelor of Arts degrees for the first time in the late 1960s, expanded its academic programs significantly in the 1970s, and was, along with its sister state colleges, granted university status by the Massachusetts Legislature in 2010.

With this historical legacy, Westfield has been consistent in maintaining explicit attention to the development of students both as citizens and as workforce participants in an increasing variety of occupations and professions. The current mission statement's emphasis on "teaching, student advising and student involvement in the life of the university and its community" is a value widely held across the campus. The centrality of students was emphatically apparent in the Evaluation Team's conversations with faculty, students, administrators and employees at all levels. Institutional and organizational features of Westfield also reflect this centrality. These including small classes, internships and study abroad, centers for academic support, and the creation of active learning communities in student affairs venues such as residence life, student government and intercollegiate athletics. Faculty were unusually direct in asserting the primacy of teaching and advising in their work. Westfield's strong retention and six-year graduation rates demonstrate congruity with this element of the mission statement.

Westfield's ties and commitment to its broader community are another verifiable element of its mission statement. As one of city's four largest employers, the university has significant economic and cultural impact. This impact has been recently enhanced by the development of downtown student housing, public arts projects, and many other community-based initiatives and partnerships (including a new collaboration with a local hospital to develop an undergraduate program in Nursing). In addition, Westfield graduates teach in all nearby school districts and staff many other professions and organizations in the region.

While the mission reflects Westfield's history and current values, its expression in the current mission statement is long and somewhat dated. Many members of the university community have expressed dissatisfaction with this presentation. Since 2009, the university's Strategic Planning Committee has worked to craft a new statement that will more concisely elucidate Westfield's mission. This work has included two "Listening Sessions" which produced dialogue with all community stakeholders as well as retreats and electronic surveys and presentations at faculty and staff forums and to the Student Government Association. After some months delay resulting from the community-wide effort that produced the NEASC self-study, a new shorter mission statement has been drafted that will be moved through university governance channels to the Board of Trustees by Fall 2012. This process has been deliberate, but its commitment to inclusiveness and community-wide dialogue holds the promise for enthusiastic acceptance. It represents an important learning process for a faculty whose collaborative governance relationship with university leadership is still maturing.

The new draft statement, which continues many of Westfield State's historical values in the more complex context of the diverse, global environment of the 21st century, will be the foundation for the development of the university's next 5-year strategic plan. The five draft goals of that plan are consistent with both WSU's institutional capacities and mission.

Institutional Effectiveness: The Strategic Planning Committee intends to bring the new mission statement and plan to the University's All College Committee for approval by the end of the 2012 Spring Semester. Approval by that body will lead to presentation to the president and, with his approval, to the trustees sometime in the fall. If this calendar is followed, it will bring closure to an important process that reflects not only Westfield's values and goals, but also the continuing maturation of its governance effectiveness.

2. Planning and Evaluation

In response to the receipt of its fifth-year interim report, the Commission asked Westfield State University to prepare a self-study in 2012 that focused on its success in three areas of emphasis. Two of those areas are directly related to Standard Two:

“1) implementing the goals, priorities, action plans, evaluations of progress, and suggested improvements that emanate from the 2005-2010 Strategic Plan;”

“2) implementing comprehensive and systematic assessment of student learning and program review.”

Strategic Plans 2005-10 and 2012-17: The process of developing the 2005-10 plan included input from key stakeholders (faculty, staff, students and alumni as well as members of the Westfield community). Progress on the plan goals was monitored and reported each year at an annual strategic planning retreat. The supporting materials supplied with the Self-Study suggest that the plan's prioritized goals for the most part were achieved, or were determined to be ongoing beyond the timeframe of the plan. In some cases, initiatives were put on hold due to lack of resources or departure of staff.

The 2012-17 strategic plan is currently being developed. The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) is using lessons from the previous planning process to make improvements. The current plan will have fewer goals than the previous plan; this will make prioritization easier. Some momentum was lost as the community stopped to focus on the NEASC self-study preparation, but it appears to be back on track now.

Institutional Assessment Committee: The university's Institutional Assessment Committee (IAC) has been in existence since 2002, but was “reconstituted” in 2009 with two students, two deans and five faculty members. Since its inception, the committee has assisted departments with the development of student learning outcomes and program review cycles. The IAC and

Division of Academic Affairs recently developed a rotating Assessment Coordinator program which allows three faculty members some alternative professional responsibility (release time) each semester to advance assessment programs within their respective departments. Currently, one faculty member is working on the development of learning outcomes, another is developing measures for outcomes, and a third is working on the aggregation of the evidence to be used in curricular modification. The IAC has been instrumental in moving the culture of assessment forward. An understanding of the value of assessment is more widespread now as a byproduct of the faculty's work to complete the e-Series forms associated with the Self-Study. The process of completing the forms produced a level of communication and collaboration not prevalent before.

Other Factors Influencing Assessment of Learning Outcomes: External program accreditation efforts have encouraged some academic departments to engage in assessment because of the requirements of those agencies and professional accrediting bodies. Among these departments are Art, History, Mathematics, Education, Athletic Training, Computer Science, Social Work, Music, English, Physical Science, and Biology. New academic programs must have assessment plans in place as part of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) approval process. The programs subject to this mandate include Environmental Science, Ethnic and Gender Studies, Spanish, and Chemistry. Capstone-style experiences are also used in several departments for assessment and have resulted in curricular changes in those departments (e.g. Environmental Science, Ethnic and Gender Studies, Psychology and Regional Planning).

Overall, the e-Series forms indicate that about 80% of Westfield's undergraduate degree programs and 100% of their graduate programs are collecting data for use in assessment of student learning outcomes. Several programs are also "closing the loop" by using that assessment data to make changes to their respective programs (approximately 60% of undergraduate programs and 63% of graduate programs). The best examples of assessment programs underway are in Education, Communication, Movement Science, and English/English Composition. In contrast, a few programs do not appear to be working on assessment of their student learning outcomes. These programs include Computer Information Systems, Business Management, Economics, Liberal Studies, and Theatre. In terms of the common core, all but one of the areas are collecting data (91%). It does not appear from the e-Series forms, however, that any of the common core areas are closing the loop.

Program Review: The vast majority of Westfield's academic programs have undergone some form of program review. Several programs undergo review based on the criteria of their respective program accreditors. The remaining programs are on a seven-year review cycle. These reviews include at least one external reviewer. A common program review template is used to help standardize the process. Several departments have made changes to their academic programs as a result of these reviews.

While assessment of learning outcomes is clearly taking place in some departments, the efforts are neither comprehensive nor organized under a formal assessment plan umbrella. The Committee on Strategic Academic Planning (CASAP), the Curriculum Committee, and the

Review of Common Core Committee (ROCCC) have all been involved in moving the campus assessment efforts forward, but it does not appear that much progress has been made in developing a formal plan. The changes that ROCCC recommended to the Curriculum Committee appear to be stalled as the committee wades through a through a large set of recommended changes to the core curriculum. The university is considering reforming the IAC again, this time with the intention of increasing faculty participation from departments with successful assessment efforts. Westfield will also have to address faculty attitudes that create a barrier to developing a culture of assessment. The university intends to continue to improve their assessment plans and to further develop a culture of assessment on campus. According to the Self Study, “All academic departments will have assessment and evaluation plans in place by Fall 2012...” While this is an admirable goal, it may be difficult to achieve, and the Self-Study does not elaborate on how this goal will be accomplished.

The Committee on Academic Strategic Planning (CASP) was formed in 2011 to examine the university’s current academic offerings – their sustainability, potential for growth of new programs, and candidates for elimination. This group began developing guiding principles and processes in Fall 2011, and is moving forward slowly and carefully to ensure that stakeholders have a voice in the process.

Student Affairs has a strategic plan which includes metrics and examples of “closing the loop”. Westfield has several other plans in place to help direct its operations such as a Campus Master Plan (which supports the work of the Long Range Planning Committee), a Technology Plan and a Library Annual Report. However, the campus does not appear to have a multiyear financial plan; nor does it have an enrollment management plan.

Institutional Effectiveness: Westfield’s faculty and administration are collecting data and using them for assessment and planning purposes. They recognize many of the weaknesses in current practices and understand the areas needing improvement. However, they have started many of their new committees and processes too late for substantive inclusion in their Self-Study. They are in the early stages of their current strategic planning process. Developments that would support their commitment to planning and assessment will not be apparent until this coming Fall.

Westfield should increase efforts to move their assessment programs forward, and to facilitate “closing the loop” in more departments. This may require increasing or re-allocating resources to augment the staff of the Institutional Research and Assessment office in order to better support planning and assessment efforts. The institution does not appear to have “useful evidence about the success of its recent graduates...”; nor does it appear that information in this regard is used for planning or informing the public about the institution. Planning is moving the campus forward, but there are many different committees involved, and lines of responsibility are at times unclear. Westfield colleagues acknowledged the need for better coordination between committees and other process limitations to their progress, but strategies for solving such problems were not offered.

3. *Organization and Governance*

The Massachusetts Board of Higher Education is the statutorily created agency responsible for defining the mission of and coordinating the Commonwealth's public institutions of higher education. Westfield State University is one of nine state universities under the aegis of the Board of Higher Education. Each has its own Board of Trustees, with reporting responsibilities to the Board of Higher Education. There are eleven members of the Westfield Board of Trustees; nine are appointed by the Governor; one is elected by and represents the Alumni Association; one is a student trustee elected by the student body. Trustees serve five-year terms, with the exception of the student trustee, who is elected annually. The trustees meet five times per year. Although several trustees' terms have expired recently, they have been asked to stay on until the current budget development cycle is concluded. Minutes of Board meetings are not currently available online, although they are available on request.

The Board's roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and described in its by-laws. As well as an Executive Committee, the Board has three standing committees: Finance and Capital Assets; Academic and Student Affairs; and Governance and Nomination. In addition, there are trustee liaisons to the Foundation and to the Alumni Association Executive Council. The Board Chair and President are *ex officio* members of all committees. Standing committees regularly communicate and work with the appropriate vice president(s). The president and vice-presidents attend all Board meetings.

Members of the Board represent a wide variety of backgrounds; eight of the current trustees are Westfield alumni. A new process for selecting trustees will be implemented this year. The Governance and Nomination Committee will identify potential candidates who will be interviewed by the Board to ascertain their understanding of trustees' roles and responsibilities. The Board will then make a recommendation to the Governor. New trustees are provided with a handbook and invited to interact with campus leadership. Although there is no specific training or professional development program, trustees take their role seriously and make efforts to educate themselves on pertinent campus issues. The Board does not currently have a defined process for evaluating its own effectiveness. The President provides the Board with annual reports, and the Board evaluates the effectiveness of the President in the areas of leadership, strategic planning, and fundraising.

The President meets weekly with members of the senior staff (vice-presidents, chief development officer, executive assistant for multicultural affairs, and associate vice president for governmental relations). Also invited to attend are the leadership of the three unions on campus. Meetings are described as informational with each member sharing information and providing updates regarding his/her area.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs (currently interim) is the chief academic officer of the institution and has four deans, the library director and the chief information officer as direct reports in addition to the 23 academic departments, each with an elected chairperson. The

VPAA meets weekly with deans, library director and CIO. Department chairs meet monthly, both as a group and with the VPAA. The deans represent functional areas rather than academic schools. Recently, a special committee studied whether reorganization by academic schools was feasible and desirable. The committee recommended against reorganization citing cost and the creation of another level of management.

The faculty and librarians are represented by the Massachusetts State College Association. (MSCA/MTA/NEA). A separate collective bargaining agreement is in effect for faculty (all part-time) who teach for the Division of Graduate and Continuing Education (DGCE). Non-confidential administrators are represented by the Association of Professional Administrators (APA). Non-confidential classified staff, maintainers, and campus police are represented by the Association of Federal, State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

Westfield has had four presidents since the previous NEASC comprehensive evaluation in 2002, each presidency accompanied by varying levels of reorganization. Following Dr. Evan Dobelle's appointment in 2008, organizational changes have included the creation of new deanships to strengthen and clarify lines of authority and accountability as well as significant increases in the number of faculty lines. Currently, a number of senior staff (including three vice-presidents) are interims. National searches are underway for the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Student Affairs.

The current administration was almost universally described by faculty, staff, and students as open, inclusive, and accessible. While a number of comments by faculty and staff indicated that there continues to be a need for improving communication within and among divisions, consensus held that significant strides have been made in this area. Periodically scheduled campus update forums, hosted by the All College Committee (ACC), were noted to be a positive move toward increased communication and transparency.

The campus is clearly strongly committed to the principles of shared governance. As per the MSCA contract, the All College Committee is the primary governance vehicle. By contract, ACC membership is comprised of eight faculty (elected by the faculty), three administrative representatives (appointed by the President), and three students (selected by the SGA). President Dobelle has used his appointments to the ACC to include representatives of the APA and AFSCME bargaining units. This has been very positively received by staff. Prior to President Dobelle's tenure, AFSCME members had no official voice on ACC or budget matters.

The ACC has standing committees (Academic Policies, Curriculum, Student Affairs, and the Graduate Education Council which conduct most of the business related to academic and student life. Special committees are constituted to address significant areas. Currently there are nine special committees, including strategic planning, long range planning, academic strategic planning, institutional assessment, and online instruction. These committee must be reconstituted as necessary with each new bargaining agreement. Short term *ad hoc* committees may also be formed by the ACC. Committees make recommendations to the ACC which, in

turn, makes recommendations to the President. If the President does not accept the recommendations of the ACC, a written response is required. According to faculty, the President has denied only one ACC recommendation to date.

While these committees allow for wide participation and deliberation by relevant constituencies, concern was expressed slowness of process and a lack of clarity about the relationship between special committees and standing committees. For example, the ROCCC (Review of the Common Core Committee), is a special committee that was established to review the common core. ROCCC delivered its final report in 2009 and was disbanded; deliberation of its recommendations is taking place in the Curriculum Committee.

Students are integrally involved in the university's governance. The Student Government Association (SGA) is the official student voice. Impressively, more than seventy students serve in SGA, and members are active participants on all major governance committees. As an example of the importance of student participation, there is no quorum at ACC meetings unless a student is present.

Institutional Effectiveness: Through its collective bargaining agreements, the university has a defined governance structure. Although sometimes described as inefficient, the committee structure allows for wide participation by all constituencies. The current administration has emphasized shared governance and inclusiveness. However, there is little regular and systematic evaluation of the various governance committees. While the President's performance is reviewed annually by the Board, there is no process for evaluating the Board's effectiveness.

4. The Academic Program

Westfield State University offers 31 undergraduate academic majors in the arts and sciences and in professional fields. Academic majors are divided among Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree, Bachelor of Science (BS) degree, and Bachelor of Science in Education (BS-Ed) degree, Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) and Bachelor of Social Work (BSW). Students at Westfield may choose from 39 minors and 41 concentrations. The university offers graduate programs through the Division of Graduate and Continuing Education (DGCE) with 25 graduate degree programs and graduate certificates focused on professional education. In the last five years, the university has added three graduate degrees and three new undergraduate majors (Athletic Training, Ethnic and Gender Studies, and Nursing).). Additionally, two undergraduate majors (Chemistry and Spanish) have been reinstated and new departments have been created or reorganized. The Honors Program has been expanded and a new Office International programs (OIP) has been created.. In addition, programs in STEM areas have been strengthened along with graduate programs in Accountancy, Social Work, and Applied Behavior Analysis.

Westfield has 4760 FTE on the main campus and 5210 FTE total with unduplicated head count of 5768 according to 2011 Fall Enrollment. Of these totals, 286 FTE are in the Master's graduate programs while 4924 FTE are in the Bachelor's degree programs. The largest

enrollment baccalaureate majors in FY12 are Business Management (758) and Criminal Justice (738). Other programs of high enrollment are Psychology (367), Elementary Education (341), and Communication (290). There are 655 (11%) students classified as Undeclared.

Undergraduate Degree Programs: A successful completion of baccalaureate degree at Westfield State University requires a student to complete 120 credits of course work with CGPA of 2.0 and a minimum of 2.0 in the major. The Common Core requirements consist of 43-52 credits, and a major requires 36-80 credits hours.

All undergraduate degree programs have requirements including introductory courses leading to upper division required courses and electives. As a result, programs such as Special Education, Early Childhood and Elementary Education programs have room for only one elective, thereby limiting students' freedom to explore areas outside of their major or concentration. Westfield allows students to combine programs to actualize its liberal arts mission and goals. Examples of such combinations include integrated studies with Economics, Ethnic and Gender Studies, Political Science, Regional Planning and Spanish. Westfield has offered online classes since 2002 through the DGCE and through the Day Division since 2005. Online courses are offered in most disciplines and the university offers only degree completion programs (through DGCE) in Business, Sociology, History and Liberal Studies.

The university's Honors Program has been expanded and reorganized, with resulting participation increases to nearly 5% of the total student population. This has been accomplished with minimal administrative investment. An Honors Director and Assistant Director, both members of the faculty work with the Honors Advisory Council and a Student Honors Advisory Council to manage the program. Westfield has also laudably expanded its commitment to academic and social opportunities for Honors students with offerings of short-term travel courses, community service activities and honors housing.

The university is now working on plans to establish First Year Program with summer reading assignments for new entrants coupled with enrolling cohorts of new students in two core courses for the first year.

General Education (Common Core): The Common Core of Studies at Westfield requires students to complete 43-52 credits from five major sections consisting of Humanities (18 credits); Social Science (12 credits); Mathematics/Applied Analytical Reasoning (6-8 credits); Science (7-8 credits) and Diversity (6 credits). The Review of the Common Core Committee (ROCCC) issued its final report in 2009 and proposed recommendations now under review by the Curriculum Committee.

The Academic Majors or Concentrations: Academic majors require between 36-80 credits depending on the program and department. All major requirements lead students through introductory, intermediate and advanced level coursework. All academic programs assign a faculty advisor to each student as soon as they declare a major. Faculty are required to hold office hours throughout the week, and student advising is required each term in order to secure a

registration pin number for course registration. Undeclared students are advised through the Academic Advising Center.

Graduate Degree Programs: All Westfield graduate programs operate under the Division of Graduate and Continuing Education (DGCE). The graduate degrees programs offered are Master of Arts in English; Master of Arts in Psychology with concentrations in School Guidance Counseling and Mental Health Counseling; Master of Science in Criminal Justice; and Master of Education degrees in multiple areas. Westfield has also created graduate degrees in Applied Behavior Analysis, Public Administration, Social Work, and Accountancy. All teacher licensure programs available to full-time undergraduates are also available to students in a post-baccalaureate program as well. Additionally, two non-degree graduate certificates are offered in Homeland Security and Applied Behavior Analysis.

The Graduate Council acts as the sole governance body of graduate education and approves all degree requirements and changes to degree programs. All graduate programs are governed at the department level by a local committee that is responsible for curriculum review, assessment protocol development and implementation. Faculty members at the DGCE are by MSCA-DGCE contract classified as part-time despite the fact that most of DGCE faculty members are full time faculty members under day contract. The DGCE Chair and Graduate Dean are responsible for evaluating faculty qualifications to teach graduate courses. Admission requirements into graduate programs vary with from department to department, but a minimum GPA of between 2.7 to 3.0 is necessary for acceptance. Each program has prerequisites for program admission to emphasize distinction between required courses, program electives and specialized areas of study. Graduate students must earn 3.0 GPA throughout matriculation to remain in good academic standing. Westfield confers 150 to 175 graduate degrees annually.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit: Faculty and administration maintain control over all academic matters, including the awarding of credit and the conferral of all degrees regardless of the modality of the program or course instruction. The university also maintains oversight of all off-campus programs or courses. The *Undergraduate Bulletin* and *Graduate Catalog* are available in print and online, clearly articulate the institution's academic policies, procedures, and program requirements. Degrees at Westfield conform to nationally recognized standards. At Westfield, the internal governance and external review processes ensure consistency of degree types awarded within American higher education. All new programs are reviewed and approved by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, a process that also requires an external review.

Assessment of Student Learning: Westfield is commended for taking initiative to assess student outcomes. Departments such as English and Communication have used assessment information to enhance and make programmatic changes. On the other hand, data on learning outcomes of the common core courses are not documented. Additionally, student survey data provided *ad hoc* is sketchy at best and a low response rate limits its usefulness. The university continues to develop programs of assessment by providing release time. Faculty pushback

against assessment is publicly acknowledged and a concern, but Westfield's academic leadership is stressing the need and importance of assessment as an academic program enhancement tool to improve the quality of pedagogy and students learning outcomes.

Governance issues and varying opinions about the Massachusetts State Vision Project have distracted campus conversations about assessment. Concern about centrally imposed assessment metrics is real among Westfield faculty. Delay in approving a new, revised mission statement and accompanying institutional strategic plan and academic program strategic plan has also negatively affected campus conversations on assessment. Changes to the structure of the core have not been realized – courses in the core are routinely changed (added/deleted/modified).

Students from Westfield had 98-99% passage rate for State licensure Examination for students in Education, and 14% of undergraduates from the past two years attended graduate school, compared with 18% three years prior as reported by post-graduation survey (41-52% responding).

Additional Appraisal: Westfield should be commended for developing successful academic support programs on campus include the creation of Office of International Programs to enhance its mission as global citizenship campus. Even more laudable is the establishment and maintenance of a comprehensive Disability Services and Tutoring Center. The Nursing program with its newly defined Nursing Core Competencies for the Nurse of the Future meets Mass-BORN requirements and addresses local workforce needs.

The establishment of new programs in Nursing and Environmental Sciences puts stress on related disciplines in the sciences and increases competition for limited academic resources. Completion of the strategic academic planning document and alignment with the new mission statement of Westfield can direct allocation of resources. Issues to be confronted include insufficient reallocation of faculty resources to areas with increasing enrollment (e.g. Criminal Justice, Elementary Education, Psychology, and Social Work): the high advising load that faculty in some departments carry (e.g. 50 students per professor in Education); and low enrollment in upper level courses in programs with small enrollments.

Westfield has been offering online courses since 2002, but the university still does not have system-wide policy (page 64, paragraph 4-Self Study) regarding online education. The committee was convened in 2011 and will be making its final report to ACC in May 2012 as charged.

Institutional Effectiveness: Westfield endeavors to assure the integrity and effectiveness of all academic programming through comprehensive program review and accreditation activities, but a lack of campus-wide buy-in appears to have hindered institutional effectiveness. The university has established or is developing protocols for the assessment of student learning outcomes across the general education and academic program curricula. Westfield should be commended for sensitizing the campus community to the culture of assessment and for providing resources to faculty to attend assessment workshops and forums. The forthcoming completed academic

strategic planning document from CASP is expected to outline guiding principles and defining data and criteria for use in academic planning decisions.

5. Faculty

Westfield State University currently has 221 full-time and 248 part-time faculty. Faculty are employed pursuant to the terms of a collective bargaining agreement (a new MOU was signed on April 20, 2012) negotiated between the Massachusetts Teachers Association/NEA and the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. Faculty members' offices are normally located in the area where they teach. Westfield is not organized into academic schools, but does have 23 discipline-based departments. Tenure and promotion procedures are spelled out in the collective bargaining agreement and implemented on the campus pursuant to that agreement. Those faculty with whom the team spoke generally believed that the hiring, promotion and tenure processes were equitably implemented across all departments. They also believed that faculty participation procedures were appropriate, and that faculty were adequately represented within Westfield's governance structure.

Westfield has experienced an increase in the number of full-time faculty from 198 in FY2009 to 221 in FY2012. During the same time period, part-time faculty remained relatively constant. According to the faculty and administrators, faculty size and composition appear to be minimally adequate for Westfield to fulfill its mission while reasonable class sizes capped at 35. Workload beyond teaching, including assessment, places additional burden on the Westfield faculty which will likely require the addition of more full-time lines. Though a discussion with faculty leaders, it appears that the Westfield administration has done a good job of balancing faculty recruitment, and composition against enrollment, a trend that they need to continue to support assessment efforts.

An issue that arose several times during the site visit was the challenge of balancing online-course offerings with the need for faculty to be on campus to maintain Westfield's character as a largely residential environment with a strong sense of community. Some faculty prefer to teach online in order to be able to perform off campus duties such as data collection for research while still teaching their courses. But if faculty are absent from Westfield, they are not interacting with students, a trend that could change the character of Westfield, affecting attainment of its mission.

It is apparent that Westfield faculty feel that that it is their university and that they have a strong hand in shared governance. It is also apparent that faculty believe that the administration provides adequate resources to support teaching, scholarship and Westfield's institutional mission. A sense of collegiality and collaboration exists that is actively fostered by the administration.

The level of support provided for engagement in assessment activities and scholarship is notable. Westfield competitively offers three individuals each semester one course release to coordinate assessment activities within their academic department. This is an attempt to "jump start"

assessment activities within departments. Scholarship is supported through a number of competitively offered internal grant opportunities and a new office of sponsored funds.

Teaching and Advising: Faculty at Westfield regularly teach 12 credits each semester. Course release is provided for department chair activities, assessment and other work as determined by the administration. Faculty workload includes teaching and advising, but assessment related work is only assigned to the department chair in the collective bargaining agreement. Faculty could receive additional release time to perform assessment related work, but that would probably require the hiring of more full-time or part-time faculty or lead to increases in class size. Care must be taken to maintain Westfield's existing culture and its consonant impact on the university's mission when determining how to provide adequate time for faculty to perform assessment related activities.

Scholarship: It is clear that Westfield is a teaching university. As such, expectations for scholarship are varied. When asked about expectations for promotion and tenure, faculty provided no clear guidelines regarding what it takes to be promoted to a higher rank or to receive tenure. When asked how equitable and consistent the promotion and tenure process is at Westfield, one faculty member said that "it depends on the members of the Promotion Committee in any given year." This leaves one to believe that scholarship activities are valued, but much less clearly defined than are teaching responsibilities. Faculty repeated numerous times that "we are primarily evaluated for promotion and tenure based on our teaching." Taken together, this leads to somewhat unclear expectations for the production of scholarship.

Faculty Handbook: Documentation of policies is largely contained in the collective bargaining agreement. However, a faculty handbook could provide additional, Westfield-specific information which faculty would find useful. While the Self-Study indicates that the faculty handbook needs to be updated, several leadership committee members indicated that there is no such faculty handbook. The team notes that no faculty handbook was provided as part of the Westfield "virtual work-room." A faculty handbook could, for example, include information on the location and hours of various offices on campus, the process for collecting promotion and tenure materials, the role of academic affairs in the reappointment and tenuring of faculty, and the university's academic honesty policy.

Institutional Effectiveness: Westfield's faculty appear pleased with the level of participation afforded through the university's governance structure and are especially happy about the significant increase in the number of faculty lines that have been added during President Dobelle's tenure. Balance of fulltime and part-time faculty hires should be monitored to assure that a reduction in the latter does not have a deleterious impact on the accomplishment of the university's mission. Additional encouragement and support for assessment activities is necessary and the development of a comprehensive faculty handbook could improve both faculty effectiveness and institutional efficiency.

6. *Students*

Admissions: Admission policies and corresponding support for all students—especially special populations—are consistent with Westfield mission to “assist its students to develop intellectually and to use their knowledge and skills to improve the social and economic conditions of their communities” and “emphasizing teaching, student advising and student involvement in the life of the university.” Full-time “day” students are admitted through the Undergraduate Office of Admissions, and part time and graduate students are admitted by the Division of Graduate and Continuing Education (DGCE). DGCE also admits online degree completion students and full time evening students.

The university is bound by state Department of Higher Education admission standards. Students meeting the minimum standards will be considered for admission based on their academic records, standardized admission test scores (SAT or ACT) and other supporting materials. Specialized majors (both undergraduate and graduate) have additional criteria for admission and have input into the admission process. All policies with regard to both undergraduate and graduate admissions and retention are clearly stated in university publications such as the *2011-2012 Bulletin*, relevant admissions publications, and the Westfield’s website. Both the undergraduate admissions and DGCE website contain clear information about policies and process.

The undergraduate admission goals for Fall 2012 of 1,140 (first year) and 365 (transfer) are realistic and consistent with the capacity and current strategic planning of the institution. This goal is reflective both of the admission trends over time and a stated desire on the part of the institution to remain at a total undergraduate enrollment of approximately 5,200 (4,800 full time; approximately 3,000 of these residential). Although there is a well-conceived recruitment plan, it is of concern that no corresponding enrollment management plan exists. Absent this, it may be difficult to manage enrollments in a way that maintains the current level. Graduate admissions have increased from 95 in FY09 to 136 in FY12, with a growth to 147 expected for FY13.

Westfield states that two of its key strategic priorities are “embracing diversity” and “fostering student success.” These two priorities function hand-in-hand within both Westfield’s admission process and in the life of enrolled students. Special admission programs such as Urban Education (UE) and the Learning Disabilities Program expand admissions to students who otherwise might be underserved. The support provided to these students is substantial. The admissions process for these categories is wholistic and inclusive; counselors are identified to meet individually with students; special events are hosted on campus for potential students; early awareness events are hosted at area high schools, and successful students within these programs are profiled in periodic e-newsletters.

Westfield neither offers remedial coursework nor admits students who have not completed required course work at the college preparatory level. A majority of new students take the ACUPLACER exam during New Student Orientation (Students participating in the Learning

Disabilities program are exempted.). Based on this testing, additional support in college level reading and mathematics may be provided through the tutoring center or through the addition of one-hour workshops to elementary mathematics and English courses.

Retention and Graduation: All students at Westfield have access to a broad range of academic support. This includes disability services, learning disabilities support, free tutoring for all students across the entire curriculum, a reading and writing center staffed by adjunct faculty, and an academic advising center staffed by four professional advisors. In addition, two-thirds of the academic departments at Westfield have their first- year students work with the Academic Advising Center. DGCE students have full access to these student support services but do not interface with other services and programs at Westfield outside of the classroom due to the mostly non-traditional, part time composition of the DGCE population.

The Urban Education program serves first-generation, low income individuals and nontraditional, underrepresented and second language learners. A required Summer Bridge Program focuses on academic skills, leadership development and college transition. This program at times overlaps with the Student Support Service Program (a federal TRiO program). The TRiO program provides a counselor/peer mentor for a student's entire academic career, academic resources for loans, personal support and financial planning assistance. Students within the UE, LD and TRiO programs are all fully integrated into the campus community and have access to the full range of student services.

The Honors Program provides "academically motivated" students with the opportunity to enroll in intellectually challenging courses which promote greater interaction with the professor and classmates, more in-depth writing and discussion and greater participation in field trips, conferences and other out-of-classroom learning experiences. First-year Honors students move in early to residence halls and participate in special programs designed to better connect them to the program; a living/learning residential unit has been recently added for the program. Discussion is underway about including an international experience within the honors expectation. Westfield has a growing global focus which includes exchange opportunities and short term study courses in many countries.

Westfield's retention and graduation rates are praiseworthy (see S-series forms). First to second-year retention for the 2009 cohort was 79%; for 2010, 80%. Student athletes consistently have the highest retention rates, with 83% for 2010. Students of color are retained at 78%; Pell grant recipients at 76%; and residential students at 82%. The federal graduation rate for bachelor's degree candidates was 58.3% for the 2005 cohort (67% for athletes, 47% for students of color and 58% for Pell grant recipients). 91% of graduate students are retained, while 64% complete their degree within 150% of time. Completion rates for students enrolled in online programs mirror these results. Students with the special programs also achieved positive results: Urban Education (UE), 72% retention, 49% graduation; Learning Disabilities (LD) 84% retention, 60% graduation; TRiO 93% retention, 48% graduation, and Honors 90% retention and 100% graduation.

In the summer of 2011, the Academic Achievement Department, under which all of the abovementioned services and special programs reside, launched Westfield360, a web-based case management system designed to increase student support and retention. This system provides early warning reports for at-risk populations (UE, LD, TRiO and students on probation). This system provides information to faculty advisors so that early intervention can occur.

Westfield is confident that these rates can be improved and has launched a major initiative to expand its approach to students' first year experience. For the past year, it has participated in the *Foundations of Excellence* program to assess its current first year experience and to identify improvements. As a result of this work, in Fall 2012 a new structure is being implemented for first-year support. This structure includes first-year cohort classes enhanced to retain the academic components of their old first year experience classes (study skills, test taking) and to provide more support for the faculty teaching these courses. A *One Book* program is also being added, and all academic departments will be encouraged to have a meeting on the first day of school with all new students, an opportunity to meet faculty, connect with their advisors, and better understand their major and their peers. Expanding the use of Westfield360 to this cohort is also being considered. The goal is to further enhance the success of their students through expanded engagement with the campus and with faculty. While not codified, the target is a retention rate of 85%.

Student Services: A broad range of students services are provided at Westfield. Faculty and professional staff regularly participate in campus activities and serve as mentors and advisors to student groups. Staff members in areas such as admissions and undergraduate studies acknowledge, however, that there could be more connection between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. There is some expectation that this will occur more intentionally as projects such as the expanded first-year experience become institutionalized.

Career services are provided for both current students and alumni and offer a full range of career development and support. Counseling services offer short term, "solution focused" counseling, walk-in urgent triage care, consultation and referral services, mental health services and substance abuse counseling. Health services are provided on a walk-in basis and are staffed by two nurse practitioners and a part-time physician. Evening coverage is provided by trained EMS staff, many of whom are students at Westfield. Health insurance is available through the university. The Campus Center serves as the student union and a hub for a full range of student activities programming, the Wellness Center, the Student Government Associate (SGA) and its 75 clubs and organizations and the Commuter Council.

The SGA at Westfield has 75 representatives elected by the campus community. Its executive board is comprised of eight students including the Student Body President. There are numerous opportunities for student engagement in co-curricular activities. Representative of this myriad of possibilities are participation in SGA, clubs and organizations, involvement in a growing array of multicultural activities cosponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs, participation in the *Owl Advantage* program offered through Residential and Campus Life, and service as a

volunteer on campus and within the community. While these co-curricular experiences are considered a critical factor in the student development model at Westfield, assessment of them is uneven. Most such assessment appears to be self-reported on the part of the students through surveys or word of mouth.

The SGA is consulted when major projects are launched, and its representatives serve on numerous campus committees. Their opinions are sought and matter. For instance, when a new residence hall was slated to be constructed on campus green space, students voiced their concern and the location was changed. Students are very much a part of the governance process and are active contributors to Westfield's success. They speak eloquently about the sense of community and involvement at their university, and repeatedly mentioned the "student centered" perspective of the president, leadership, faculty and staff.

A clear description of all co-curricular programs and other student services is available within the *Bulletin*, in many publications and on the university website. Signs on campus post reminders about activities, e-newsletters are sent to campus community members, and SGA sends out special notices. Students have every opportunity to learn about and access campus life. An e-transcript for student involvement was added in 2011. This gives students the opportunity to document their co-curricular learning, work experience and athletics involvement as an aid in future career and academic development.

A New Student Orientation Program is in place for new students and their parents in both the Fall and Spring Semesters. Ninety-three percent of all new students participate in these programs. They are organized and staffed by Residential and Campus Life and include the usual array of information and services including student support, introductions to academic departments and expectations, testing, registration information, and financial aid advising.

Residential and Campus Life offers a comprehensive residential life, housing and residential education program. It runs the *Owl Advantage* program which promotes involvement in co-curricular campus activities. Three thousand students live in eight residence facilities on campus and in an apartment style facility in Westfield. A new residence hall with 410 beds is scheduled to open in Fall 2013. It will alleviate overcrowding in the current residence halls, will allow the other halls to repurpose bedrooms into lounges and study spaces, and will provide more opportunity for transfer students to live on campus. In addition, it will free up space for more academic offices to co-reside within the residence halls.

Student financial aid is provided in an equitable, well organized program. Criteria for awarding is clear, and information about student costs is provided in advance of application via an accessible net cost calculator. The neediest students are packaged first. Institutional aid at Westfield is very limited (currently \$1.9M), which has resulted in an increased dependence on student loans. Information about average student debt (\$23,000) is communicated clearly and entrance counseling is conducted for students who avail themselves of loans. Westfield has

contracted with ASA to deliver a web-based program which helps students (and alumni) manage their money and loans more effectively and promotes greater financial literacy.

Westfield participates in Division III of the NCAA and offers 21 varsity sports programs, an intramurals program, and an extensive club sports. It operates in full compliance with all NCAA rules and regulations. It participates in the NCAA's Champs Life Skills Program which promotes athletics, academics, personal and career development. It recently completed the NCAA Self Study which resulted in two recommendations: 1) the need for priority academic scheduling for athletes (a proposal has been submitted to administration about this); and 2) the need for more full time coaches (which will be dependent on funding). Athletics also participates in the NCAA Division III Academic Reporting Pilot. Westfield athletes have the highest graduation rates in the Massachusetts system, and have higher retention and graduation rates than the Westfield population as a whole. The university leads its conference in placing student-athletes on the academic honor roll.

All Student Affairs staff are qualified, caring, and committed to student success. Training is provided to staff on a yearly basis. While facilities, technology, and funding are adequate to support the needs of students and to implement all services and programs, student affairs staff and budgets have been cut in recent years. Hence, some offices operate with very thin staffing for the numbers of students and range of services. While difficult, this has resulted in more collaborative offerings between departments. However, some departments feel particularly constrained. Admissions, for example, is challenged in today's competitive environment due to the lack of adequate funding for expanded recruitment activity and a low level of institutional financial aid.

Westfield has an appropriate set of standards to guide the delivery of student services including a guide for peer advisors, handbooks for coaches and athletes, guidelines for student threat and assessment, Counseling Center protocols and procedures and Tour Guide training manuals. The university publishes student rights and responsibilities and grievance and appeal procedures in the *Bulletin*, the *Student Handbook*, and in the Residence Life Contract. They are fairly and consistently applied and are understood by the students.

Westfield has a Student Records and Privacy Regulations Policy which is consistent with FERPA. Records are maintained and destroyed consistent with FERPA and with the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Records Retention Schedule.

Institutional Effectiveness: Overall, the university assesses its effectiveness in recruiting and retaining students in an adequate, and in some cases, exemplary fashion. Admissions conducts regular surveys of admitted students, and periodically of non-enrolling students. While there appear to be few student success assessments beyond a comprehensive reporting of retention and graduation, there are indications that the state Board of Higher Education will require administration of the NSSE as a part of its Vision project. Retention and graduation of special populations is calculated but is not easy to locate. DGCE conducts some surveys related to

customer service, but these are limited and need improvement. Residential and Campus Life uses the EBI survey to collect data about the residential life experience including food service; this has resulted in changes and improvement in the dining program. As previously mentioned, Athletics participated in the NCAA Self Study which resulted in recommendations connected to course scheduling and staffing. TRiO and UE conduct ongoing assessment, as does Academic Advising. Career Services, Health Services, and Counseling track contacts and survey students about services and access; these results have aided in expanding staffing, hours and adding support for these programs. All departments within Student Affairs are on a three year cycle for assessment, and appear to be on target for completion this year. A program review of the Banacos Center, which provides disabilities services, occurred the second week of April 2012; this will include an assessment of space, services and data collection/assessment.

7. Library and Other Information Resources

Under the leadership of a new library director, Ely Library is at the beginning of what should prove to be a significant transition. Thanks to early intervention after his arrival, the director – with employee input – revised the library renovation plans to assure the result would be a “quality academic space” for students and faculty. Physical renovations and the reconfiguration of flow patterns have made spaces much more attractive and usable for students. On the first day of the evaluator’s visit, most of the computer pods were filled with students by 10 a.m. Sprinklers will be added to the building this summer to address safety and resource protection concerns.

It is clear that Westfield students value their library. The gate count has increased significantly this year, and librarians provide library use instruction for virtually every student in each of the two first-year required English Composition courses. Expansion of an already busy instructional classroom to accommodate classes of up to thirty will happen this summer.

Librarians and staff hold appropriate credentials and are experienced. As with the academic discipline faculty interviewed, library employees are clearly committed to their students’ success. They are working well with the director and following his lead on the changes needed for the library.

Recently, the librarians and staff at Westfield met with the director to begin a strategic planning process which led to the establishment of priorities for the coming year. It is too early to tell if that process or its results will obtain the traction needed to drive change at Westfield, but it is a promising direction.

The strategic planning process begun recently is an excellent first step:

Expanding it to include implementation details with timeline, costs and assignment of responsible individuals or teams would be helpful, as would the engagement and input from a broad spectrum of faculty and connecting it to the Campus strategic and financial plans.

Technology supporting the library is relatively robust. Student and employee technology seem to be current and adequate. The library management system is adequate but may need additional improvements in the coming years.

The most obvious issue is a lack of “linking” software that connects the database article to the catalog in a seamless way to permit a user to bring up the article instantly and then review it, print it or e-mail to him/herself. This linkage is currently managed in a spreadsheet and requires part of a page of instructions for the students to access the actual article.

The library webpage is functional but should be reviewed for “student usability.” While the librarians are teaching library use one way, students are going at information seeking in a different way – based on their own “user experiences.” The library’s goal should be to create a user interface that matches the students’ current way of accessing information.

There is also room for simplifying how resources are organized and presented to faculty for their courses and programs. The department heads have prepared resource/research guides for faculty members, and while very useful, new web-based tools can make the work easier and access simple for users. For example, a fairly new tool, LibGuides, creates mini-webpages to aggregate chosen library resource links that are specific to a course or even an assignment. Once prepared, a link to these focused LibGuides can be embedded into a course website within Blackboard or held on the library webpage for easy access.

As the current staffing is minimally adequate for what is being done, adding new technologies to enhance the webpage’s usability for the students’ searching experience may require additional resources to support student and faculty use.

Collections appear to be adequate for the basic needs of the students. However, given the pressure of flat or decreasing legislative appropriation for Westfield, as well as the growing pressure from students and parents to limit tuition increases, the current allocation of the library budget may need to be reconsidered. Library staff have decreased bound journal collection by 50% in the last year – a notable accomplishment.

Conducting a use-study on all aspects of the collection may reveal items that could be removed and space/shelving consolidated. In addition, replacement items to strengthen the collection can be identified by discipline faculty working with librarians or an outside consultant to recommend areas for strengthening; collections additions from this point forward should be predominately digital resources easily accessible remotely by all students.

The library provides good support for students in the use of the online catalog and database systems. The Center for Instructional Technology (CIT) provides faculty training and help desk support for faculty and students using online course management systems, and the Information Technology Department (IT) provides infrastructure support for campus: computer labs, desktops, administrative computing (Banner) as well as video production and media support for 120 smart classrooms and for campus events. Training and user support appear to be hallmarks

of the institution – often with departments and staff working well beyond reasonable workloads due to open positions and growing expectations. Social media can be used more effectively to reach and educate students.

The team found a VERY high level of IT support for students and faculty. As noted by one faculty member, ‘They make it all work with their limited staff and resources.’ The network is robust, secure and rarely ever down. A new redundant Internet link will become available in the coming year. A four-year life cycle for computer replacement is functional and reasonable. In addition, technical helpdesk services are operational and functions well despite being down one position.

There is a perception expressed by some students that there are not enough computers on campus, especially around the time of mid-terms and finals. During our visit to the instruction lab in the library, we had no fewer than ten students appear at the door seeking to use the lab only to be turned away by our presence.

The Center for Instructional Technology (CIT) is well positioned as an academic ally of faculty and departments seeking more opportunities to move online. While there is concern about how well the CIT is integrated with the academic enterprise, it has built a functional relationship with academic departments and Division of Graduate and Continuing Education on delivery and marketing. There has been an astronomical growth in online courses, in faculty training, in course development and in praise for the Center. Academic faculty lead, guide and approve the transition of “day” courses and programs to their online status.

Institutional Effectiveness: The library’s new director is beginning to bring together internal and external resources, and a vision of the academic library of the future is beginning to form. Library colleagues are sorting out their strengths as well as the direction the library needs to take for the future; needed technological and staff changes are being identified and will be implemented as time and resources allow. Information technology is student-focused and manages resources well, and CIT is a “powerhouse” of support for faculty for the development of online courses and programs.

8. Physical and Technological Resources

Westfield State University has a unique history of evolution. It was founded in 1838 in Barre, Massachusetts, as the nation’s first public coeducation school for teacher training. After locating in the center of Westfield, the current campus, which is approximately 1.5 miles from downtown Westfield, was occupied in 1956. The campus evolved into four distinct areas beginning with the “main campus” followed in order by the south, north, and east campuses.

The nearly 300 acre, 1.4 million gross square feet campus now consists of 24 buildings and over 3,000 parking spaces. The 80 acre “Main Campus” is considered the core and consists of academic, residential, campus life, and the signature campus green. The 80 acre East Campus is

the site for central administration, admissions, financial aid, bursar, the Criminal Justice Program, and the athletic facilities. The 105 acre South Campus is used primarily for parking and the 45 acre north campus, which is owned by the Foundation, includes land along the Westfield River. This campus has limited development potential due to wetlands and the Wetlands Protection Act as well as the Rivers Protection Act.

During the last ten years five new buildings have been added to the campus. These include the Woodward Center, which serves as an athletic facility and specialized academic programming space; an Athletic Storage Building; New Hall Residence Hall; and Lansdowne Place, a leased apartment building located downtown for additional student housing; and Mod Hall, which houses faculty offices and classrooms. The campus continues to evolve with the start of the construction of a new residence hall expected to be available in the fall of 2013 and the continuation of planning for a new Academic Building. Construction of this building is expected to begin in FY14. A new Facilities and Operation/Public Safety Center is also projected for the future.

Facility maintenance and renovation projects have been ongoing. The university spent \$3.65 million in FY10, \$2.23 million in FY11, and will spend \$3.9 million in FY12 in this area. This spending has included classroom and laboratory renovations, pool upgrades, window replacements for energy efficiency, food service dining room expansion, residence hall renovations, library renovations, and academic or campus center building renovations. Fourteen projects were funded in FY10, fifteen in FY11 and sixteen in FY12. The financial resources used are a combination of operating funds set aside, Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM) emergency project funding, capital reserves from Residence Life and Athletic Funds, bond funds, and more recently in FY12, a capital improvement fee of \$100 assessed to each student at the university.

In addition to the facility maintenance budget resources, part of the capital funds are allocated to Information Technology to refresh and acquire equipment and to support equipment purchases for the Library, Center of Instructional Technology or other needs. In FY11, \$240,000 was allocated for these purposes; in FY12, \$913,000.

Planning regarding facility needs and stewardship of the physical plant is ongoing. The Master Plan completed in 2007 was updated in 2010. Three focuses were part of the updated plan: the identification of preferred sites for the two more immediate new building projects (a new 128,000 sq. ft., 410 bed residence hall and a 45,000-60,000 sq. ft. academic building) and the expansion of the dining hall. Upgrades to the functionality and image of the campus and the direction for the long-term use of the Main, East, South, and North Campuses were also part of the plan.

A Student Housing Study was completed in 2009 to determine needs for additional student housing. This study provided the basis for the new residence hall now under construction. In 2011, the university contracted with Sightlines LLC to evaluate annual stewardship, asset reinvestment, operations effectiveness, and service related to their physical assets. The

Westfield results were also benchmarked to peers. This study found that 69% of the campus buildings are over 25 years old and underscored the need for additional investment to manage deferred maintenance. The estimate of deferred maintenance is approximately \$100 million.

A current DCAM study presented tentative space use of the new academic building on April 4, 2012. The presentation revealed the amount of assignable square feet and suggested how the space could be used to support academic programming needs. Input for the final plan is expected to be broad based and will include the Long Range Planning Committee, Academic Strategic Planning Committee and campus-wide feedback. This project, as well as backspace refill possibilities, is expected to remedy some classroom teaching space concerns as well as suggest faculty department adjacency possibilities.

More detailed follow-up planning will address the backfill of space vacated when some instruction and faculty offices are moved to the new building and will develop a plan for the renovation and use of the Juniper Park Elementary School. This school, currently leased by the city, is no longer needed for city elementary school use and will be turned over to the university. While there is currently limited use of the facility by the university, a long range plan will be developed for the property.

A Long Range Planning committee reviews facility needs on an annual basis. Its membership, which includes the assistant vice president of facilities and operations and the vice president of administration and finance as well as campus representatives from faculty, departments, unions and the student body, assures broad based input and connection to Westfield's fiscal planning.

While renovations and deferred maintenance projects are ongoing, there is candid recognition by the administrative staff and faculty that some of the instructional space is less than ideal. An example of this is the Music Department's close proximity to the English Department, which produces sound penetration from one set of instructional spaces to another. The Art Department is also instructing in former science laboratory spaces that have not been renovated for its new purpose.

Westfield wrestles with an approximately \$100 million deferred maintenance budget, so resources can only be applied when significant impacts are the outcome. Budget pressures limit the number of projects that can be undertaken annually. The staff understands the fiscal issues and have been adaptable. Continued efforts are underway to work with DCAM and the state's Administration and Finance Division to increase the caps on state deferred maintenance funds and to accelerate attention to the deferred maintenance backlog.

While the university has created a partial long term capital revenue budget, institutionally approved project priorities have not yet been developed. Fiscal targets of the Development Office's proposed capital campaign have not been included in the revenue forecast. Full development of a long term capital plan fully identifying revenues and specific projects priorities will enhance planning activities.

Sustainability is also a focus of the institution. In order to reduce their carbon footprint, LED lighting has been installed to reduce electricity consumption; solar panels have been added to reduce electricity consumption; and the steam plant has been converted to gas from oil. The recycling program received recognition from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for effectiveness in 2010.

The Information Technology Department supports administrative use by providing productivity software and supporting the Banner system. The system handles, among other things, all student demographic information; student registration; student accounts; financial accounting and Human Resource functions. Security of internal data is safeguarded by CISCO firewall protection that is configured to protect the servers by campus user access lists.

Institutional Effectiveness: The university continually evaluates the physical plant and technology resources consistent with mission. Current needs are incorporated into planning with short term budget allocation.

9. Financial Resources

Like most public institutions, Westfield State University has balanced a decline in state support with continuing to provide appropriate resources to support and expand the institution. During FY12, for example, the university had to absorb a \$3.2 million reduction in state appropriation and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds. This large reduction was the result of the expiration of the ARRA, which represented approximately \$3 million dollars. The state appropriation has cumulatively declined by approximately 3 million dollars from FY08 to FY12.

Several factors have assisted the university in managing effectively during the downturn in state support. The student graduation and retention rates indicate growth in matriculated students and corresponding tuition revenue. New program development, such as the expansion online education delivery, has brought additional adult students to the institution. MassInc's designation of Westfield as the state's best value in higher education has also raised the public's perception of the university's quality and value and has generated enrollment increases.

Mandatory student fees have also been an element in managing Westfield's budget. In 2011, the general fee charged to all students increased 9.6%; in FY12, 7.55%. The total mandatory fees increased from \$6,046 in FY10 to \$6,461 in FY11 and to \$6,916 in FY12. A new Capital Improvement fee of \$100 per student was instituted in FY12. Based on the comparisons with other public institutions and peers, these rates have not created a competitive disadvantage. Tuition of \$970 per semester for residents has been unchanged since at least FY08. Tuition reverts to the state while student fees are retained by the institution.

Lastly, conscious administrative discipline in reevaluating, and in some cases not refilling, open position and limiting and decreasing operational costs, has contributed to maintaining financial

stability. Successful efforts have been undertaken to decrease energy and IT costs by transitioning the steam plant to natural gas; reducing the use of the steam plant during the warmer months by decentralizing hot water supply; virtualization of servers; and aggressive renegotiation of software licenses. The savings from these activities have been reallocated to other needs within the institution.

The university had operating expenses of \$88.80 million in FY11 compared to \$86.1 million in FY10. FY11 operating revenue equaled \$69.20 million and non-operating revenue (state appropriation net and investment income) totaled \$25.66 million, compared to \$21.69 million in FY10. The university was assisted with federal American Recovery and Reinvestment funds in FY09 of \$1.29 million, \$5.12 million in FY10, and \$3.22 million in FY11. These funds were not available in FY12.

Over the last three years, the operating expenses by function have remained stable. Instruction represents 33%, up 1% since 2009; academic support 7%; student services 12%; institutional support 9%, down 2% since 2009; operation and maintenance of plant 10%, down 3% since 2009; scholarships 2%; auxiliary operations, up 4% since 2009; and depreciation 5%.

The budget development process is well developed. The Budget Committee, which is comprised of the president's Cabinet, representatives of the three bargaining units, a member from Student Government, with support from the administration and finance department manages this function. The focus of the budget process has been to support instruction and student service needs in order to maintain the educational experience of Westfield students. The strategic plan guides decisions about additional funding requests.

Initial budget priorities and criteria are set in January by the President and his Cabinet, and preliminary discussions are also held with the Finance/Capital Assets Committee of the Board of Trustees on the budget development process. The Budget Committee creates budget guidelines and considerations for the budget and distributes this information to all budget departments through the Banner ERP system. These budget instructions create the environment for realistic budget submissions. Budget development and management training is also provided in group or individual sessions. During this same time, a capital budget for new buildings, deferred maintenance and renovations as well as equipment is incorporated into the budget development budget.

From March to May, the Budget Committee reviews and discusses the proposals for new or special requests during open sessions for several days and meets with individual departments to further discuss budget requests. After the review, the committee prioritizes the budget requests to arrive at a balanced budget. Follow up discussion is also ongoing with the Finance/Capital Assets Committee of the Board of Trustees. The budget is presented to the President for review and then submitted to the Finance/Capital Assets Committee of the Board. The Board subcommittee advances the final budget to the full Board of Trustees in early June for action.

Westfield has an independent annual audit using the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with the accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, as prescribed by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB). The audit report indicated that the financial statements were presented fairly in all material respects and accurately portrayed the financial position of the university. One of the key elements of the audit was that for FY11 unrestricted net assets have increased \$7.2 million to \$19.34 million compared with FY10. Total net assets increased to \$61.5 million compared to \$55.12 in FY10.

The financial management of the institution is effective and knowledgeable. The division is led by a Vice President of Administration and Finance, an Assistant Vice President/Chief Financial Officer, and a Director of Budget and Internal Audit. Budget managers can view their budget status through Banner in real time and weekly institutional spending reports are reviewed by the finance staff. The Board of Trustees is updated quarterly on the budget.

Resources are expended consistent with the university's current mission, and the fiscal environment is stable due to sound fiscal management. Fiscal policies are in writing. Samples of these policies include coverage of Fund Raising, Investment, Audit, Audit Findings, Administering Petty Cash Funds, Emergency Purchasing and Refunds. The university has sufficient reserves to weather unexpected fiscal issues and has manageable debt service.

Current strategies of tightening expenditures while maintaining academic quality and student service delivery, capping day student enrollments; program development caution; and presenting Westfield among the state's lowest cost universities will all put increasing financial pressure on the institution's maintenance of current services. The revival of the Westfield State University Foundation to generate additional funding to support the Capital Plan can help take some of this pressure off the operating fund. The development of a financial plan with different revenue/expense scenarios over multiple fiscal years will assist with the identification of alternatives to cope with projected revenue and expense growth. Maximizing alumni giving as well as continued program growth in the Division of Graduate & Continuing Education are other strategies to address future resource challenges.

Institutional Effectiveness: The university has effective fiscal management and controls to evaluate the fiscal climate and uses their resources in accord with mission. The fiscal environment is carefully monitored.

10. Public Disclosure

Westfield State University does an admirable job meeting the expectations of Public Disclosure as outlined in the NEASC Standard. Notably, the public face of the university is presented consistently among publications and aligned with the realities on the campus. Students, parents, community members and constituents have the ability through publications and public presentations to gain an accurate picture of Westfield.

In recent years, there has been a significant improvement in “town-gown” relationships with much more connection between the two. Students now live in downtown Westfield and pursue service projects and art presentations in the community. Community members come to campus to use facilities and participate in campus events. A contract consultant working on this issue deserves commendation for guiding the campus in its external presentation. Marketing staff also do a commendable job with promotional materials and general marketing.

There are consumer information and Clery Act/Campus Crime Report links as required by Department of Education, and the pages include all necessary information. One area related to work on in the near future will be the “results” of the university’s expected learning outcomes. The team applauds this inclusion of program outcomes on the public webpage. Next steps will be to provide assessment results about how well students are accomplishing those outcomes - by program and by all graduates in general education outcome.

Institutional Effectiveness: Thanks to a concerted effort, there has been a significant improvement in “town-gown” relationships with much stronger connections between the two. The university presents a highly functional website that can be updated by departmental and program content managers, and marketing materials represent the university in a positive manner. Continued diligence will be required as expectations of public disclosure are ratcheted up, especially with measures of student success.

11. Integrity

Westfield State University, as expressed through their mission statement and other literature, is a “student centered learning community, dedicated to serving the regional community, rooted in and continuing a tradition of educating students to become...responsible citizens.” In keeping with this mission, Westfield exhibits integrity within its leadership as well as in its approach to serving students and the community, and in its dealings with all campus stakeholders.

Internal controls, policies and procedures are in place to help prevent violations of the law and regulations, to protect faculty, staff and students and to guarantee equal opportunity. These are regularly reviewed and updated. A policy manual which details academic affairs, student affairs, administrative, and public safety policies is available for every manager. This manual includes policies on conflict of interest, intellectual property, privacy, the acceptable handling of finances, and academic policies associated with student enrollment. Every new employee and all department heads receive employee guides and employee benefit guides; these contain human resource policies and procedures, information specific under collective bargaining, and additional resources available to Westfield employees. All administrators are given a hiring guide which details procedures for hiring, including an emphasis on diversity.

Through the Human Resources Department and Faculty Center, professional and faculty development and training for administration, staff and faculty occurs on a variety of themes

including supervisor development, university policies and systems, plagiarism and academic honesty, and training required under Title IX. The Associate Director and Assistant Vice President of Human Resources and Affirmative Action participate in professional training programs offered by organizations such as the Massachusetts Commission against Discrimination to ensure that they are providing correct and timely training.

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education is the governing body that allows Westfield the right to grant degrees. All appropriate laws, rules and regulations related to this charge are followed. If violations are uncovered, Westfield has a system in place to investigate. The university's Ombudsperson is a resource to assist and mediate faculty, staff and student issues that these individuals may not feel comfortable dealing with in a more formalized structure. This position reports to the Assistant Vice President of Human Resources and Affirmative Action.

Policies and procedures are located on Westfield's website and within various employment manuals. Academic and non-academic policies appropriate for students and faculty are also available in the *Bulletin* and the *Student Handbook*. Information about grievances and appeals are found within appropriate collective bargaining agreements, policy manuals and employment manuals for employees and within appropriate publications (the *Bulletin* and *Student Handbook*) for students, as well as on the university website.

Consistent with its key strategic priority of "embracing diversity," Westfield adheres to non-discriminatory policies in recruitment, admissions, employment, evaluation, disciplinary action and advancement. It offers two admissions programs geared toward diversity (Urban Education and Learning Disabilities), strives to hire a diverse workforce, and works to promote diverse employees. The SGA has a multicultural representative among its members and is establishing a Multicultural Committee. The university adheres to numerous affirmative action and diversity policies including Affirmative Action Hiring Procedures, Anti-Bullying/Harassment/Mobbing, Non-Discrimination and Accommodation for Persons with Disabilities, Discriminatory Harassment, and others. The Office of Multicultural Affairs was formed in June 2008 and works with students, faculty and staff in the expansion of diversity at Westfield. The Office collaborates with student affairs and academic affairs on programming related to the recruitment and retention of diverse students and faculty. A program called *Sankofa* is specifically in place to promote and celebrate faculty and staff diversity, and to better network them as a community.

Admission staff are trained to follow ethical guidelines established for the profession by regional and national accrediting bodies, and are oriented to practice fairness and consistency in the admissions process. Student tour guides are trained to provide accurate portrayals of student life to applicants and parents. Information related to retention, graduation and student indebtedness are easily located on the web site. Similarly, Student Affairs staff are trained to provide accurate information to students.

The university's various divisions and departments offer numerous conferences and workshops annually. These are all compatible with the institution's mission and purpose. Examples include

the professional development programming offered by DGCE, the many sporting activities offered by local high schools in collaboration with the Department of Athletics and the Dual Enrollment programs offered by the institution. These events complement instructional offerings, provide important opportunities for community members to connect with campus, and deliver important instructional programs for an expanded population. Other activities such as Commencement, the Speaker Series, special activities related to campus life and sponsorship of programs like those of the Chamber of Commerce are open to the community as well.

The university is committed to meeting all standards set by NEASC CIHE and by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. All reports are delivered and requests responded to in a timely manner. The university is in compliance with all reporting requirements, standards, laws and regulations as evidenced by financial audit reports over the past ten years, academic accreditation by ABET, CAAHEP, CAATE, CSWE, NASM, NASPE, CATE NCSSNCSS, NCTE, NCTM, NSTA and submission of all appropriate reports.

Institutional Effectiveness: Periodic assessment produces the review and updating of appropriate policies on an annual basis. Satisfaction surveys and tracking occur for training programs in order to ensure that needed programs are offered. While much progress has been made in fostering a community that supports and embraces diversity, faculty and department chairs expressed concern that the recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty is difficult at Westfield due to lack of resources and, at times, adequate academic facilities.

Institutional Effectiveness Summary

Westfield has made significant strides since its last NEASC report in improving participation in governance by campus stakeholders and in developing assessment methodologies to measure progress and identify areas for improvement. Clearly, the university took advantage of this NEASC review to elevate attention to improvement of organization and process. The majority of all segments of the Westfield community appear to have participated in this effort. Westfield's strategic planning process is also undergoing augmentation that promises to provide a more focused context for continuing improvement. Progress toward more effective employment of assessment is also evident, but the task of integrating various unit and division plans into a more coherent institutional architecture of assessment remains. Assessment is not yet implemented consistently across all academic departments. Processes for allocation of resources in areas such as facilities, budgets, library, and information technology appear well-organized and consistent with Westfield's institutional goals. The university's student-centered mission provides a worthy organizing principle for its operations, and the team found consistency in pursuit of this mission.

Affirmation of Compliance

To document Westfield's compliance with Federal regulations relating to Title IV, the team reviewed the university's Affirmation of Compliance form signed by the CEO and compared its

content with relevant university materials. Westfield demonstrates its compliance with the federal definition of credit hour in its *Bulletin* and on its website. Its credit transfer policies are also stated in these venues and in other admissions publications. Appropriate information regarding student complaints and grievance procedures is available from various sources, and adequate processes with regard to password and login protection and faculty training exist to monitor verification of student identity in distance learning education programs. There are no extra charges associated with the verification of student identity. Westfield informed the public of its comprehensive NEASC evaluation through its website and press releases to the *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, *The Republican*, the *Berkshire Eagle*, the *Westfield News* and the *Pennysaver*. The team's discussion of Westfield's credit hour policy can be found in the **Integrity of the Award of Academic Credit** in Standard 4: *The Academic Program*.

Summary

Overall, the evaluation team judged that Westfield State University is providing academic programs and services that clearly meet its mission as a public university serving its region and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. On some dimensions, these programs and services are delivered with distinction. Its faculty and staff are dedicated and, with striking uniformity, share a commitment to enabling student success. Morale appears to be high despite financial and governance issues that are common to public institutions in many states. The Board of Trustees and broader community support the university and its mission, and students are highly enthusiastic about their experiences. Westfield's president has, during his five-year tenure, created an environment of energy, transparency and commitment to shared governance; he is respected by all campus constituents.

In the years since its last NEASC visit, Westfield has taken significant strides in implementing an environment of shared governance. Faculty are widely engaged in committee and governance work, and open discussion of important academic issues is encouraged, occasionally to the point of diminishing returns. While laudable, this environment has produced a very slow pace of collective attention to matters such as strategic planning, curricular change and assessment. Constraints inherent in the university's collective bargaining agreement further slow the pace of change. Faculty morale has also been bolstered by a conscious program of hiring that has added more than twenty new positions over the past four years, and new populations are being served by degree-completion distance learning initiatives. This commitment to teaching faculty has produced strains on administrative and support services, where lines have been held vacant. This produces pressures on performance and efficiency, as does the current presence of a number of interim appointments in significant leadership roles.

Westfield is financially sound. Its budgets are managed with transparency, efficiency and creativity. While deferred maintenance and the age of academic building present challenges, notable investment has been made in student residence and service facilities. Enrollment is strong, and the university has a deserved reputation as one of the best values in Massachusetts public higher education. Its retention and graduation rates far exceed those of peer institutions,

and these metrics demonstrate the effectiveness of Westfield’s student-centered organizational culture and the commitment of faculty and staff.

Since the last NEASC visit and interim report, Westfield has taken steps toward fortifying its assessment infrastructure and practices. The commitment to this endeavor is real among leaders of governance, but work remains to expand this attitude throughout the organization and create a true “culture of assessment.” More attention, and perhaps additional resources, need to be directed to institutional research and integration of the various planning processes now underway is essential. The new draft university mission statement and strategic plan are an encouraging foundation upon which to base such integration.

Colleagues at Westfield were generous with their time, sincere in their responses, and genuine in their commitment to students. These positive—and widely shared—attitudes are far more difficult to develop than organizational or governance structures. They are the firm foundation upon which Westfield has grown, and they constitute the university’s most notable comparative advantage.

Strengths:

- Westfield has developed a consistent and positive identity that is effectively communicated to all stakeholder groups; its “brand” is strong.
- The university has successfully worked to develop a positive relationship with the City of Westfield. This productive (and continually improving) town-gown relationship is producing educational, cultural and economic benefits for both the university and city.
- Westfield enjoys the engagement of a passionate and committed faculty and staff. Morale is high and the sense of collective community is palpable.
- Westfield demonstrates an active, consistent commitment to teaching and advising that both produces positive results in student academic success and advances the established university mission.
- The Westfield university community is truly student-centered across all organizational functions, especially with regard to student academic services, both for the general population and for specific groups. Its initiatives to help students with learning are particularly impressive.
- Westfield’s success in implementing its mission is reflected in its notable student retention rates.
- The level of student engagement with and inclusion in university governance is notable.

- Westfield's senior administration is viewed as inclusive, open and accessible by all constituents. This perception, which the team believes is based upon reality, enhances institutional effectiveness.

Concerns:

- Westfield needs to develop a more effective integration of strategic and academic planning. Current processes do not appear mutually consistent and the complex organizational landscape of committees and other governance structures impedes progress on initiatives in planning, curricular revision and assessment.
- Current resources directed toward institutional planning may not be sufficient to provide effective support to planning and evaluation work.
- Westfield needs to continue to develop and implement a comprehensive and systematic assessment of student learning and program review. A good start has been made in this area, but more work that will reach down to the operating unit level is needed.
- The university has work yet to do to develop a coherent and substantive common core curriculum.