## Introduction

The reaccreditation visiting team would like to express its sincere thanks to President Ronald Crutcher and the Wheaton reaccreditation steering committee, with particular thanks to Darlene Boroviak, Professor of Political Science; Elita Pastra-Landis, Professor and Associate Provost; and Susan Colson, Executive Assistant to the Provost, who served so well in orchestrating the reaccreditation process and in accommodating us so graciously during our visit to campus.

We found the self-study for this comprehensive evaluation thoughtfully composed and highly informative, and we have profited as well from background materials and from extensive interactions with members of the community. While we have tried to base our evaluation on a careful analysis, we cannot know the institution with anything approaching the nuance and depth of understanding as those who are part of it. With this caveat, we offer our commentary in the hope that it will be helpful to the institution in its ongoing planning and development.

We appreciate the institutional attention and time that were spent on the self-study in face of leadership changes and intensified financial challenges brought on by the recession and applaud the good work that was done to make this a worthwhile process.

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Founded in 1834, Wheaton is a venerable institution with a distinguished history as a women's college that made a successful transition to coeducation in 1988. Undoubtedly, it is a stronger institution than at the time of the last accreditation visit in 1999.

The College made impressive gains during a period of significant change and challenge. The change in presidential leadership in 2004 was the first of a series of turnovers in leadership positions at Wheaton and only this past summer have two new senior officers, the Provost and Dean of Students, joined the team.

The institution is adversely affected, of course, by economic downturn and global financial crisis during 2008 and 2009. Understandably, the economic climate and its challenges have shaken some of the well laid plans of the institution. Most visibly, it has interrupted the construction of a new science center -- with a demoralizing effect on many in the community -- and it has put on hold other priorities, such as addressing residence hall, faculty salary, and financial aid needs.

Nonetheless, the institution is adjusting to these new realities and developing ways to move forward. A task force of trustees is working in close collaboration with the President and senior administration to provide a financial road map for the future that would allow strategic priorities, including the construction of the new science center, to go ahead. In keeping with

the consultative model of governance, the President has put in place a new campus advisory group, the Planning and Priorities Committee, to help to guide future deve
lopment.  In short, while there have been disruptions in forward momentum in recent years, and while there are tensions and anxieties, to be sure, nonetheless the spirit and resilience of the institution are strong.

## Standard One:  Mission and Purpose

Drawing strength from its historical roots and shared values, and embracing its new coeducational student body while reaffirming its commitment to transformative liberal arts education, Wheaton College grew appreciably stronger in the last decade and it has set an ambitious course for the future.

Helping to set that course, President Dale Rogers Marshall, shortly before announcing her impending retirement, led a planning process designed to help prepare the institution for a leadership transition.  The resulting document, *Wheaton 2005: Connections to the Future,* emphasized the College's core values: personalized education, rigorous liberal arts, appreciation of diverse perspectives, and a commitment to gender equality.  President Ronald Crutcher initiated a second round of planning in 2004.  This effort resulted in a document entitled *Wheaton 2014: Transforming Lives to Change the World.*

In this document, the mission statement was shortened:  "*Wheaton College provides a transformative liberal arts education to intellectually curious students in a collaborative, academically vibrant residential community that values a diverse world.*"  While this statement contains a number of distinguishing characteristics of the College, it does not, in itself, encapsulate the distinctive nature and aspirations of the College. But, it is apparently not meant to stand alone.  It is accompanied by an aspirational and more specific "Vision 2014" statement:  "*Wheaton College will develop global citizens prepared to lead in a complex world.  Its transformative learning environment prepares students to live a purposeful life, be engaged in their communities, be scientifically and technologically literate, and act effectively to promote change.*"  The mission and vision, along with three "strategic priorities"  -- Leading with Connections, Reaching Beyond, and Demonstrating Success – and the executive summary, "Wheaton 2014," are listed in the catalog and on the President's website.  Additionally "core values," "institutional goals," and a "set of milestones for 2014" serve as benchmarks and yearly measures of institutional success.

The self-study in itself could be clearer about these interlocking components of mission, vision, priorities, goals, core values, and milestones, and this material could be strategically placed on the College's, not just the President's, website.  Nonetheless, members of the community across all levels -- faculty, students, staff, trustees -- spoke eloquently about the transformative nature of the Wheaton education experience, the centrality of the academic program to all that the institution does, the attention to the individual student's potential, the attempts to encourage students to connect their learning across the disciplines and to their aspirations for the future, and the innovative spirit which has pressed forward on curricular innovation designed to prepare students for realities of the diverse, globalized world of the twenty-first century.

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**Institutional Effectiveness**:  The College is centered on its mission and vision; its strategic focus is understood by its constituencies; its values are widely shared, and its specific objectives -- reflective of the mission and vision -- are developed and embedded in the other divisions of the College.

## Standard Two:  Planning and Evaluation

**Planning**:  Wheaton College is committed to college-wide planning that is tied closely to its mission. The planning process is open and collaborative, involving representatives from the faculty, staff, and students.  There is generally good communication to the campus community about the planning process and results. On the other hand, planning appears to be less widely pervasive in individual offices and departments.

Shortly after the arrival of President Crutcher, the College began developing a planning process guided by a committee of administrators, faculty, staff, students, and alumnae/i and including meetings and consultations with the campus community and alumnae/i. The resulting document, *Wheaton 2014: Transforming Lives to Change the World,* was adopted by the Board of Trustees in 2006. It focused on a series of broad goals that were to be achieved by 2014. Annually, the president and an advisory committee have reviewed progress toward these goals and identified "milestones" for the coming year. Those involved in other planning efforts make systematic reference to these goals, and they are a touchstone for many of the decisions made by the College. The new curriculum plan and its role in guiding the academic program are discussed in Standard Four on the academic program. In addition, the College has a dynamic financial planning model that allows for contingencies and alternative scenarios.

Several representative committees are charged with planning and resource allocation. The standing committees include administrators, elected representatives of faculty and staff, and students appointed by the Student Government Association. One of these standing committees, the Budget Advisory Committee (BAC), meets throughout the year and makes budgetary recommendations to the president. When possible, the President attends the meetings. *Wheaton 2014* is a reference point for the BAC, but the faculty, staff, and student representatives develop annual priorities which they present to the entire BAC. These presentations inform the budget deliberations of the BAC. A new representative planning committee, the Planning and Priorities Committee (PPC), was created in 2009 to make longer-range plans for the College. The PPC will also assume responsibility for the annual review of the strategic plans and the setting of "milestones" for the coming year. In addition to these standing committees, the president appointed a short-term committee in the spring of 2009, Task Force One, to make recommendations about reducing the budget for fiscal year 2009-10 in light of the economic recession and the projected reduction of revenues for the College. The budget for FY 10 was largely shaped by Task Force One. This fall, the Board of Trustees has also formed an *ad hoc* committee to develop in close collaboration with the President and senior staff a multi-year financial model for Wheaton.

With all of these committees and task forces involved in planning for the College, there are issues of coordination. The PPC has just begun meeting, but members of both the PPC and the BAC are uncertain about how the two committees will collaborate and how the long-term priorities from the PPC will be incorporated to the annual budgeting process by the BAC. Several joint meetings of the two committees are planned for this year to address these concerns. Task Force One, formed in response to an immediate financial problem, and the BAC were both working on the same budget last year, and there was uncertainty about the role of the BAC in the budgeting process for FY10 once Task Force One was created. The Board of Trustees intends that its new committee will be creating a financial model laying out long-term parameters for the PPC and BAC to use in their deliberations, but members of both committees continue to be unclear about how the coordination will work and which committee will have responsibility for which parts of planning and resource allocation.

There may be a tendency to create *ad hoc* structures tailored to meet exigencies rather than to work with current structures and strengthen their ability to deal with the exigencies. This approach may be efficient in the short-term but may undermine some of the commitment to and legitimacy of the standing committees.

At the College level, planning is clearly part of the culture, but planning is less evident in some of the departments and programs of the College. Some, notably finance, physical plant, admissions, financial aid, and advancement, do regular planning and monitoring of activities. Other operating units, however, seem to work on an *ad hoc* basis with little forward thinking or contingency planning. With all of the changes in the academic program, new and evolving services, and the current financial exigencies, this lack of systematic planning may be a problem, especially as departments are asked for more careful resource utilization and preparation for uncertain contingencies.

**Evaluation:** Wheaton College is also committed to evaluation. The third priority in Wheaton's strategic plan is "Demonstrating Success. Wheaton focuses on student learning, development and change, and provides evidence of institutional effectiveness." In adopting the new curriculum, the faculty specified that key elements of the curriculum would be evaluated at the College level and within individual departments and majors. Several offices also have on-going procedures for evaluating their activities. Many academic and non-academic areas, however, do not yet have evaluation plans, or they are in the early stages of developing them.

As we discuss in Standard Four, Wheaton has an organic and evolving approach to assessing student learning in light of the core elements of the curriculum. This approach has the potential of leading to effective and sustainable assessment led and supported by the faculty. As part of the implementation of the "Infusion" component of the curriculum and more general College efforts on diversity and inclusiveness, the President's Action Committee on Inclusive Excellence (PACIE) has made considerable progress on evaluating the overall effectiveness of the infusion efforts. They have also conducted an analysis of the campus climate from the perspectives of students, faculty, and staff, leading to the introduction of new programs for increasing dialog and understanding.

Both academic and non-academic departments have periodic reviews including visits by outside reviewers. The College has also effectively used outside consultants to evaluate offices and procedures, notably in finance, physical plant, admissions, and financial aid among others. In collaboration with three other colleges in the greater Boston area, Wheaton has hired an internal auditor who has conducted several evaluations that have led to an increased understanding of problems and improved effectiveness. There is also a regular program of surveys of students, alumnae/i, and applicants; and results from these surveys have been effectively used for evaluation and program improvement.

Further development of evaluation within operating units of the College will require support and guidance from staff versed in evaluation. As the self-study notes, there currently are inadequate resources for this evaluation support. Evaluation might benefit from increased support and analytical capacity for the office of institutional research and a faculty-based assessment coordinator in the Provost's office. Evaluation at Wheaton is also hampered by the difficulty of extracting relevant data from the administrative data system in forms that can be readily manipulated and analyzed. Some offices are developing analysis-oriented warehouses extracted from the transactional data systems, but most are relying upon reports that pull data into individual spreadsheets. Making the administrative data more useful for evaluation may require both different or enhanced reporting tools and more staff training in working with the systems. The office of institutional research will increasingly become a central player in supporting evaluation, but that office currently must rely on other offices to extract the data.

**Institutional Effectiveness**:  In the past ten years, the College has made considerable advancement in both planning and evaluation, and it recognizes that more work remains to be done. At this point, there does not appear to be any office or procedure for evaluating the effectiveness of these planning and evaluation efforts or for guiding improvements in these capacities.

## Standard Three: Organization and Governance

The formal organization of Wheaton College is clearly described in the Statutes of Wheaton College, which were revised in 2000, the Faculty Handbook, the Staff Handbook, and in the table of organization.  These documents clearly outline the institution's system of governance and the responsibilities of all the appropriate constituencies.   In addition, these formal statements of roles and responsibilities are supported by a remarkable culture of participation and collegiality that is powerfully embedded in the practices of the College's various constituencies.

The governing board shows admirable dedication to the institution's distinctive mission and purposes and brings considerable skill to the execution of its fiduciary responsibility.  The board seeks to develop and ensure its own effectiveness through examination of its internal structure and functioning.  New board members are assigned a trustee mentor and every board member undergoes an annual review.  In response to the 1999 reaccreditation visit, the board revised its committee structure, expanding the former Board Affairs Committee to include broader responsibilities in Governance, and adding new committees on Student

Affairs and Academic Affairs.   In these challenging times, the board has sought to create multiple channels of communication with the campus constituencies.  The board undertakes an annual Presidential Evaluation Process and revised this process in July 2009 by designating that its Executive Committee become the compensation committee for the purposes of setting presidential compensation.

After a period of some turnover in the President's Council, the President now has in place a leadership team that is committed to working collaboratively to address institutional issues and maintain the institutional momentum generated since the last review.  The new Provost and the new Vice President and Dean of Students, working with the Vice President for Enrollment Management, have been charged with addressing the long-standing retention concerns of the institution, working across divisions in a manner that exemplifies Wheaton's long-standing collaborative culture.  Several offices have undergone significant reorganization in recent years, including the Filene Center, the Office of Health and Wellness, the Office of Service, Spirituality and Social Responsibility, the Marshall Center for Intercultural Learning; ongoing evaluations of the new structures will be important to ensure that they continue to function effectively and efficiently.

The Provost reports directly to the President, sits on the Tenure Committee, and works closely with department chairs and faculty committees to oversee the quality and integrity of the academic program.  Global education initiatives are approved by a faculty committee in order to ensure academic quality.

Both the Faculty Handbook and the Staff Handbook are clear compendia of important information and are regularly updated.

Wheaton has a large number of committees, councils and associations that represent all the major constituencies of the College, and a growing number of bodies charged with bringing the varied constituencies together to address institutional matters.  This structure is deeply embedded in Wheaton's culture, which supports 10 standing committees of the faculty, Advisory groups to the President and the Provost, a Student Government Association with its associated Senate and SGA Council, the Staff Council and Senior Management Group. Members of these groups are committed to these channels for participation and report a sense of being heard and valued in the institution.  Recently, new institutional committees and processes have been added to advise the President on how best to allocate resources so as to realize the mission of the institution in this period of financial stress.  These new committees supplement a robust system of participation and voice already in place, and their specific roles and responsibilities are not yet entirely clear.  The relationships among these entities will no doubt evolve over time as redundancies and gaps are identified and addressed.

Faculty are justifiably proud of their long tradition of effective faculty governance.  The evidence shows that this tradition has generated considerable curricular innovation and that it has served to support the development of significant consensus on matters of curriculum and faculty compensation. The Committee on Committees assesses the charges of the various bodies and recently recommended that the number of committees be retained, but that each committee be reduced in size in order to improve efficiency and reduce workload.  While

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new demographics have recently tested the faculty's consensus-making processes, the faculty leadership is committed to adapting to these new realities, creating opportunities for new faculty to build a culture that is responsive to their unique needs and perspectives. The faculty tenure process is built around a mentoring process that is clear and innovative. As the number of faculty members in the pipeline for tenure grows, it may be helpful to review the documents that describe the process and to consider adding material on standards and criteria for tenure and promotion in order to increase the clarity, transparency, and understanding of the process by all its participants.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** Wheaton College's organization and governance are the product of the community's long-standing commitment to lively, participative and deliberative processes. The board, faculty, staff and student organizations all have in place opportunities for systematic review of their structure and process. Since the last review, the institution has demonstrated a capacity for creative innovation that along with consistent evaluation will stand it in good stead for the next decade

# Standard Four:  The Academic Program

**Introduction**:  Wheaton College offers only the Bachelor of Arts Degree that typically requires at least four years to complete. The AB degree is satisfied by completing a comprehensive general education program and the requirements for a major. The Committee on Educational Policy, comprised of five faculty, the President, the Provost and two students, is charged with oversight of the curriculum. Changes in the curriculum must be approved by the faculty, who has primary responsibility for the quality of the curriculum.

Wheaton also offers six off-campus domestic programs of study, six dual degree programs and a number of overseas programs. All of these programs are evaluated and approved by the faculty. The domestic programs are administered by the Filene Center for Academic Advising and Career Services and the overseas programs are administered by the Center for Global Education.

The faculty's goal is to provide a curriculum that is "flexible, holistic and integrative."  It accomplishes this through the structure of its general education program coupled with its majors program. The general education program is comprised of "Foundations" that in the first two years provide basic knowledge and skills that students will use in later study and "Connections" that require students to examine links between or among disciplines. The major requires that students study a discipline in depth. The academic programs are primarily funded through the budget; however, the College has been especially successful in obtaining funding for development of new programs, primarily through grants from foundations such as the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and The Christian A. Johnson Foundation.

The College publishes program requirements in the online and written catalog. The self-study states that learning goals are published in the online catalog, department websites, individual course syllabi and online and print publications from the Registrar; however, few department web sites have listed learning goals.  The website does provide information on knowledge, intellectual and academic skills and methods of inquiry for the major academic programs.

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Since the last review, Wheaton has undergone significant changes in its academic programs. Starting in 1999, Wheaton began a review of its entire curriculum. The planning began by asking two questions: 1) "What will liberally educated students of the 21$^{st}$ century need to be productive and successful?" and 2) "What is the best education for the students that we want to attract?" Through visitations to other campuses, development of faculty and staff working groups, and a faculty retreat, the curriculum design was developed, passing with a remarkable 91-3 vote of the faculty in 2001. Implementation of the curriculum has been ongoing and is the primary responsibility of the Educational Policy Committee.

Wheaton has incorporated on-going academic planning into its strategic planning process. In many cases, it seeks outside perspectives. For example, the writing plan developed through departments was reviewed by an external consultant from the National Council of Writing Program Administrators. Further, Wheaton requires that all departments periodically undergo outside review, and since 2006, ten departments have had external reviews.

**Undergraduate Degree Program**: Beginning in 2002, Wheaton began implementation of the new undergraduate curriculum. The curriculum requires a breadth of knowledge through its "Foundations" and "Connections" requirements and requires a depth of knowledge by requiring students to major in at least one of the 34 majors. It is clear from catalog descriptions that these programs are complementary and constitute a reasoned approach to general education.

**General Education**: Wheaton should be applauded for the design of its innovative, new curriculum. This design is coherent and substantive, but, not surprisingly, the various parts of the curriculum are in different states of implementation. For example, still at an early stage of assessment is the "Infusion" part of the curriculum, a program designed to "emphasize the study of race/ ethnicity and its intersections with gender, class, sexuality, religion and technology in the United States and globally."

"Connections" provides breadth in the curriculum through requiring students to take courses that are linked across any two of six academic areas (creative arts, humanities, history, math and computer science, natural science and social science). Students are required to take at least one course from the arts, humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. Connected courses are identified by either the faculty or students and can include either two connections comprised of two courses each or a single connection comprising three courses.

"Foundations" includes a number of requirements. For example, the First Year Seminar is an innovative program that envelops an academic subject in a nurturing and supportive environment that includes a team comprised of the faculty member teaching the course, two student preceptors and a volunteer staff member. This collaborative approach exemplifies one of the distinctive attributes of Wheaton College: personalized support for students that helps them succeed when they might not believe they can. In addition to the First Year Seminar, every student at Wheaton is required to take a course in composition. Further, students are taught writing within their major discipline by the departments. They also must complete a quantitative analysis course, two foreign language courses and one course that reaches beyond an understanding of western cultures.

**The Major Concentration:** Wheaton offers 34 disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary majors. Faculty legislation has defined the minimum requirements for a major as including 9 courses, at least three of which must be at the 300 level or higher.  The major must include discipline-specific skills and knowledge that lead to a capstone experience. Perusal of the college website and the catalog show that few departments include a mission statement or learning objectives.

**Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit:** The Educational Policy Committee oversees all aspects of the curriculum. The award of credit is overseen by the Educational Policy Committee which includes the Provost and the President.  The Center for Global Education oversees 1) direct partnerships with overseas institutions of higher education, and 2) memberships in consortia with established programs and Center based programs with accredited U.S. Colleges and Universities.  When new programs or courses are started, they are evaluated by the faculty and staff who sometimes complete site visits.  New proposals are reviewed and approved by the faculty.  The Dean and Associate Director for Global Education work with department chairs in reviewing degree, credit and grading systems of overseas universities to insure appropriate credit is granted.  The Center for Global Education maintains guidelines for credit evaluation, awarding of credit, grading scales and equivalencies.  The Committee on Academic Standing is responsible for determining credit awards.  No credit is awarded for pre-collegiate level work or remedial work.

The College Catalog clearly states the standards for student progress.  Students are not allowed to fall more than 2 credits behind.   The graduation requirements published in the catalog require that students complete 32 credits (each credit is the equivalent one course or 4 semester hours), maintain a 2.0 GPA, fulfill the general education requirements, fulfill the major requirements and have at least a GPA of 2.0 for courses in the major.  The Committee on Educational Policy is responsible for insuring that these criteria are applied consistently in the granting of degrees.

Faculty are responsible for all aspects of their courses including grading.  The Committee on Educational Policy (which includes members of the faculty) is responsible for assigning credit for courses.  The College Honor Code which is taken very seriously by students and the entire college community has explicit statements about cheating and plagiarism.  New faculty orientation introduces faculty to the Honor Code especially as it pertains to cheating and plagiarism.

Policies for acceptance of transfer credit are established by faculty committees and legislation.  Transfer credits must be from accredited domestic institutions or from recognized degree-granting institutions in host countries.  Appropriate departments, the Filene Center for Academic Advising and Career Services, and the Center for Global Education review institutions, programs and all courses for transfer of credit. Academic departments are ultimately responsible for transfer work.  The policies for transfer of credit are on the college web site and there are no obvious, unnecessary barriers for acceptance of transfer credit.  Students must complete at least half of their course credits on campus. Further at least half of the course credits for the major must be completed on campus.

**Assessment of Student Learning**:  Assessment of student learning was a major concern of the last evaluation.  This assessment is clearly a priority of the College, but work remains to

be done. According to the self-study, the administration "began cultivating values-informed assessments that are learning centered and reflexive." In 2002, the Educational Policy Committee delegated responsibility for assessment to a Curriculum Assessment Subcommittee, and a Director of Institutional Research and Assessment was hired by the Provost. Most of the previous assessment efforts focused on formative measures but they are now working on summative assessments. The catalog contains clear statements of what students are expected to gain from an education at Wheaton. The institution has adopted the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators and has collected some information in the S-series forms.

Assessment of student learning is the responsibility of the Educational Policy Committee, mostly through the Curriculum Evaluation Subcommittee (members include faculty from each division, chair of the EPC, Registrar, one student and staff from the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and the Filene Center for Academic Advising and Career Services), and the newly hired Director of Institutional Research and Assessment. The College is in the early stages of developing learning objectives for students. In 2006 and 2007, the Curriculum Evaluation Subcommittee recommended that the Educational Policy Committee develop guidelines for increasing the consistency of departmental learning goals.

Most of the focus of assessment has been at the institutional level and just recently at the programmatic level. For example, the College holds up its efforts at assessment of Connections as an example of how it would like to assess all programs. It has collected data on the effectiveness of the program through surveys of students and faculty, focus groups and outside consultants. From interviews with faculty and administrators, it is apparent that Wheaton is just beginning to develop student learning goals for many of its programs. The College is already making effective use of surveys, many of which are national or consortial so that comparative data are available. Analyses of these surveys are providing useful feedback on connections, student engagement, and student-reported improvement in liberal arts learning goals.

The Center for Global Education has a regular program of surveying students about their study abroad experiences, and information from these surveys is being used as part of the evaluation of individual foreign sites and the overall effectiveness of the study-abroad programs. They are also providing self-reported evidence about what students are learning from these experiences.

The capstone experiences in each major are another area where work is being done on codifying learning expectations, leading up to the use of capstones as a means of assessing the effectiveness of programs in the major. The College is increasingly well-positioned to use products from capstones as direct evidence to evaluate how well students have achieved the general education goals of the College.

Other areas of the academic program, such as the foundational courses on writing and quantitative literacy, have been in operation long enough that there could be consensus on clear outcomes and goals and the development of measurement procedures begun; assessment of these areas might accelerate in the future. The evaluation subcommittee is appropriately expecting to do sampling adequate to evaluate the programs and pedagogy of the College.

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Assessment efforts have taken an "organic" approach where faculty first develop goals for the program, then evaluate the structure of the program, and finally produce learning outcomes that can test the efficacy of the programs. This approach is rather unusual but according to faculty in charge of assessment, it is fostering an understanding of assessment that is changing faculty perception to a more favorable view of evaluation. According to the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators, most departments have stated that learning outcomes are published on the departmental web page or in the catalog, but there is little indication that most departments have developed mechanisms of testing learning outcomes and are using this information to revise their major requirements.

The expectations for student learning that are published on the College's website clearly reflect the mission and goals of the institution and are consistent with those for other small liberal arts colleges. Departments are evaluated periodically by outside reviewers, but it is not clear if these evaluations focus on student learning. There are concerns raised in the self-study about the resources available for assessment. We believe that the College should make continued assessment a priority.

**Institutional Effectiveness**: Wheaton has an innovative and contemporary set of academic programs. The quality of the programs can only be enhanced by the development of strong methods for assessment that are evidence-driven and result in improvements to teaching and learning.

## Standard Five:  Faculty

Wheaton College has an admirable and talented faculty with an ethic of service to the institution. The faculty is composed of 140 full-time individuals, with an equal number of men and women who work together with the administration to ensure a supportive environment characterized by academic integrity. Faculty members at Wheaton are enthusiastic about both teaching and research, recognizing that the latter serves to strengthen the former. In fact, faculty often collaborate with one another and with students on research projects and artistic endeavors, many of which have resulted in awards and grants.

Since 2000 Wheaton College has provided support for the faculty by moving to a 3:2 teaching load, even as the College implemented a one-semester, junior leave at full pay and a 10:1 student-faculty ratio. This was accompanied by a 30% increase in size of the faculty, wherein the College also honored the dictates of the last review to be mindful of diversity in faculty recruitment. In fact, the College was able to increase the diversity of the faculty, although retention of faculty of color and their representation in the tenured ranks remain issues of concern among a number of faculty with whom we spoke. Between 1998 and 2008, 24 tenure-track faculty of color were hired, 6 of whom had left, for a variety of reasons, by 2008. Four other faculty of color hired before 1998 left in the early-2000s. Of 7 faculty of color hired in the year 2000, 4 remain; 3 of those have successfully received tenure, and one has not yet come up for the tenure decision.

The establishment of a Faculty Affirmative Action Officer position (FAAO), chosen  from the faculty to serve in rotating 3-year terms, is a good step toward ensuring that diversity remains

an important priority, although we were uncertain about the adequacy of training of the FAAO and how this position differs from that of the EEO officer.

The transparency of the tenure process is much debated among faculty, especially because many believe the already daunting process permits too much variability across departments and that there is too much reliance upon departmental autonomy in rendering effective mentoring, annual reviews, and the undocumented third-year review.

The faculty has sought to have equity in employment for all of its ranks: tenured, untenured, and non-tenure track, by ensuring that adjunct faculty undergo annual reviews as is the norm for tenure-track faculty members and by creating faculty associate positions that permit this cadre of faculty to undergo tenure review if they so desire.  These, and several other objectives, were accomplished with support from the very active AAUP chapter of Wheaton College.

**Teaching and Advising:**  We found widespread pride in and commitment to the new Wheaton curriculum.  Indeed, students, administrators, trustees, and the staff applaud the creative and dedicated work done by the faculty in putting the Wheaton Curriculum into place and ensuring its vitality through the First-Year Seminar and the focus on Connections across the curriculum.  Most of the faculty we spoke with expressed their enthusiasm for the new curriculum and their commitment to the advising component of the First-Year Seminar that carries over into the sophomore year.  Faculty-student collaboration is at the heart of this work and students regard this relationship as one of the many transformational qualities of the Wheaton College experience.

While we recognize the pedagogical energy and achievements of the Wheaton College faculty, we also note the demands of heavy service commitments, which are not, apparently, borne equitably: the self-study says that 34% of full-time faculty serve on ten standing committees and two administrative committees.  During this difficult period when salaries are not increasing, the faculty is looking to the administration to demonstrate its commitment to renegotiating the faculty salary plan.  That step will help sustain faculty morale and commitment to the ethic of transformative service.

The potential for more stable leadership manifest in the appointment of a new Provost four months ago is also a hopeful sign and should help to direct energies towards realization of the ambitious milestones outlined in *Wheaton 2014*.

**Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activity**:  The faculty of Wheaton College emphasizes the importance of an active research and scholarship agenda as necessary to bolstering efficacy and optimal engagement in the classroom.  In conversations with faculty members, the subject of the science building was repeatedly broached as the single most important concern requiring immediate attention.  It was striking, in fact, that the faculty do not seem to regard the halting of this building project as an issue merely for scientists.  It was often stated that the completion of the science building will increase the scholarship potential and creative vitality for the entire faculty.  Because of this ethos, more than a few faculty members characterized the fact that construction of the science center had not yet begun as

"demoralizing." and "a visible halting of professional development opportunity" for a significant number of the faculty. At the same time, however, faculty expressed no ambivalence about the primacy of faculty-student research collaboration and the fact that this occurs with considerable frequency across divisional lines at Wheaton.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** The College has sought to ensure sufficient support for faculty through reductions in the teaching load and student-faculty ratio and the development of a faculty salary plan. While the recession and leadership changes at the College have interjected stresses and interrupted plans, including the implementation of the faculty salary plan, the Wheaton faculty continues to demonstrate strong institutional allegiance and admirable dedication to curricular goals.


# Standard Six: Students

Wheaton College serves a residential, coed student body that has ranged between 1,600 and 1,650 students for the last four years. Only a very small percentage, if any, of the students are not full time. Reflecting its history as a women's college, nearly two-thirds of the students are women. In recent years the college has sought to increase the diversity of its student body. Wheaton takes great pride in the academic achievements of its students, particularly in the high number of students who have been awarded prestigious national awards since 2000. One of the goals of the College has been to increase the academic quality of incoming classes, and average high school GPA and standardized test scores have risen significantly in the last ten years.

**Admissions:** The Admissions Office has successfully reached many of its goals regarding volume, quality, and diversity of applicants and enrolled students since the last reaccreditation review. Its success has been instrumental in raising the profile and reputation of Wheaton College and in enabling the College to advance on its commitment to diversity and inclusion.

In the last ten years, the conversion rate of inquiries to applications has risen from 15% to 28% and number of applications from 2,461 in 1999 to a high of 3,827 in 2008. The rise in the number of applications has not come at the cost of quality, as both markers of academic quality, high school GPA and SAT scores (voluntary), also increased during the same period. While many factors have contributed to this success, key changes included the refinement in the core message to reflect the College's values and the use of new technology in both the marketing of the College and the admission operations. In addition, the steady growth in the number of applications from students of color has resulted in growth in the percentage of students of color enrolled in the first year class from 14.5% in 1997 to 21.9% in 2009. In the last five years, students of color have ranged between 14% and 16% of the total student body.

Significant changes also occurred in the area of financial aid since the last accreditation review. The College merged the front end of the Bursar Office with Student Aid and College Financing to create Student Financial Services. The new office was placed in the Admission Division to strengthen the link between financial aid and enrollment management. A second

change was to develop a new model, with the help of SHBrooks, Inc., to evaluate the use of financial aid dollars that led to a reduction of the discount rate between 1998 and 2003.

While a number of positive changes have occurred with regard to financial aid, the discount rate has been steadily rising since 2003 to the current 29.9% of the comprehensive fee (34% of tuition). The average student loan borrower graduates with a debt of approximately $18,000, which, while lower than some colleges, places Wheaton at a disadvantage in enrolling highly talented students with high need who can receive full funding at some competitor institutions. Since 2006, the College has used a one-time fund, Project Scholarship, to close the gap between students' demonstrated need and their financial aid package. The fund was created to cover the gap for five years through FY 11, with the expectation that fundraising during the five-year period would create an endowed fund that would generate $1.2 million/year. Fundraising exceeded the original $6 million goal, and the comprehensive campaign is now focused on raising $24 million in endowment support for financial aid.

 Like other colleges in the Northeast, Wheaton experienced a challenging admission year in 2009. Decreases occurred in the total number of applications (14% decline), early decision applications (13% decline), early decision enrolled (37% to 29%), and selectivity in the regular pool (40% to 59% acceptance rate). The yield rate and quality markers, however, remained constant. Applications continued to rise in the important category of students of color (up 5%), yielding the current 21.9% of the enrolled first-year class.

The ability to provide adequate financial aid is essential for Wheaton to continue to attract and enroll highly qualified students. The 2004 interim report from NEASC requested that particular emphasis be given to "increasing enrollment with attention to differences among students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds." Wheaton's ten-year affiliation with Posse and other community-based organizations are of critical importance in the challenging climate for recruiting students and increasing the diversity of the student body.

The downturn in applications and pressure on financial aid also come at a time when Wheaton is considering growing the size of its student body. While the growth being considered is modest and may be realized through the January pool for the first few years, the College must weigh the impact of the challenging admissions environment and the possible implications for selectivity, quality of the first year class, and diversity on the feasibility and desirability of increasing enrollment.

**Retention and Graduation:** Wheaton has a longstanding concern with retention and graduation rates, a concern that was also expressed in the interim NEASC report in 2004. Although the College has given attention to the issue, overall retention and graduation rates have shown little change since the interim report. The percentage of students persisting into the sophomore year typically ranges from the mid to high 80s, the percentage of students graduating in four years typically falls between the mid to low 70s, and the percentage for graduation in five years has been in the mid 70s.

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The College is disappointed that it has not been able to sustain the rates of occasional years when retention was significantly above average, even with the creation of some new initiatives. As part of Project DEEP, the college participated in an outside assessment review which praised it for the level of student voice on campus. More recently, it has administered the National Survey of Student Engagement to assess the level of student activity in critical areas. Even with the results of the survey, the college has had difficulty in singling out the factors that influence students' decisions, and is currently beginning to collect data to identify and analyze the key factors that impact retention. These analyses are central to isolating the factors that should become the focal points for intervention.

Two new recent workgroups, the First Year Experience and the Sophomore Year Experience, have been created to build on existing programs and to increase the level of individual engagement and attention. Attention to both the first and sophomore years is critical as some students voice concern over the decrease in support during their second year. A key aspect of their work must be to use data about the factors that influence students' decisions whether to remain at Wheaton as the foundation for creating and implementing strategies and programs.

The new Provost and the new Dean of Students have been tasked with coordinating the institution's efforts regarding retention, signaling the institution's seriousness of purpose and awareness that success will require collaboration and involvement across divisions. The challenge will be for the institution to remain focused on the task as it addresses pressing financial and planning decisions.

**Student Life**:  An essential component of the Wheaton experience is the residential nature of the college. As residents, students have the opportunity both to teach and learn from their peers. The out–of-classroom learning that occurs in residences, organizations and clubs, athletics, and community service is an important part of the learning that occurs for students at Wheaton.

The division of Student Affairs strives to provide the special kind of environment that fosters a residential community. The division is led by the Dean of Students and Vice President for Student Affairs. This position underwent a significant transition with the retirement of a long-time dean in 2008 and the arrival in 2009 of the first new dean in twenty years. The offices that comprise the division include: Athletics, Counseling, Student Life (Housing, Residential Life, and Student Activities), Health and Wellness and the Office of Service, Spirituality, and Social Responsibility. The Marshall Center for Intercultural Learning is located in both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. Other offices that provide critical support regarding academic advising, career planning, and disability services are housed in the Filene Center for Academic Advising and Career Services and are part of the division of Academic Affairs. Thus, Wheaton provides a range of services and offices to support students academically and personally.

A number of offices that support the student experience have undergone significant changes since the last review. Health Services was restructured to become the Office of Health and Wellness to give greater prominence to and support for health promotion and education. In recognition of the link between student wellness and student success, the office was created

to focus on both individual student support and environmental management. The office offers a wide range of programs including those to encourage students to engage in a healthier living style and others to create a healthier environment.

Two reorganizations were directed toward increasing the College's commitment to diversity and inclusion. The Marshall Center for Intercultural Learning was created in 2001 to provide academic and co-curricular advising, sponsor cultural and co-curricular programs, and offer academic support programs. Since its creation, it has become an important source of support for students of color and has partnered with other offices to infuse issues related to women and gender into both curricular and co-curricular offerings.

Support for intercultural learning is also offered through the Office of Service, Spirituality, and Social Responsibility, which was established in 2005. The main charge to the office is to educate students to be change agents on campus and beyond, which involves sponsoring service opportunities, creating service learning components in conjunction with faculty, and supporting programming in collaboration with student organizations. An important function of the office is to serve as the primary support for religious organizations. The director also served on the President's Action Committee on Inclusive Excellence and oversaw the implementation of the Dialog Action Pilot program.

Finally, the Filene Center for Work and Learning, Academic Advising Office, and Kollett Center for Collaborative Learning were merged to form the Filene Center for Academic Advising and Career Services. This action brought together in one place those offices that provide counseling to students about academic choices and career planning and tutoring services to students, allowing for greater access by students and increased collaboration among staff members. The merger involved a signature program at Wheaton, the Filene Center, and the College will need to take special care that the new structure continues its tradition of innovation and excellence.

A major area of concern is the quality of life in the residence halls. Although the College built a new complex to provide additional bed space, significant overcrowding continues as a result of the growth in the student population. To meet the demand, first year students live in doubles that have been converted to extended triples and lounge spaces converted to quads. The result is that the residences are overcrowded and lack common space, both of which impede the ability to offer programming and to build a strong positive sense of community among the residents. The residence halls also suffer from a significant backlog in deferred maintenance. The buildings are in need of renovation and updating, and most common space furniture needs replacement. While a small amount of money was provided for minimal work, the College must set aside sizable funds to bring the buildings up to standard.

Students express disillusionment over the lack of attention to this problem, which they view as negatively affecting their quality of life. This situation is responsible, in part, for the strained relationship between students and the Office of Student Life because students perceive the office's inability to respond to housing concerns solely as rigidity and indifference to student issues. Another important concern is the role that overcrowded conditions and poor living arrangements play in retention.

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The inability to support adequately key areas extends beyond the residence halls. Athletics is a major source for recruiting applicants and enrolled students, and a major aspect of student life with 63% of all students participating in either club or varsity sports. Despite its importance, funding for operations has been level for the last 12 years and outdoor fields are insufficient to support student interest. Similarly, the need for counseling has grown at Wheaton, reflecting a national trend in the use of counseling centers. The staff is fully booked, and space is so limited that staff members must share offices. Availability of counseling services is key to providing students with the support they need to be successful both inside and outside the classroom.

One of the strengths of the division in addressing and resolving the challenges is the collaborative working style of the staff members. The staff has a history of cross-office and cross-division initiatives, and the willingness to join with others has allowed them to take on large scale problems and issues. In addition to valuing a collaborative approach, the new dean also understands the importance of providing staff with professional development opportunities so that they will have the necessary knowledge and skill set to address the challenges.

The Student Government Association values its working relationship with offices across campus. Since the beginning of the economic crisis last year, the students have been well informed about the challenges facing the College and the resulting decisions. They have a strong working relationship with key administrators in every division that allows them to voice concerns about nearly any aspect of the College. Students have been involved in decision-making processes as members of key committees such as the Planning and Priorities and Budget Advisory Committee. Still, the student leadership expressed concern that their needs, particularly problems related to residences, are sometimes set aside for other issues.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** The College has taken positive steps to increase the effectiveness of services in admissions, financial aid, and student life. While some of the changes have been based on data, assessment has not been a regular activity of all offices and for all initiatives. Future programmatic and strategic changes should be data driven and should include assessment as part of the process.

## Standard Seven: Library and Other Information Resources

Since its last reaccreditation, Wheaton College has made significant changes in its approach to library and technology services. Most notably, it has created a new organization – Library and Information Services – that provides an integrated approach to library and technology services, and brings together three previously distinct organizations: the library, academic computing, and administrative systems. LIS, with 46 FTE, has 23 staff more or less dedicated to supporting its library, with a fairly traditional approach to library services that does not necessarily take advantage of the merged nature of its organization.

LIS has developed a solid approach to integrating information literacy into the curriculum, especially through its partnership with faculty in the First Year Seminar and development of

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academic department technology and information literacy requirements. That said, given Wheaton's explicit commitment to integrating information literacy into the curriculum, it is unfortunate that the present method of including LIS in curriculum planning and department evaluations is relatively ad hoc. LIS staff would be willing partners in a more ambitious program to realize the information literacy goals set forth in the Wheaton curriculum.

LIS has a team of instructional technologists who partner with faculty to evaluate and provide access to and support for a wide-array of instructional technology resources. While this group has not yet developed an evaluation framework for assessing the impact of its work, the College has through creative re-assignments assembled an impressive team to support efforts to integrate technology into the curriculum. This group seems to struggle to develop well-coordinated plans with academic departments and, as a result, has found itself resorting to more ad hoc approaches for developing strategies for integrating technology literacy into the education of Wheaton undergraduates, including assessing technological literacy by using its student employees.

By joining the HELIN Consortium, the library has provided the Wheaton community with much improved access to a much broader collection of materials. It has made the commitment to shifting to a largely digital environment, although there are budget concerns attendant upon the shift from an ownership to access model.

Through a series of library renovations, the College has made much progress in transforming the physical space of the library to meet the changing needs of students and the increased need for access to information through technology and for collaboration spaces. This work is not yet complete, pending further funding sources being identified. While the College has committed resources to re-designing spaces to accommodate new demands for space, the library is quickly running out of space for its print collection, and needs to develop a strategy moving forward. This will include further weeding of the collection, and some combination of off-site storage, compact shelving, or commitment to a steady-state collection.

As noted in our overall statement of concerns, the College does not have a funded technology plan, leaving it vulnerable to not having financial resources to sustain commitments it has already made to infrastructure, classroom technology, and other equipment necessary to effectively integrate technology and information resources into the curriculum, and not allowing for effective resource allocation and planning.

Wheaton College depends upon the Banner enterprise data system for its administrative data services in all functional areas of the College. The College remains current with the continuing set of releases, and the Wheaton modifications are kept at a reasonable level and appear to be well integrated with the delivered system. There is a highly competent and adequate number of dedicated staff maintaining the system. The IT staff of 23 comprises half of LIS's total FTE of 46.All indications are that the procedures for entering and cleaning data are efficient and accurate, and users appear to be satisfied with the quality of the data in the system. In addition, there are appropriate advisory groups to guide priorities for development work.

That said, there are some problems with extracting information from the system. For operational and administrative purposes, the reporting tools Wheaton uses appear adequate, although they require staff that is both skilled in the tools and familiar with the data structure and content. However, the tools, appear to be somewhat constraining for analysis and exploration purposes, which often have to be ad hoc and iterative. In addition, because the College has elected to place many of the support staff for reporting in the major administrative offices, with the advantage of having the staff readily available to the users, this choice limits the ability to respond to new requests from offices without a support person. Institutional research, for instance, which is becoming increasingly central to the evaluation activities of the College, must rely on the reporting staff in various administrative offices to extract data for its analysis and support work.

**Institutional Effectiveness:**  The new LIS organization successfully partners with faculty and staff to provide to the campus the information resources, instructional technology, and infrastructure necessary for the College's academic mission and administration. While there are two standing advisory committees that help advise and set priorities (LTLC and Admin Group) there is no apparent formal planning process within LIS for setting goals and priorities, or for assessing the progress towards meeting goals. Similarly, while there is a great deal of data collection through surveys and other logging of interactions, there does not appear to be a systematic use of that data in decision making and assessment.

## Standard Eight: Physical and Technological Resources

Wheaton College has a functional and beautiful campus. The 480 acre campus includes 25 buildings and 1.0 million square feet of building space.  The 17 student residence halls are all equipped with automatic sprinkler systems, and the College should be commended for this significant effort.  Since the last team visit, the expansion and renovation of the arts facilities was completed at a cost of $20 million, and a new residence hall with 100 beds was finished at a cost of $7 million, both in 2002.

The College has also updated the campus master plan utilizing the services of William Rawn Associates, and it calls for the expansion and modernization of science facilities as a major and immediate institutional priority.  This project is currently estimated to cost in the range of $40 million.  Other major projects with preliminary pre-design estimated costs include a new residence hall ($10 million), a new waste water treatment plant ($10 million) and outdoor recreational facilities.

Deferred maintenance as outlined in a report recently completed by Sightlines, a consulting firm that specializes in this type of analysis for colleges, estimates approximately $50 million needed, a very significant challenge.  Although the College has in recent years provided annual budget allocations of $3 million for facilities maintenance, recent economic pressures have reduced that amount to slightly more than $1 million for the current year, which is not a sustainable level.  Annual depreciation expense is $3.6 million.  Similarly, the current practice of financing equipment replacement (scientific instruments, computers, residence hall furniture, vehicles, etc.) with "one-time" funds has been uneven and insufficient, as

noted in the self-study. Maintaining and updating these core aspects of the infrastructure might better be planned as part of the Capital Budget.

Many of the residence halls appear dated, particularly the bathrooms. As part of the ongoing planning for capital projects, emphasis should be given also to aesthetic improvements to certain areas, possibly including selected classrooms and dining service areas. Consideration should be given in the next few years to the installation of a card access control system, at least initially to the entrances of all residence halls. As noted in the self-study, older buildings on campus are not fully accessible, and over time these issues need to be addressed. We support the ongoing efforts to work on a regional solution for the waste water plant, and given the urgency (next 3-5 years), magnitude and complexities of this project, we note the importance of this solution to the financial well being of the College.

The College is to be commended for the Banner administrative system in place, a very significant investment. It is also noteworthy the College has a policy and practice to keep current with this important set of complex systems.

Much work has occurred in improving security access to the College network, and we support these efforts and the continuing vigilance needed in this important area. We also note the important Internet access work with OSHEAN and other similar organizations, the work ongoing regarding the College disaster recovery plans, and the recent initiative that installed a wireless network on campus.

While we noted overall satisfaction with technological services, several offices did indicate some additional work needed in obtaining specific reports from the administrative system. Given the increasing pace of changes with technology, and the fact that new technology is now primarily user and student driven, the College should update the Instructional Technology Plan. Although there are some practical limits to long-term planning in this area, limits due to new product development, the College needs to intensify its planning for maintaining, expanding, and funding its technological resources. Plans for adding technology capability to classrooms should be accelerated, as resources allow. In this planning the Office of the Registrar should be authorized to schedule all instructional, lab, seminar and related teaching spaces to maximize classroom utilization. We note the current academic, library and administrative advisory groups function somewhat separately, and the need for strategic policy and planning for technology, including funding strategies, is critical for the College over the next several years.

The challenge with respect to physical and technological resources, as with the College's finances, is to balance aspirations with good, but not unlimited, resources.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** Physical and technological resources support the mission, are designed and maintained well, and serve institutional needs. This sector of the College appears to be properly managed and to have adequate and competent staffing.
While the College has a good overall sense of its needs in the areas of physical and technological resources including deferred maintenance, a more systematic planning approach, as noted in the self-study, is needed.

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## Standard Nine: Financial Resources

Wheaton's operating results for fiscal 2009 were a modest surplus of $.5 million, an important achievement given the economic turbulence of the year and the recession. This success is primarily the result of the entire community working hard to reduce planned expenditures and other related efforts. The College bond rating (an independent measure of financial strength) is A2 from Moody's Investors' Services. Financial resources appear properly managed, and the College has adequate and competent staffing. The leadership of the trustees, faculty, administration, staff and students understand the impact of the recession and that higher education may have reached an inflection point regarding costs, access and related matters. As noted earlier, the challenge here is to balance the College aspirations with good, but not unlimited, resources.

The College financial statements are independently audited, and the opinion provided was unqualified (highest possible). The auditors note that they are not aware of any material uncertainties that cast doubt on the College's ability to continue as a going concern. For the year ended June 30, 2009, the auditors noted certain significant deficiencies in internal controls. The College has put in place new policies and procedures to correct these deficiencies.

Over the past decade the College endowment has grown significantly and was valued at $140 million as of June 30, 2009. However, compared to its reported peers, endowment resources are quite modest.

The College has achieved an improving market position and favorable operating margins by prudent budgeting and management practices. Wheaton continues to build on its market position as a residential, liberal arts college in a picturesque setting. Since the last team visit, the College has demonstrated improvement in entering class selectivity and growth in tuition revenue per student.

The College completed a major campaign in 2000, raising a total of $90 million, exceeding the original goal by $25 million. It has over $60 million committed in gifts and pledges in the third year of a nucleus phase of the next campaign.

Admission acceptance rates over the decade have improved because of larger applicant pools. However, the College competes with several prestigious institutions in the Northeast, which affects its yield rates. These schools generally have larger endowments and more funds for financial aid. Last year's economic situation impacted Wheaton, as it did many other colleges. Wheaton believes it will be able to maintain steady enrollment or even possibly increase its size modestly (by 100 or so students) over the next few years, but given the breadth and depth of the recession, it will likely be challenging to maintain or gradually build market strength in the competitive New England and mid-Atlantic areas, or to raise tuition significantly. Income from comprehensive fees accounts for approximately 80% of revenues.

The recent successes in improving academic quality and diversity are to be commended, but there remains a significant challenge to fund these initiatives, evidenced by increasing expenditures for student aid, which totaled over $21 million in fiscal 2009. It will be challenging to control the tuition discount rate, which has been steadily increasing in recent years from 25% in fiscal year 2006 to 27.4% in fiscal 2009 (the respective figures using Moody's calculations are 29% to 34% ), while maintaining the gains recently made. The College needs to address goals and tradeoffs in this important area.

Given the recent economic challenges, the College has responded with reductions in expenses, largely from the elimination of vacant staff positions, a reduction in adjunct faculty, a lowering of non-personnel expenses, and certain revenue enhancements altogether totaling approximately $2.5 million. In addition, a reduction of $2 million in facilities maintenance funding was accompanied by the cost containment measure of placing a freeze on faculty and staff salaries. Many of these cost-cutting actions are not sustainable, and the College needs to develop longer-term plans for fiscal equilibrium.

Key selected financial indicators provided by the College for fiscal 2009 are operating margin 3%, return on net assets -17% (largely the result of challenging investment markets, prior years showed good performance), tuition discount 34%, enrollment full-time equivalent 1,649, selectivity ratio 43%, and matriculation ratio 25%. These all compare favorably to several years ago, with the exception noted above regarding the return on net assets due to investments. The College has modest debt, which at June 2009 was $22.3 million.

Wheaton College must be careful as it plans for the future. Managing expectations will be a challenge. The College can do many things going forward, but it cannot do everything.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** Wheaton College has adequate financial resources to sustain the achievement of its educational objectives now and in the foreseeable future. While the College has a strategic plan, a workable annual budget planning process, and a good understanding of its financial condition, the institution needs to better integrate its strategic and financial planning. As priorities are clarified, it needs to use its financial modeling tools to estimate and project the costs of changes to academic programs, net tuition, facilities, and related costs. This work needs to integrate operational and capital budgets as well as the implementation of the faculty salary plan and possibly a staff salary plan.

## Standard Ten: Public Disclosure

Wheaton College provides information that is complete, accurate, accessible, clear and sufficient for intended audiences to make informed decisions about the institution. Increasingly, the College uses the web to accomplish this goal, and its efforts to launch a new website (scheduled for early 2010) should significantly improve the access to information that is presently self-identified as an issue. The new website will allow for data to be drawn from a single source and displayed in multiple contexts, eliminating the delays that presently exist in keeping information current in multiple places. *Vision 2014* and the printed and on-line catalog include clear statements of learning goals for students, but they are difficult to find on the website without knowing of their existence. More explicit statements of learning

expectations for the curriculum and by individual departments are being developed, and strategies will need to be developed for assuring that these are presented clearly and in a consistent manner to students and the public. Similarly, as assessment develops, there will be an increasing need for procedures to assure the accuracy of any public statements about learning achievements. The use of tools such as Google analytics and search engine log analysis is to be commended, as this allows the College to understand how its website is actually being used, and to use this information to reorganize how information is placed within the larger website.

Currently, some information about student achievement, such as graduation and retention rates, are difficult to find. With the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA), the information required by regulation has increased considerably, and Wheaton, like all institutions of higher education, needs to develop monitoring procedures to assure compliance.

**Institutional Effectiveness:**  While Wheaton College appears to be meeting its responsibilities for public disclosure, it is not entirely clear who 'owns' the responsibility for ensuring compliance with the increasing demands by the public and legislative bodies for disclosure.  We encourage the College to consider defining that responsibility within a particular office or committee to ensure that this process becomes institutionalized.  As for the process for managing the new website going forward, it is not clear that there is a well-defined process for setting priorities, defining resource requirements, and assessing progress.

## Standard Eleven:  Integrity

At Wheaton College, the concepts of community, collaboration, and collegiality are seen as central to the institution's identity.  Ethical behavior by all members is considered as the cornerstone for maintaining these defining qualities and therefore strongly encouraged by the policies, procedures and norms of the campus.

Wheaton's Honor Code, which was established in 1921, continues to be the institution's foundation for all policy regarding students' academic integrity.  In a recent survey of students regarding the Honor Code, the vast majority (81%) responded that they were familiar with the code. Faculty affirmed their commitment to the code by voting to include the statement on their syllabi, although there is little consensus on how to handle cases of plagiarism and cheating, with some faculty acting independently and others bringing the case before the College Hearing Board.  To address the concern over the possible disparity that results from the range of faculty responses, the faculty adopted in May 2009 *The Faculty Handbook to the Honor Code* as a guide for applying the code.

Students disagree about the scope of the Honor Code.  When asked about the areas of campus life to which the code applied, slightly greater than half (56%) saw the code as primarily academic while slightly fewer than half (43%) saw it as academic and social. Thus, although the code refers to "honor and integrity in all areas of campus life," most students consider it restricted to their academic lives.  For example, while Student Life staff view students' compliance with the alcohol policy as a part of the code, students do not consider underage

drinking as a violation of the code.  The differing views of the code and its applicability to social life may be part of the source of students' perceptions that their values and views are not valued by staff members.

The Wheaton College Ethics Code serves as the code of conduct for the faculty and staff and clearly communicates the expectation that the behavior of all employees will meet the highest ethical and professional standards.  New faculty members are introduced to the code during their orientation to ensure that they are familiar with the code and the expectations for their professional conduct.

Policies exist regarding a wide range of issues and behaviors including plagiarism, nondiscrimination, academic freedom, sexual harassment, affirmative action, drug and alcohol use, confidentiality, accommodations for the American with Disabilities Act, and use of network and computing systems.  These policies are available on the web and many are contained in the handbooks for students, staff and faculty, which are updated as revisions and updates to the policies are made.  The College has established clear procedures and hearing bodies for reviewing policy violations and for appeals of any resulting sanctions, all of which can be found on the web and in the appropriate handbook.

In addition to the policies themselves, the process of policy creation and revision also reflects the commitment of the College to collaboration and transparency. The Faculty Handbook on the Honor Code was the product of collaboration by the Student Government Association with the faculty.  Revision to the policy regarding tuition benefits for employees involved a long process that included surveys and open meetings so that the full range of opinions and concerns could be voiced and debated.

One of the "2014 Milestones" states, "Diversity and inclusive excellence distinguish the Wheaton learning experience, the Wheaton community, and academic culture." This milestone is reflected in the "Infusion" component of the new curriculum, and most departments have already developed plans for how race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality will be "infused" in one or more of their courses. The President's Action Committee on Inclusive Excellence (PACIE) has been examining the inclusiveness of the College community as experienced by students, faculty, and staff. In 2007, PACIE conducted a campus climate survey of all three populations, presented the themes from the surveys to the community, and is developing and monitoring action programs to increase dialog and improvement in an already generally supportive and accepting community for people of diverse backgrounds and characteristics.

Admissions strives in its print and on-line materials and in interactions with prospective students to present an accurate picture of Wheaton and what it offers students. The financial aid office is concerned about helping families pay for a Wheaton education without undue burden and reportedly has at times counseled students not to come to Wheaton because of the financial strain resulting from Wheaton's inability to meet the full demonstrated need of all students.

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The visiting team believes that Wheaton College was accurate, forthright, and open in the self study and in the electronic and paper materials the College collected for the committee. We were impressed by the general candor and integrity of those we met during the visit.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** Wheaton has established a record of assessing the policies and procedures that support the institution's commitment to collaboration, transparency and a spirit of community. These assessments have involved feedback from and deliberation by appropriate constituencies.

## Conclusion: Summary of Overall Institutional Effectiveness

Wheaton College has a clear mission and ambitious goals for the future that grow out of that mission. Its organization and governance are the product of the community's long-standing commitment to lively, participative and deliberative processes. The institution is committed to college-wide planning and evaluation, although it needs to continue to develop methods for charting and evaluating progress in ways that can help guide improvement and to identify and collect the information needed for this evaluation. Its faculty, with an admirable ethic of service to the institution, has devised an innovative and contemporary set of academic programs. The quality of these programs can only be enhanced by the College's intention to develop strong methods for assessment that are evidence-driven and result in improvements to teaching and learning.

The College has taken positive steps to increase the effectiveness of services in admissions, financial aid, and student life, but evaluation of these services is hampered by either inadequate information or by the difficulty of extracting data from administrative systems in flexible and efficient ways amenable to analyses supporting evaluation. While the College has a good overall sense of its needs in the areas of physical and technological resources including deferred maintenance, the challenge is to balance aspirations with good, but not unlimited, resources. There is strong consensus about the need to move ahead with a new science building and to redress deficiencies in residence halls. Given the institutional commitment to transparency, collaboration and community, it is important to clarify decision-making processes and to communicate in a clear and open manner, particularly as difficult choices are made.

**Strengths**

- Wheaton displays multiple measures of increased strength since its last accreditation:

  o a significant gain in applications for admissions with increased selectivity in enrollments,
  o a larger student body and growth in tuition revenue per student,
  o the addition of more full-time faculty, the recruitment of a diverse faculty, and the reduction of the student/faculty ratio and the teaching load,
  o impressive numbers of student national award winners,

- o major improvements in service through newly merged library, computing, and administrative systems,
  - o successful fund raising,
  - o improvements in facilities, growth in assets, and a record of conservative financial management.

- Wheaton is centered and strengthened by a shared commitment to the mission of the institution on the part of all its constituencies and a shared pride in the transformational power of the educational experience for its students.

- Wheaton is committed to an open and collaborative planning and evaluation process. The steps it has taken to put in place processes and advisory groups to consider the effects of the economic recession exemplify the strength of this part of the Wheaton culture, although the relationship of these advisory groups to one another and their coordination need greater clarity.

- The establishment of a new curriculum is a testament to the faculty's innovative approach to education and ability to arrive at consensus.  Components of the new curriculum are creative in design and challenging to implement.  Wheaton's commitment to evaluate the success of these efforts is commendable. It also realizes that much work is yet to be done in assessment of student learning.

**Concerns**

- While the 2004 letter from NEASC identified retention and graduation rates as issues meriting particular attention, they continue to be points of vulnerability for Wheaton. Aspects of these matters have been studied and various initiatives have been developed, but planning needs to be based on a clearer and more systematic understanding of the nature of the problems and their causes.  Concerted action, under the direction of the new Provost and Dean of Students, is only just beginning.

- While the institution has invested significant resources and attention to attract a more diverse student body, and while progress has been made, continued attention to this matter is warranted.  While Wheaton has successfully recruited faculty of color, retention requires continued diligence.

- While Wheaton is committed to College-wide planning and has begun many promising initiatives, analysis and assessment frequently come late in the process, if at all. Resources could be more wisely used if goals and objectives guide new initiatives rather than evolve after the initiatives are begun. In many areas, but especially student learning, the challenge will be to identify outcomes and expectations in ways that are amenable to assessment and then to design assessment methods that lead to a better understanding of why programs are or are not working effectively and how they could be improved.

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- Wheaton would be well served by a comprehensive, prioritized, multi-year capital and maintenance plan for facilities, equipment and technology that is integrated and consistent with the strategic goals and priorities and that provides adequate financial support for the long-term maintenance of the basic infrastructure of the College.   The framework and key components of such a plan should include identified sources for support and should be completed prior to decisions being made to go forward with significant capital projects.

- Like many other institutions, Wheaton may find it difficult to control the discount rate which has been steadily rising since 2006.  Furthermore, its policy of meeting less than full need may limit its ability to attract and retain students and to compete with other schools.  This issue has important strategic and budgetary implications.

- The College would be well advised to move quickly to integrate strategic planning with financial planning, including an updating of the faculty salary plan and the inclusion of a staff salary projection.   The administration is well aware that many of the recent reductions in operating expenses, such as the salary freeze and the reduction in maintenance spending, are not sustainable in the long term, and that responsibly balancing the budget will require difficult tradeoffs and discipline as well as imaginative forward thinking.  Increasing the size of the student body to grow revenues is an option that has both direct and indirect concomitant costs -- including its effects on admission selectivity and support services -- that require careful consideration.

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