Educational Effectiveness Review Report

Prepared for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges by

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Preface

The voice of the report below belongs to the community. Although I am the ALO, I have taken small part in either accomplishing the work or recording it, except to frame it, as I have here, with this preface. The story created in the report below is told in strongly factual, self-reflective, and critical language. It does not varnish the truth of our position. Regardless of the judgment of others, my own judgment is strongly favorable to the work of the community.

March 17-20, 1998, a WASC evaluation team visited Woodbury University. The subsequent Commission meeting on June 24-25 resulted in a letter that commended the university for its efforts to respond to "concerns identified in its previous action letter and progress made since the last accreditation visit" (July 6, 1998). The letter reaffirmed accreditation but also scheduled a progress report due March 1, 1999, and a special visit for spring 2001 to address financial viability, faculty sufficiency, and assessment, including effective data collection, analysis, and planning. Had the visiting team, which was satisfied with progress in those areas, used the rubrics for assessment that now are employed, they would have noted that Woodbury stood at the "emerging" level.

Since 2001, the challenge for Woodbury, as for many universities accredited by WASC, has been institutionalizing those aspects of operation, such as assessment, that are critical for sustaining and advancing in the current contexts of success in higher education. These are the aspects that WASC and other accrediting bodies have been charged with reporting on and helping to regulate. The alignment of institutional self-interest and regulatory interests are both stronger and clearer. This is excellent; however, the requirement for demonstration of institutionalization is a more stringent and difficult one to meet.

In the past, an institution might create the appearance of compliance by temporarily disguising its weaknesses and reverting to its normal operations after a visit. The changes that WASC now looks for are systemic, not simply operational. Systemic change can be difficult to discover, so the commission considers the hallmarks of institutionalization, requiring evidence that institutions collect and analyze key data as both antecedent and predicate to action. The commission considers the capacity created by planning and policy and procedure, and the subsequent regularity of the use and results of that capacity. It does all of this while relying on reports and visits at more frequent iterations, so that institutional data points can tell a story of progress or indicate problems.

Any institution that has committed itself to systemic change knows how difficult and time-consuming making such change is. For those of the Woodbury community, creating systemic change has been the prime motivating impulse for actions both prior and subsequent to the CPR visit. The community acted not simply because WASC and our professional accrediting boards require change, but because in order to sustain the university and to create competitive advantage in recruiting students and in having our graduates succeed, we needed to assure the effectiveness of our educational processes, as well as the effectiveness of the processes and resources that support, sustain, and improve the learning environment.

Among other lessons, Woodbury has learned that systemic change, like any type of deep and transformative process, is difficult. Universities are conservative by nature.
traditions in which its members trained are not easily cast aside, because they have shaped a lifetime of practice and given value to the practitioner’s life and work. In this truth lies the essential tension that informs the task, since in order for a university community to re-envision and to re-invent itself, change must come from the center of its members’ selves, their institutional identity, and the habits of their practice.

Our students require four years for such transformation. But in that transformational pursuit, faculty, staff, and administration hold the authority to define acceptable work. They set the goals and motivate, nurture, and facilitate the change in a conscious and intentional manner. Even then, gains made in the safe and focused environment of the campus can be temporary. The induction into a profession or discipline through work or further education is often required to secure those changes.

The task for members of a university community is much more difficult because there is no teacher or guide except a sense of institutional purpose that they themselves must shape and inhabit. And so, while Woodbury had progressed from 1998 to 2001, when the members of the university community began the latest accreditation reaffirmation journey, they found it necessary to start at the most basic level, at the point of recognizing and affirming an institutional identity.

After long deliberation, the community distilled into six educational principles an identity from which the process of alignment, resource focus, and assessment of effectiveness took its impulse. Copious evidence exists that this common identity pervades the community and that the work of deep change has been fully embraced, encompassing the crucial tasks of data-driven planning and assessment.

In much of this work, I have absented my authority, except to serve as an umpire, as it were. The steps from the CPR to this point have been given over to the faculty and others who directly support the work of education, led by an EER committee composed of faculty and staff central to the day-to-day tasks that undergird the university’s identity, effectiveness, and health. To them I have given over the writing of this document, and all that follows, while touched by many hands, including mine, has been written by them and authorized by their immense work.

In over twenty-five years in higher education, I have never seen accomplishments of its like over such a short span of time. The progress of the university is seen in the passion of the community members and the growing number of documents that support the story of the report. It can be seen in the results of learning that the faculty are eager to talk about and exhibit. It can be seen institutionalized in key documents, like the current catalog, which publicly announces its reliance on an intentional learning process, using objectives, curriculum maps, and assessments that result in evidence of learning that demonstrates student achievement and becomes the basis for further improvement.

One of my greatest pleasures was the strategic planning session on 17 February 2009, where the community was posed the following questions: 1) What excites you about the university? 2) What is the defining difference for the university? 3) What is the economic engine for the university?

Across all groups and all questions came back a single answer: "The way we transform our students." Confirmed beyond doubt was the bedrock belief that transforming students is what we do in our many different ways. This answer, speaking of deep alignment, reinforces the progress we had made and gives greater energy for further progress. We understand both the urgency and importance of all that finds its way into the
WASC standards. For we know that if we can verify that we transform our students, we will provide them a powerful validation and provide the whole community a powerful economic engine into the future.

The work is difficult, and it must be undertaken in an orderly fashion. Because it cannot all be done at once but everything in due course, much remains to do. The sense that there is always more ahead can seem oppressive, but I see the community roused and optimistic. It is buoyed by its success so far, by its knowledge that this work is important to all, and by the promise that what lies ahead is not easy, but satisfaction of an extraordinary kind. The pages that follow may not express that in their eager candor. So I have taken time to say as much under my own hand.

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Introduction

Woodbury University approaches the task of reviewing its educational effectiveness through a coherent plan based on the direct assessment of student work, especially work produced in students’ capstone courses, the collection and disaggregation of demographic, enrollment, retention and graduation data, and the use of strategic surveys such as the National Survey of Student Engagement and the College Student Inventory. Academic departments have created systematic learning outcomes, detailed curriculum maps and multi-year assessment plans that guide everything from syllabus construction, instructional reform, and curriculum planning. A rich institutional internet portal with targeted live reports and restructured committees for curricular review and approval almost complete the picture.

All of this, however, was sparked by the renewal of the University’s identity and mission undertaken over the past few years. The creation of the University’s six principles of academic quality, communication, innovation and creativity, transdisciplinarity, social responsibility and the integrated student have provided a focus and a challenge to the University’s assessment efforts. They have created a lens through which to view the learning of the University’s students, the teaching of its faculty, the development of its facilities and the work of its staff and administration.

The effects of these developments can be seen in such outward signs as the University’s academic, budgetary (especially financial aid), and strategic planning, its new Handbook and Guide to Learning, its new and renovated buildings, and its increases in full-time faculty and student development staff. More important, however, are the changes that are less evident, the changes in instructional practice, faculty culture, and program reviews that these initiatives have produced. As is often noted, assessment is no longer a taboo word in faculty and administration circles; in fact it is often embraced as a way to assure the quality of the faculty’s educational work and our students’ efforts in ways that are public, persuasive and clear.

The University’s approach to assure quality in teaching and learning is rooted primarily in the examination of the work of its students. Capstone reviews, mid-career work and analysis of students’ preparation for university-level learning are all part of how the University goes about assessing students’ readiness, practice and culminating achievements. This work is archived across the University’s departments and regularly reviewed and evaluated by its faculty. Measuring the work against the expected outcomes of the program, faculty critique and assess this work in order to develop new strategies for instruction and syllabus design as well as new structures for courses and curriculum. Significant renewals of major parts of the curriculum in the Schools of Architecture, of Business and of Media, Culture & Design and the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies have resulted from the beginnings of this process. The continual evaluation and assessment of these changes is an essential part of the University’s future as it tests the effectiveness of these innovations and plans for the next generation of students.

The approach that the University takes towards this particular educational effectiveness review is that of a major research project. Centered on asking numerous questions that arise both from the standards in the Handbook of Accreditation as well as from the University’s own Institutional Proposal and Capacity and Performance Review, this educational effectiveness review is a natural and logical culmination and on-going part
of the University’s commitment to understanding more clearly what its students learn, how well they learn it, and how well our faculty and staff help these students learn. In what follows, the University explains and elaborates on its commitment to assessing the effectiveness of its educational programs.

Chapter 1: Creating Purposeful Identity: Teaching Who We Are: The evolution of Woodbury University’s institutional purpose and identity around its six educating principles from 2005 to present is examined. The chapter examines how these principles fit the particular characteristics of its students and how they allow for students to develop and add to the cultural capital they bring with them. The educational effectiveness review examines what the University is looking for in terms of educational outcomes and what it expects students to learn, both in general and in specific programs, in outcomes that transcend all programs and that reside in individual majors. It looks for how the basic values and outcomes of the six principles find expression in individual programs and their attendant courses.

In terms of the context for assessment, the review discusses how the University goes about finding out how well students learn, on institutional, programmatic, and course levels and what kind of on-going assessments, intentional inquiry and purposeful data collection it uses for effective decision making and improvement. Lastly, it explores the kinds and thoroughness of the data it has across the institution and in programs, both as indirect and direct data, and how this information regarding indicators of effectiveness and measures of diversity is developed, shared and utilized in assessment plans and program reviews.

Chapter 2: Heightening Impact through Alignment: The Power of Intentionality: Beginning with how the University’s educational outcomes (the six principles) reveal themselves in strategic and budgetary planning, this chapter looks at the ways the University’s leadership, resources, expertise and processes reflect these principles and how well they align with the needs and aspirations of the students and faculty of the University. These principles, the plans derived from them, and the resources allocated through this process are examined for their impact and sufficiency in creating appropriate learning environments. The chapter also examines whether or not University’s planning and the alignment of its programs and resources is informed by educational evidence. Additionally, the chapter discusses how budgetary allocations match the needs revealed by assessment.

The University's development and application of organizational resources and structures for sustainability, including the appropriate alignment and integrity of resource commitments, is explored. Also, the ways the University communicates its processes and results to the community are considerable, both how they provide information and solicit feedback. The chapter examines how the University involves its stakeholders in reviews of effectiveness, in planning and in resource allocation.

Chapter 3: Producing Educational Success: From Students to Graduates: It is important for the University to know what and how well its students are learning, cognitively, socially, and professionally. What it knows about its students in terms of preparation for entry, progress at mid-course, achievement in capstones, and accomplishments as alumni are important ways of understanding what the impacts are of
the degree programs on student learning. Central issues concern evaluation of the impact of the general education program on student learning and whether or not the general education of students is something shared across programs, is ‘purposeful, substantial and effective,’ and is in line with our identity and mission. Furthermore, the review examines the role that professional and personal development programs, as well as co-curricular activities and programs, play in student learning.

The review explains what direct, as compared to indirect, evidence exists for this learning and what students are able to do successfully with this learning. It also asks if the University is able to parse this success across demographic data lines, including transfer status, ethnicity, age, time at Woodbury, or other variables and if these differences are significant. The review also examines the results of this kind of inquiry when the University asks similar questions about faculty, including faculty development programs, and how faculty exercise ownership and discuss academic standards at the institutional, program and course level. Finally, it looks at the measures, means and methods of evaluating and documenting student achievement and success.

**Chapter 4: Teaching and Learning Effectively: Action Research for Continuous Improvement:** Given the evidence in the previous chapters, the principle focus is what the University does with this knowledge of its students' learning. This chapter looks at the alignment of program reviews to institutional learning objectives, at how the University “closes the loop” from goals and outcomes to data collection and evidence production to interpretation and use. It examines if this process leads to reformed goals and outcomes and a renewal of the cycle, if this process is used to reform and improve teaching, programs, and the University itself. The creation of pedagogical innovation and effective use of assessment methodologies is explored, as is how evidence is used to direct faculty development, program review, accreditation efforts and co-curricular programs.

The review also details the kind of improvement systems that are in place so that the University's faculty is continuously learning about learning and remaking itself as a learning organization, sustaining a continual discussion across the campus concerning student learning. Organizational learning, both by faculty and staff, that takes place related to creating a culture of learning and developing pedagogical knowledge across campus is examined, as is the integration of course-, program-, and university-level learning outcomes in order to create the systematic and regular improvement of learning.

Each chapter concludes with a series of conclusions and recommendations to the University regarding the issues and results detailed therein. These conclusions and recommendations evaluate the effectiveness of the measures taken and processes created, integrating and synthesizing the learning about the University in this review and pointing towards needed directions in institutional improvement. They reflect not only on what has been accomplished, but also on what remains to be done, both in the short term and in the long term.
Chapter 1

Creating Purposeful Identity: Teaching Who We Are

On November 1, 2004, Jonathan Brown, President of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities, addressed a retreat meeting of Woodbury University’s Board of Trustees. At that time he told us that we needed to find a clear identity and a renewed focus. Shortly thereafter, we began our Institutional Proposal process, emphasizing the reinvigoration of our institutional purpose and identity, the alignment of our educational objectives and resources, the assessment of our students’ learning and achievements, the creation of an enlivened institution dedicated not only to our students’ learning, but to our own. Returning again to address the Board of Trustees at its November 7, 2009 retreat, Dr. Brown found that the University had made startling progress, noting that Woodbury had worked hard to reinvent itself to serve today’s students and that its focus and progress had been greater during that time than that at any other institution he has seen. We thank him for his words and seek here to show how we have accomplished such high words of praise.

Theory and Environment

A Renewed and Common Purpose: In our Institutional Proposal (IP) we committed ourselves to “a refined University vision and mission that reflects Woodbury’s emerging identity.” (IP 5) In the intervening years, we have created the “clear educational identity that establishes our main educational objectives across the University” both in terms of creating increased access to institutional information and developing a common vision of our educational objectives. (IP 8) The result of this process, as documented in our Capacity and Performance Review (CPR), was the creation of a robust information system: on-line student, course, and registration information, and an intranet portal for storing, retrieving and communicating vital information across the campus. This information system now also includes Moodle course management software.

The process also resulted in our University principles. Those principles are: academic quality, communication, transdisciplinarity, innovation and creativity, social responsibility, and the integrated student. (CPR 5-6) They have come to embody and symbolize what we stand for and what we aspire to. They are integrated into our curriculum and our institutional structure, from the alignment of educational outcomes to the creation of the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies. They have become a lingua franca for our University and ideals that we measure ourselves against.

As widespread as the acceptance and use of these principles may be, the institution needs to assure that they fit the particular characteristics of our students and allow for them to develop and add to the cultural capital they bring with them. As reported in the last visit, our students continue to be first generation, low-income, and minority. While other universities may see these characteristics as providing obstacles to education, we see them as providing our students their own unique cultural capital that forms the foundation for their success and our ability to assist them to persist and graduate at above average rates.
Our principles are designed in practice to leverage this knowledge into viable personal and professional abilities, as the outcomes of our educational process demonstrate. As our most recent Course Catalog, renamed the Handbook and Guide to Learning (HGL), states, "learning at the university helps students create new knowledge to shape the world of the future," transform themselves so that they "can transform others," and "make a difference in all that they do, in their classes, on the campus, and within their communities." (HGL 5)

Learning from Collaborative Experience: We know this through the institutional research, learning assessment, program review and academic reform we have undertaken. We believe we have made great strides in transforming the University into a learning institution. Starting from our experience working with professional program accreditors such as ACBSP, AACSB, NAAB, CIDA, and NASAD, we have moved from using anecdotal and incidental observations of student work to rigorous structured assessments of student learning. We have adapted the standards and objectives of these organizations as well as WASC to our own self-determined principles and outcomes, and have begun to use these assessments in making key decisions regarding curricular and co-curricular programming.

For instance, the School of Architecture has blended the NAAB criteria with the University principles and developed a system of review and assessment that goes well beyond professional accreditation standards to reflect our institutional and their departmental values and goals as well as their students’ needs and experiences. The School of Business has thoroughly re-examined its curriculum, faculty and resources, raising expectations and performance for students and faculty alike, and has begun testing these changes with an emphasis on student learning and performance as it seeks AACSB accreditation. Both have applied these experiences to their undergraduate as well as graduate programs to invigorate them and bring students into partnership with the faculty in thinking about and reforming our educational experiences.

Three departments (Animation, Fashion Design, and Graphic Design) in the School of Media, Culture & Design, along with the department of Interior Architecture in the School of Architecture, have some of the most robust assessment plans and evaluations in place, building on their experience with NASAD to create a unique faculty-driven and student-centered process of examination and reform.

The department of Interior Architecture in particular has blended not only NASAD but CIDA criteria with the University’s principles to create a distinctive standard of learning assessment and curricular review, while the department of Graphic Design has contributed to our thinking about how curricular plans can be represented to make them effective learning tools.

The remaining degree-granting academic departments of the University, two in the School of Media, Culture & Design (Communication and Psychology) and two in the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies (Interdisciplinary Studies and Politics & History) have used their colleagues’ experiences and models to create their own programs of student learning assessment and curricular review, using information about and input from students to begin to reshape their own curricula as well as the learning experiences of students within individual courses.

The extension of these practices has gone well beyond the programs that are responsible for academic majors. Our departments of Art History, Mathematics & Natural
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Sciences and Writing, all within the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies, as well as Library and Information Sciences and the Office of Student Development, have all developed learning outcomes, curriculum maps, and assessment plans for their units, while some have already initiated and completed significant assessment of student learning and incorporated that information into curricular change (HGL and Results of Summer 09 Assessment).

The integration of the Office of Student Development (including Academic Advising, Counseling and Health Services, Housing and Food Services, Instructional Services, and Student Life) into Academic Affairs has brought about an intentional alignment of those activities with student learning and a real partnership wherein student development concerns reciprocally inform disciplinary learning (OSD Learning Outcomes, FOA group). All together, we have created a robust institutional framework that embodies our identity and principles, a collaborative environment of shared learning and work and a central focus on student and organizational learning that has resulted in improved and aligned functions and outcomes.

**Thesis**

**From Principles to Outcomes:** Our educational outcomes are thoroughly rooted in our six principles, which in turn emerged from our consideration of our educational objectives and give concrete substance and applied meaning to these principles. Across the University's programs, including our General Education program, we are looking for student learning that transcends and yet also resides in individual majors and programs. Our existing general education outcomes are based on the educational outcomes developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and adjusted to our mission principles. A proposal before the University's Educational Planning Committee would transform these outcomes into thematic clusters aligned to the University’s principles in a clear and conscious effort to articulate our guiding principles in terms of specific educational outcomes.

These principles and their related outcomes permeate our specific Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs), connecting both discipline-specific learning and integrative learning across our curriculum. All PSLOs are published in the draft of the Handbook and Guide to Learning (HGL) as well as on the University portal under Program Student Learning Outcomes. They are also incorporated into virtually all course syllabi, which are now collected in an on-line Syllabus Library on the University portal.

An examination of our PSLOs demonstrates a clear commonality of values and expectations that are aligned to the University's identity and principles. As a result of much faculty discussion across department meetings, a consistent emphasis on communication skills in all curricula, as well as on ethical decision making and social responsibility has emerged. All academic units are embracing both global and intercultural awareness as well as striving towards interdisciplinary perspectives and transdisciplinarity activities. Integrative thinking and actions alongside the development of collaborative and leadership abilities in our faculty and students are a central concern of all as well. A cursory examination of these outcomes can demonstrate this alignment and demonstrate how the basic values and outcomes of the six principles find expression in individual programs and their attendant courses.

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**Communication:** To begin with, the principle of Communication is expressed as an awareness that “the diversity of forms... [and of] people and places that one must communicate with.... [has] expanded and given heightened importance to visual and physical as well as written and oral communication... [requiring] excellent communicators across diverse media and audiences.” (HGL 6). This principle takes a variety of forms, all based in the General Education program’s assertion that these skills be “achieved and demonstrated through learning in a range of fields, settings, and media, and through advanced studies in one or more areas of concentration.” (HGL 12)

In the Architecture program, communication is primarily associated with a student’s ability to represent effectively design ideas in “a wide range of media” by means of “writing, speaking, drawing and model making” (HGL 31), outcomes that are also echoed in the Interior Architecture (HGL 49) and Design Foundation programs (HGL 129). The new Bachelor’s of Business Administration degree defines the outcome in communication as that of an entry-level professional (HGL 85, 96, 107, 118), while Animation, Fashion Design and Graphic Design also seek a professional standard, whether in story structure and visual concepts (HGL 133), design process and drawing skills (HGL 171) or visual organization and symbolic representation (HGL 186; see also Mathematics & Natural Sciences, HGL 245). The program in Organizational Leadership also expresses this in terms of effective use of multiple means of communication, logical, visual and statistical (HGL 119).

The Communication program emphasizes this with regard to media literacy and professional practices in communication organizations (HGL 155), the Psychology program in terms of information literacy competency and public presentation skills (HGL 198; see also Art History, HGL 231 and Library and Information Sciences, HGL 238), the Interdisciplinary Studies program looks to creative textual analysis in written and oral work (HGL 210), and lastly, the Politics and History program develops students who can effectively apply historiographical and political analyses to their written and verbal work (HGL 220). The graduate programs (MArch, MBA, and MOL) each express this principle in terms of effective or skillful communication across multiple dimensions. The Writing program expresses this in terms of written communication’s heightened importance and demanding nature (HGL 257). Each discipline has found its own way of expressing and valuing this principle, creating unity from diversity in this and, as you will see, all of the other principles.

**Transdisciplinarity, Innovation and Creativity:** We have begun to overcome the traditional isolation and insularity of academic programs by embracing integrative and collaborative learning that transcends traditional disciplinary and professional boundaries. The principle of Transdisciplinarity states that we understand “the interdependence of all knowledge... [includes] emotional intelligences, intuition, and physical knowing... [as well as] the importance of collaboration among the disciplines to solve complex problems.” (HGL 6) We abide by this principle by practicing and teaching the application of inter- and transdisciplinarity to one’s learning (HGL 12, 171, 185, 210, 220, 231, 238, 246, 257), the solving of complex problems (HGL 71, 127, 186, 210, 246, 257), and the undertaking of collaborative efforts (HGL 12, 49, 133, 171, 186, 197, 210, 246) across all of our disciplines and programs.

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These principles are closely related to our emphasis on innovation and creativity: that all of us, students, faculty and staff, can be a “maker of knowledge, goods, concepts and not just a receiver of them... [and that what one] makes is new and forward-looking.” (HGL 6) The manner in which this principle appears across our curricula is in the application of critical, theoretical and historical analysis and knowledge to varied contemporary situations (HGL 198, 210, 220, 231; MBA, MOL), the solving of discipline-related problems through the systematic application of disciplinary skills (HGL 12, 127, 154, 171, 185), and the actual creation of substantial and imaginative real-world projects (HGL 12, 31, 49, 86, 96, 108, 133).

Social Responsibility and the Integrated Student: Finally, we base ourselves on the idea that social responsibility “no longer is an option... [it] implies a respect for the planet, a respect for its people and the environment... accepting responsibility for one’s actions... [embracing] civic engagement... [and] sustainability as well as social justice.” (HGL 6) Furthermore, we find “it more important than ever to assure that the aspects of a student’s personal and professional life are fully integrated.” (HGL 6) That these principles are the foundation for program goals and learning outcomes across the curriculum is also clearly evident.

They are also central to the learning outcomes developed by the Office of Student Development, where students are expected to apply their talents to their local community and evaluate the impact of their actions on others. Academic programs utilize a variety of approaches, from promoting a concern for environmental responsibility and sustainability (HGL 12, 171, 257), professional and personal integrity (HGL 85, 96, 262; MBA, MOL, OSD), and the social and ethical application of research and design production (HGL 12, 49, 108, 186, 198, 238, 246), to bringing together of the personal and the professional (HGL 220, 257), understanding the social effects of diverse media and business decisions (HGL 96, 108, 155, 231) and exploring a variety of social and aesthetic theories and perspectives (HGL 12, 31, 49, 171, 210, 220, 231).

Closely linked to these values is the University’s dedication to global and intercultural awareness by learning how spaces are socially and culturally constructed (HGL 31, 49) conducting historical and contemporary studies that span diverse cultures and periods (HGL 12, 31, 49, 133, 155, 171, 186, 220, 238) and consistently placing problem solutions in their global contexts (HGL 86, 96, 108). By aligning all of our expectations and outcomes to the University’s principles, we have developed a common language and identity that lays the foundation for collaboration and discussions across campus, with students, faculty, administrators, staff and external stakeholders. The approaches and methods that we use to facilitate these collaborations and discussions is what we will turn to next.

Strategic Direction and Achievements

Academic Quality: The first and overarching principle we have adopted is that we will “add value to the lives of its students through the educational experiences [the University] provides. At the same time, the course and outcomes of learning must adhere to the highest principles and goals.” (HGL 6) How do we know this? How do we know we have added value, developed rigorous courses of instruction and aided students in achieving the
highest outcomes possible for them? These are the fundamental questions of an educational effectiveness review.

Assuring academic quality requires a robust investigation into how well our students learn, how well the University is structured and how much more our students can accomplish than when they first entered our campus, all on institutional, programmatic, and course levels, and through a variety of means. Our on-going assessments, intentional inquiry and purposeful data collection, which we use for decision making and improvement, include faculty-created curriculum maps and assessment plans, public presentations and juried reviews of student work (including capstone course reviews), rubric-based evaluations of archived student work, and a series of student surveys and focus groups, including the NSSE and alumni surveys. The varieties of data, both direct and indirect, that we have across the institution and in programs are a thorough resource for our research into student learning.

Curriculum Maps: Our curriculum maps correlate student learning outcomes with specific program courses, indicating the interrelation of learning and course structure, the flow of learning across a curriculum, and the levels of expected instruction and performance required. They visually represent what a student is expected to learn and a professor to teach. Developed collaboratively by faculty, the curriculum maps, just like the program student learning outcome, were subjects of intense debate and multiple revisions.

Always a snapshot of a dynamic process more than a rigid scaffold, these maps may have helped faculty discern the interrelationships of their courses, chart pre-requisites more effectively and look for unexpected connections and reinforcements of student learning. In our professional programs, the process of writing these maps has allowed for the integration of multiple demands from accrediting bodies, professional associations and the University itself clearly into the curriculum. For the programs based more on the liberal arts, the mapping process brought a heretofore unseen sophistication to curricular planning and created another common experience and language that bridged the gap between departments as well as between professional and liberal studies. All curriculum maps are published in the Handbook and Guide to Learning (HGL) as well as on the University portal under Curriculum Maps.

The departments of Architecture and Interior Architecture have created curriculum maps with five and four broad-based thematic outcomes respectively that merge together expectations from NAAB, WASC and the University in the case of Architecture, and NASAD, CIDA, WASC and the University in the case of Interior Architecture (HGL 34-35, 52-54). In the School of Business, AACSB, ACBSP, WASC and University expectations have been blended across four common and two discipline-specific outcomes in Accounting, Fashion Marketing, Management, and Marketing (HGL 72-74, 90-91, 98-100, 111-13).

Each map demonstrates three levels of complexity, marking where each outcome is: 1) introduced, 2) applied/developed/practiced, or 3) mastered. The level of intensity at which each outcome is expected to show itself, either: a) high importance, b) moderate importance, or c) low/background importance, reveals a clear progression of development from lower-division through upper-division and capstone courses.

The departments of Animation, Fashion Design and Graphic Design, accommodating NASAD, WASC and University requirements, took a more specific and granular approach to the drawing of curriculum maps (HGL 137-40, 175-76, 189-90). Detailing numerous
outcomes (from 24 to 28 in each program) and utilizing a four point scale of: 1) introduced, 2) developed, 3) practiced, or 4) mastered along with the same three levels of intensity scales as the one above, these maps also reveal a clear progression of development from lower-division through upper-division and capstone courses.

The departments that have some more latitude in determining their outcomes and curriculum maps, as they do not fall under professional accreditations, had both the advantage of freedom and the disadvantage of coming up with their own models. Learning from their colleagues’ experience, these programs (Organizational Leadership, Communication, Psychology, Politics & History and Interdisciplinary Studies, as well as Art History, Library and Information Sciences, Mathematics & Natural Sciences and Writing) have developed curriculum maps that fall somewhere between the other versions.

Using anywhere between five and eleven outcomes per program, these employ similar scales as their counterparts, often simplifying them to three levels and removing the intensity level markers in order to focus only on the most important outcomes for each course (HGL 121, 159, 201, 214-15, 223-24, 232, 240, 247-48, and 257). The result has been, as with the application of the principles to each program’s learning outcomes, a unity in diversity that has allowed for individual expression while creating a common language for sharing ideas, practices and information. One of the immediate fruits of this process of University principles, program learning outcomes and curriculum maps has been a greater sense of common purpose and shared responsibilities.

Twice during the year over which we developed our learning outcomes and curriculum maps we asked department chairs to respond to a rubric concerning their progress. The first Progress Evaluation Rubric we developed ourselves in 2008 (results). For the second, we used the WASC Program Learning Outcomes Rubric in 2009. The departments of Art History, Communication, Graphic Design, Interdisciplinary Studies, Interior Architecture, Library and Information Sciences and Politics and History all participated in submitting both rubrics (Fashion Design, Foundation and Psychology completed the first; Architecture the second). These programs initially assessed their status as somewhere between emerging and developed in the fall of 2008. By the following spring and summer in 2009, they considered themselves to be developed in the areas of having comprehensive and assessable outcomes as well as having an aligned curriculum and a reasonable assessment plan. It is to those plans we will now turn.

Assessment Plans and Reviews of Student Work: The assessment of student learning has a long history at Woodbury. Faculty in architecture and design have reviewed student portfolios in order to assess the preparedness of students for advanced work. Final projects in each studio were reviewed by teams of scholars and practitioners from inside and outside the university. The accrediting organizations also demanded that the work of graduates demonstrate standards set down by the organizations.

But like so many other universities, much assessment was done more informally, course by course, in examinations and papers. While this method of feedback often resulted in improvements in pedagogy, the faculty learned about student learning in an unsystematic way and in a way that rarely crossed from course to curriculum. The benefit of all these institutional experiences, however, was that they could form a foundation for regular, systematic, and measurable assessments of student work, creating a cycle of review and evaluation that could feed into curricular and instructional improvements. As
with the previous work, shared experiences and learning across the faculty was brought to bear in the creation of program assessment plans. All assessment plans are published in the Handbook and Guide to Learning (HGL) as well as on the University Portal under Assessment Plans.

As with our learning outcomes and curriculum maps, our assessment plans reveal individual approaches linked by a common language and framework that makes the learning from each department accessible to others. All degree programs have adopted plans that assess student work and progress at major milestones, including assessments of capstone work, whether referred to as a degree project, a senior thesis, collection, project, studio, or seminar, or simply a capstone. The department of Architecture, for instance, places milestones at the end of the third year and two within the fifth year of the program. Portfolios, books of student work, and final thesis projects are collected and examined annually by the faculty (HGL 36-38).

A similar process exists in the Interior Architecture program, including an annual rubric-based assessment of senior thesis projects by the faculty following the public presentation and critique of these projects (HGL 55-56). Both programs also employ formative assessments of student work in regular jury reviews, faculty critiques and peer feedback during design studios across the curriculum.

Similarly in the School of Media, Culture & Design, the program in Animation uses regular jury reviews, faculty critiques and peer feedback as formative assessments as well as asking for and reviewing annual portfolios of student work (HGL 141). Fashion Design and Graphic Design have an end-of-second-year portfolio review as well as a pre-capstone and capstone review (HGL 177, 191). Communication uses an annual common standardized exam in the beginning of the fourth year as well as a student learning portfolio and a summative capstone assessment (HGL 160). The work of students in the four Foundation courses is annually and publicly reviewed as well (HGL 130).

The School of Business has adopted a two-year cycle of assessments focusing on key curricular points in a student’s progress. For example, student work in the one-year Accounting sequence is assessed every two years, as is student work in the upper-division Accounting courses (HGL 75), while in Fashion Marketing and Marketing a similar two-year cycle will be employed (HGL 92, 114). All students in these majors as well as in Management complete a series of twelve common introductory, mid-point and capstone courses. A pair of outcomes will be assessed across these courses on an every-other-year cycle, covering the four common outcomes every two years (HGL 100). This ambitious plan will review and assess the entire curriculum, both common outcomes to all four programs as well as individual outcomes related to each major, on a biannual basis.

The program in Organizational Leadership and the program in Psychology (in the School of Media, Culture & Design) have developed multi-year assessment plans focusing on a specific part of the curriculum each year over a four-to-five-year cycle, examining selected outcomes across certain courses and including a capstone assessment (HGL 110, 202).

In the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies, the degree-granting departments of Interdisciplinary Studies and Politics & History collect and review the work of students in the senior thesis course every five years. They have also developed six-year assessment plans focusing on a specific part of the curriculum each year so that at the end of the cycle all outcomes and all courses have been assessed. All assessments are conducted by faculty,

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both regular and adjunct, using rubrics developed by the faculty and employing inter-subjective analysis and rating techniques (HGL 215, 224).

The small size of these programs, both in terms of students and faculty, argues for a more extended assessment cycle in order to collect sufficient student work with which to make substantiated judgments. The other programs: Art History, Library and Information Sciences, Mathematics & Natural Sciences, and Writing use six-, five-, two- and three-year cycles of assessment respectively, covering all outcomes in all courses with rubric-based, collective assessments of student work (HGL 233, 239, 249, 261). We have made significant progress in instituting assessment plans that address direct evidence of student learning across all of our academic departments, the results of which will be discussed below in Chapter 3.

Surveys, Reports and Focus Groups: In addition to direct measures of student performance and learning, we currently employ a number of other strategies to learn about our students and how well they are learning. We have conducted the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) twice, once in 2005 and again in 2009. This year we also conducted the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE). All first-year students complete the College Student Inventory (CSI) and have done so for more than a decade, and we have been regularly surveying our alumni since 2007.

Student course evaluations, administered electronically and with a 60% response rate, have been revised to fit with national norms to give faculty clear and strong indications of student perceptions that correlate to student learning. Our office of Institutional Research has created a number of standard reports drawn from data in our student information system that allow faculty and administrators to track enrollment information such as class size, cohort progress, retention, and graduation.

Our participation in the Building Engagement and Attainment for Minority Students (BEAMS) project from 2004-2006, which led to the use of NSSE as well as a group of faculty, administrators and a student attending two summer academies, also included using numerous campus focus groups of students and faculty to probe behind the statistical data and assist in designing campus initiatives. Faculty learning communities, the first in 2005 on developing teaching portfolios and the most recent in 2009 on the orientation of first-year faculty, have also provided rich information for developing faculty resources and influencing the work of University committees and task forces. These efforts are integrated with our direct assessment work.

Improvements and Future Goals

Aside from the many improvements that have been implemented since 2005 noted above, we have also improved the amount of information available and the processes by which we handle it. Once we have gathered and published this information, we develop, share and utilize it regarding indicators of effectiveness and measures of diversity through the Institutional Researcher, the University portal and organizational units such as the Institute for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, the Curriculum Committee, the Educational Planning Committee, the Faculty Personnel Committee, and the Space Planning Committee. Based on the structure outlined above, our program reviews and professional accreditation reports, both in design and execution, as well as our evaluation of individual
faculty, program curriculum, and space allocations are robust and use the appropriate data, information and methodologies within them.

**Institutional Research and Instructional Improvement:** Administering the Institutional Portfolio, the Institutional Researcher provides, through the University portal as well as through special research projects requested by departments, a variety of informational sources and investigations. Currently presenting data and information from 2005 onwards, faculty and administrators have on-demand access to a variety of IPEDS, enrollment and demographic reports, the Academic Updates from the Senior Vice President, student and alumni surveys of various kinds, student course evaluations from across the University, and the standard reports mentioned above.

The Institutional Researcher is also very active working with faculty across the University, providing instructional support on the use of information technology in the classroom, developing student course evaluations, participating in key institutional committees and faculty learning communities, and assisting with data collection for program reviews and professional accreditations. Much of what we have accomplished over the past few years would not have been possible without his efforts.

Another recent innovation has been the creation of the Institute for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. The Executive Director has been instrumental in moving faculty along a path of increased effectiveness in terms of classroom instruction, assessment awareness, and problem solving in numerous academic departments. The Institute provides numerous resources for faculty development and has been indispensible in creating faculty learning communities, advising faculty and departments on innovations in teaching and learning, and in the development of the educational effectiveness review.

**University Committees:** Learning about learning has become a central motif to our institutional committees as well. The Space Planning Committee requires that educational and pedagogical goals be addressed and resources justified in any application for space usage on campus. The Faculty Personnel Committee has increasingly required faculty to demonstrate their teaching effectiveness through not only student course evaluations, but also through reflective self-assessments and peer assessments.

A reformed Curriculum Committee and a new Educational Planning Committee have instituted new processes built on WASC’s substantive change form that require faculty and administrators to address educational effectiveness in any proposal for new programs or substantial modifications to existing ones. They have also strengthened program review requirements for departments without professional accreditation requirements. In those programs with professional accreditation, our program reviews are robust and on-going. Programs reviewed by ACBSP, CIDA, NAAB and NASAD have received high praise for their openness, their thoroughness and the quality of education they provide our students.

They have served as models for those developing our own program review processes so that they include direct assessment of student work at their center. Of these programs, only that in Politics & History has completed a program review, and it is being used as a basis, both in terms of its quality and in its need for improvement, for further reviews by other departments. In addition to program reviews, the Educational Planning Committee is overseeing the development of a Master Academic Plan to complement the University’s Strategic Plan. In all these areas, a growing awareness of how we understand,
measure and improve educational effectiveness is changing procedures and requirements for all departments and faculty.

Recommendations:

1) Greater Collaboration Among Academic and Non-Academic Units: As we move ahead in the coming years, a number of items have come to our attention as needing further development and effort. We need to continue to improve our collaboration across the University. While much has been done to increase collaboration among academic units, including the Office of Student Development and the Institute for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, old territorial thinking sometimes emerges. Collaboration between academic and non-academic units is generally good, but it is still sporadic and based on personal relationships rather than being systematic and regular. Generally the community believes in the power of the learning environment to shape a student’s habit of learning, and the community subscribes to the principle of the integrated student, which values the individual as the site of all learning. However, in order to make good those ideals and beliefs, we need to extend the collaborative learning more fully across the University and institutionalize those collaborations.

2) Greater Outcome Assessment for Continuous Improvement Among Non-Academic Units: While learning outcomes now exist in all academic departments and the Office of Student Development and while some units, like University Advancement, have clear performance metrics, those units will need to continuously assure that these assessments are truly operational and lead to continuous improvement. We would hope that all non-academic units, from the Business Office to Admissions, seeing their cooperative role in the education of students, would also look at developing learning outcomes. They also need to be more widely understood and applied by our students in a clear and conscious manner.

3) Testing What We Have Created: Our curriculum maps, a wonderful innovation the construction of which was an intense learning experience for many of the faculty, need to be tested against our assessments and the links between courses and their pre-requisite learning made clearer to both students and faculty. As with the learning outcomes, they also need to be more widely understood and applied by our students in a clear and conscious manner. Our assessment plans, arising from our new learning outcomes and curriculum maps, are a relatively new innovation based on solid past practice in many departments and will need to be carefully monitored to insure that they are fully supported with the necessary financial and personnel resources and are carried out as planned on an annual basis.

4) Sustaining Process to Sustain Improvement: Finally, while an impressive array of institutional resources, organizations, and processes has been created, and a rich repository of data and information has been provided, we need to assure that the past few years of learning, writing, and infrastructure creation are sustained and flourish. We will address these issues, those of aligning our resources, measuring our students’ success, and planning for continuous improvement in the following chapters.

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Chapter 2

Heightening Impact through Alignment: The Power of Intentionality

In February 2009, the University held a Campus-Wide Retreat to consider what Woodbury would look like twenty-five years in the future. Groups drawn from staff, faculty and administrators were asked to imagine themselves as a consulting company that would help redesign the campus in time for Woodbury’s 150th anniversary in 2034. We were asked to consider three questions: what are Woodbury’s faculty, staff, students, and alumni deeply passionate about, what drives the economic engine of the University, and what is the University’s marketable difference? Teams were also assigned specific areas in facilities, services, people, technology and the educational process to consider what the University of the future would look like.

Although the tasks given to the various teams did not address the six principles, the Team Reports illustrate how thoroughly the values of the six principles have become embedded in our everyday discourse. One group argued that a common paragraph be placed in all advertisements for employment at Woodbury: “The people of the Woodbury community are connected to our devotion to creativity, collaboration, and professionalism. We embrace opportunity. We value integrity. And we promote responsibility.” Another focused on communication and creating alternative learning spaces for students to suit their learning styles and extra-curricular demands.

Virtually all of them envisioned the use of technology in creating innovative and integrated learning experiences for students. Finally, one group put our future aspirations this way: “Our students are not the same people they were when they arrived here. They are the best versions of themselves. They have been led beyond their expectations.” This is actually our present aspiration as well, and our planning, alignment and intentionality are directed towards making this happen for our students.

Theory and Environment

The University’s educational outcomes, based on the six principles, reveal themselves in our leadership, resources, expertise and processes, including our strategic and budgetary planning in the work of three bodies: the Educational Planning Committee, which oversees program review and the master academic plan, the Budget Advisory Committee, which reviews spending priorities and allocations in anticipation of the next year's budget, and in the Strategic Planning process facilitated by the Vice President for Information Technology & Planning that sets the direction of University decision making.

Academic Planning: The Master Academic Plan (MAP) helps create a path for the intentional alignment of all units in Academic Affairs and across the University. As our Strategic Plan states, once the Master Academic Plan is fully developed, including assessable outcomes, the University’s strategic plan and campus master plan are to be aligned to it. The overview for the plan explicitly references the six principles and asks each academic unit to consider them in its planning.
Alongside such elements as learning goals and outcomes, alignment with the six principles, formation of a cohesive identity, and implications for students, faculty and resources, the Master Academic Plan is envisioned as a strategic plan for the academic units and as a strong basis for the strategic plan of the University. During the process of creating and using the MAP, the community has come to realize that the MAP is and will remain a work in progress, because the environment for education is constantly shifting. To remain agile, the institution and its academic units need to be able to adapt to the changes within and outside the University. Thus the plan requires annual updates.

So where are we? The School of Business and the School of Architecture have completed SWOT analyses as a preparation for creating their Master Academic Plans, and those analyses occasionally refer to the six principles. For those units that have completed drafts of these plans, for example the School of Media, Culture & Design in its May 2009 update, the six principles are explicitly referenced in the School's goals and school-wide learning outcomes, in a specific section devoted to alignment to the six principles, and in the recommendations about the creation of a common space for the programs of the school.

For the School of Media, Culture & Design, the employment of such principles as communication and innovation and creativity are central and are reflected throughout the document. Both transdisciplinarity and the integrated student as principles are used to argue for a common School space, one seeking to build bridges between departments and integrate students’ curricular and co-curricular learning. The creation of a shared design foundation curriculum for all students in the School, cited in the plan, is another step towards integration and interdisciplinarity, what we believe is an essential step on the path towards transdisciplinarity. A focus on sustainability in design adds the social responsibility component. The emerging identity of MCD is firmly rooted in these principles, as are the plans for new programs, student experiences, faculty growth and space allocations.

Individual departments within MCD have also aligned their plans to the principles. The department of Animation did an insightful analysis of its strengths and weaknesses organized according to the six principles, not only in terms of resources and structure, but also students’ abilities in areas such as written communication. While the usual issues of staffing, facilities and enrollments are addressed, the department of Graphic Design noted how faculty are uncomfortable with assisting students in more than professional skills, yet fully supported the principle of the integrated student. As several of the plans note, the ambition of the School is to create transdisciplinary senior projects that will include students from all five disciplines represented in the School.

The department of Interior Architecture in its Master Academic Plan analysis emphasized the significance of innovation and creativity and social responsibility, while also noting that finding opportunities for transdisciplinarity and ways of balancing discipline-specific learning with the personal growth of the student has proved challenging. Across all the departments of the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies, similar strengths and challenges are recognized, from truly living out its mission to developing its Fellows Programs to assuring that the results of learning in its two major programs (Politics & History and Interdisciplinary Studies) at the senior thesis level are truly innovative, integrated and transdisciplinary.
**Budget Planning**: The President's Budget Advisory Committee is involved primarily in recommending "strategic priorities for allocation of funding, including one-time only, capital, and operational expenses." Discussions have centered on deferred maintenance, and academic and non-academic program needs for equipment, staff and faculty. While strategic and long-term concerns were considered, student learning issues and the core functions of the University as a learning institution were paramount, the work of the committee did not explicitly focus on the University’s principles or learning outcomes as a source for prioritizing resources.

The effect of our efforts to integrate learning outcomes and the six principles across the University, and to improve communication between the committee and the President, however, has led this year's committee to refocus its efforts on longer-term strategic questions and evaluate budget requests in the light of our organizing principles and the learning needs of our students. Three of the academic deans (the fourth is represented by a professor of Accounting) serve on the committee and all are basing their work on the emerging Master Academic Plans in their units as part of this transition.

**Strategic Planning**: As noted in the introduction to this chapter, our Strategic Planning process has become infused from below with the language and concepts of our principles, which are stated as our educational goals in the document that heads our Planning portal site. The 2006 strategic plan, as revised in July 2007, clearly states that "Student learning is the mission of the institution and both drives and guides the activities of the University." Although not explicitly referenced, the six principles are inferred in the earlier statement of our academic and co-curricular goals: articulate, ethical, innovative learners who have been provided opportunities for social and personal development.

Furthermore, student learning is clearly placed as the essential mission of the University, and while primarily the responsibility of Academic Affairs and Student Development, “all other organizations’ departmental responsibilities, goals, and activities must be aligned with the strategic goals in order to meet the research, teaching and learning needs of students and faculty while at the same time meeting their social, cultural, and psychological needs."

These plans align with the needs and aspirations of our students, our faculty and our University in several ways. There are approximately 240 action items in the current strategic plan; of these about one third are directly related to student learning and the actions by faculty and staff necessary to develop student learning, and of the remaining two-thirds, several are oriented directly to the principal goal of enhancing student learning. In addition, the values of the six principles make themselves visible in several references to enhanced communication, social responsibility, academic quality, and the integrated student.

For example, in terms of assuring academic quality, the University has committed itself to placing an emphasis on creating best practices, pursuing the highest national accreditations, and enhancing faculty development for both full and part-time, to “evaluate instruction based on common measures and with regard to the institution’s educational objectives and desired learning outcomes... [and to] explore the effectiveness of various modes of instruction in producing significant learning.” We are also pursuing the development of the integrated student through creating a “holistic model of student success that takes into account research on best practices as well as what is most
meaningful within the Woodbury culture... [while sustaining] strong academic advising for all students... [and creating a] healthy learning/teaching/working environment for all those on campus.” A future iteration of the plan would make these linkages more explicit.

**Thesis**

The plans derived from these principles and the resources thereby allocated are generally sufficient for our purposes. The creation of the University budget takes into account the learning needs of our students in several ways. This planning has had numerous high-impact results. It has expanded the number of faculty in key areas, has improved support for student learning, in areas such as the Writing Center, has enhanced the technological resources for students, and has created new learning environments (from the new School of Business building and Architecture studio buildings in both Burbank and San Diego to renovations of the Library, the Whitten Student Center, and Isaacs Faculty Center).

**Budget Allocations:** The overall University Budget is efficient and devotes the majority of its resources to the personnel required to facilitate student learning. The latest operational Budget Update published for the University community noted $20.0 million for salary and benefits; $7.6 million for institutional scholarships; $4.2 million for services, utilities, publications, rent, etc.; and $2.2 million for debt service (principal & interest) for a total budget of $34 million, 93% of which is derived from tuition and fees.

The University has invested heavily in technology for our students and aimed at serving them better, especially in providing the means to support their innovation and creativity as well as campus communications. The Technology Steering Committee has established criteria for technology investment that addresses the needs of students and provides rubrics for evaluating the proper priority for items to be invested in. The recommendations of the committee are forwarded to the Budget Advisory Committee and integrated into its report. The result of this planning and collaboration has been significant improvements in the technology available to students and faculty to enhance learning across the campus.

Creating a campus-wide wireless network, instituting a new course management system based on the open-source Moodle program, upgrading our course registration, advising, and academic information system, developing videoconferencing between the Burbank and San Diego campuses, upgrading video projectors in several classrooms, and increasing capabilities in architecture and design labs and studios have been integrated into our instructional capabilities, allowing faculty to fully utilize their collective expertise in educating students.

Lastly, our Key Performance Indicators, as of November 2009, show that we have been responsive to the needs of our students, especially in financial aid, where the total institutional aid budget has increased from $6.3 million in 2006 to $7.6 million in 2009. Merit-based awards, based on an equal measure of grade point average and standardized test scores, addresses potential bias in those test scores towards underserved populations. An institutional need-based grant program provides access to economically disadvantaged students.
Overall, growth in instructional expenditures has outpaced growth in enrollments over the past four years, and fund raising (private gifts and grants) has exceeded $10 million over the past three years, more than $7.5 million for the university building fund, the results of which are discussed below. Our commitment to supporting our students, especially in the area of financial aid, is a major component of our dedication to social responsibility.

**New Building Construction:** Our recent construction efforts have resulted in two significant learning structures. Adding to earlier improvements such as the re-design of the old basketball gym as a new Design Center and the installation of Kirby Hall to serve the needs of students in the programs of Animation, Interior Architecture, and Graphic Design, the new 20,000 square-foot School of Business building contains four classrooms for forty students, four classrooms for twenty students, the 220+ seat Fletcher Jones Auditorium (the first-ever for the University), and conference rooms and offices for faculty and administration.

A new 19,000 square-foot studio building for the Department of Architecture allows students more open space, houses the Ahmanson Main Space for critiques, public presentations and meetings, and has enabled the introduction of a Master of Architecture program this year. Each building’s design included faculty consultations concerning pedagogical and student learning needs. They addressed identified needs for larger and more flexible spaces, increased capacity, and improved technology.

**Building Renovations:** In addition to this, we have redesigned several spaces on campus to make them more conducive to student learning and student/faculty interactions. The Enkeboll Courtyard in the Library created an informal learning and gathering space for students and faculty to read, talk, and attend performances, highlighting a change in the Library’s identity as a house for learning more than a house for books. The Isaacs Faculty Center has created increased faculty office space and new advising and meeting spaces, as well as clear tangible identities for the School of Media, Culture & Design and the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies. The San Diego Architecture campus is now housed in a 27,000 square foot former hardware store sandwiched between commercial and residential neighborhoods in Barrio Logan and includes a library, studios, digital fabrication and wood shops, as well as classrooms and a computer lab.

The Whitten Student Center consolidates the resources of the Office of Student Development, providing improved spaces for counseling and health care, academic advising, student programming, the learning center and the writing center. The faculty and staff in both of the new centers report increased collaboration and communication, leading to the identification and resolution of student issues and needs. Budget allocations and facility development plans reflect our focus in student learning, both in terms of providing the necessary resources for personnel, technology and financial aid as well as in terms of creating the necessary spaces through construction and renovation to address student learning needs. They embody our principle of the integrated student and transdisciplinarity by encouraging the blending of the personal and the professional as well as work and communication across disciplines and roles.

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Strategic Direction and Achievements

Our planning and the alignment of programs and resources are informed by educational evidence and budgetary allocations generally match the needs revealed by assessment and the needs of assessment itself. The recent accreditation reports of the School of Business and the School of Architecture and the School of Media, Culture & Design, as well as the collaborative efforts of the Office of Student Development, the Institute for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies in the BEAMS project all illustrate how our understanding of student learning needs drive institutional planning and resources.

School of Business: In its 2006 Application for Pre-Accreditation with AACSB, the School of Business noted that it had been allocated an additional $150,000 per year as well as “2/3 of any additional net revenue from enrollment increases in the School of Business... [in order to] address initial and on-going quality initiatives... [such as] hiring the best faculty possible... program development and refinement, assessment support, [and] student recruitment.”

In 2009, in its annual report to AACSB, the School of Business recorded how “enrollments have risen by 9%, yielding net tuition revenue of over $700,000... [resulting in] new [faculty] positions--three for 2009-10 and three projected for 2010-11.” These resources, as well as those dedicated to the new School building, have been allocated to address the continuing improvement of both the undergraduate and graduate programs as reflected in the capstone assessment each program employs.

School of Architecture: In its 2007 Self-Study for NAAB, the Department of Architecture noted several dedicated resources that had been made available to it, including a one million dollar gift from Julius Shulman in 2005, half of which was used to fund the new studio building, the other half to establish an endowment for the Julius Shulman Institute. At the same time, the Raymond and Maxine Frankel family established the annual Frankel Foundation Award Program to award faculty development grants and fund student initiatives.

As with the School of Business, increased enrollments have allowed for increased resources, including the hiring of four new full-time faculty members. The arguments for these advances were made in part based on institutional data on student retention and graduation as well as extensive survey assessment of students and alumni and in part from assessments of student work in the form of portfolios and reviews of degree project work. These reviews occur annually in the department among the faculty at all levels and provide feedback on instructional and resource improvement.

School of Media, Culture & Design: In its 2007 Self-Study for NASAD, the departments of Animation, Fashion Design and Graphic Design in the School of Media, Culture & Design, along with the department of Interior Architecture in the School of Architecture, noted as with the other Schools, an increase in full-time faculty commensurate with the increase in student enrollments, a share in the annual Frankel Foundation Award Program for Fashion Design faculty and students. The rationale for increased financial support is rooted in the observation that while faculty “are confident that our programs are producing graduates...
who are competent in the visual arts, have a sound liberal arts base of knowledge, and are prepared to enter the professional world, there are areas for improvement.”

The claim is based on the collective view of faculty involved in various forms of assessment, including desk critiques, portfolio reviews, and various surveys of students and the faculty’s annual discussions of these observations and evaluations. Those assessments revealed, for example, a weakness in freehand drawing skills, a need to emphasize theme and narrative in the Animation program, and that Interior Architecture students have strong skill in planning and programming. From these observations and assessments come the above noted confidence of the faculty and thus the University’s commitment to its resource allocations.

Office of Student Development: In its 2005-07 participation in the BEAMS project, the Office of Student Development, along with the Institute for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies, began a process of studying student learning and engagement based on our initial administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement. Grant funds and University resources were used to support travel, release time, student focus groups and the acquisition of pedagogical resources.

In 2007, the group of staff and faculty gathered together as the Student Success Task Force (SSTF) noted that the NSSE showed that the University was successful in terms of creating a supportive student environment but needed to address enhancing educational experiences and perceptions of co-curricular learning. They also used information derived from a series of student focus groups directed at the NSSE findings to develop further plans for addressing the need for enhanced educational experiences.

Of the recommendations developed by a small group from the SSTF at the BEAMS Summer Academy, several have been implemented: a teaching philosophy workshop for rank advancement and position application (directed in Fall 2009 towards first- and second-year full-time faculty); expanded first-year and transfer transition curricula; a discussion of a common ethos in terms of university history, new campus and academic structures, and current university mission; and a significant proposed revision of the general education and the professional and personal development curriculum, both of which are underway.

The University authorized and paid for a new administration of the NSSE as well as first time administration of the FSSE in Spring 2009 in support of these and other efforts. Overall, the evidence here demonstrates that the University develops and applies organizational resources and structures for sustainability, including the appropriate alignment and integrity of resource commitments.

Improvements and Future Goals

We are communicating our processes and results to the community, both in terms of providing information and soliciting feedback. Through the various institutional bodies related to academic, budgetary and strategic planning as well as through the major academic units of the University, and through the various forms of indirect assessment, institutional data, and direct assessment of student work, we are constantly checking and re-checking the direction and alignment of our planning with our intentions and aspirations.

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**University Portal:** An increasingly important element in our communication process, the University Portal, coupled with the wide use of laptop computers and campus-wide wireless internet access, makes a vast array of information, documentation and real-time reports available during meeting and discussions. Department chairs can access a variety of enrollment reports to assist in budget planning; committee members can access past minutes and reports, as well as the work of affiliated committees, while conducting their meetings. With separate tabs for faculty, students, and staff as well as one for planning documents and resources, the portal is becoming a robust instrument in terms of providing information to all members of our community.

For example, all of the sources used in the writing of this report are available to members of the university community on the portal site. News, events and announcements can be found, and University workstations are set to open to the portal upon start up. Faculty can find access to curricular and assessment information, accreditation reports, committee sites and student resources. All are available across the academic units, increasing transparency and accountability.

On the portal, Students can find the student handbook and links to resources in the Office of Academic Success and Instructional Services (OASIS). Similarly, staff offices have home pages linked to the main staff page while the planning page has emergency information and links to several document libraries related to strategic planning, budgeting, and other matters. Never has more information been available to more people in the University, although much more can still be done.

**Campus Involvement:** We are involving stakeholders (students, staff, faculty, alumni, employers, practitioners, etc.) in our review of effectiveness, in planning and resource allocation, not only through the materials on the University portal and the various committees across the University that have been discussed, but also through community forums, meetings and events. One need only glance at the calendar for the past year to see the various opportunities available to the community for feedback and commentary on University planning, policies, and practices. An all-student forum with the Cabinet was held on November 3, 2009 to address student costs for printing and other instructional supplies. Alumni are invited back to campus on regular occasions for forums in the School of Architecture. Several academic departments have regular meetings of their students to solicit feedback and provide information. The Graphic Design department takes on a non-profit client each term and has done so since the early 1990’s, with such clients as the Burbank Health Care Foundation and the Screen Actor’s Guild Foundation, designing projects that surpass any classroom simulation or case study.

Professional experts are brought in regularly to present career panels for students, experts who often become involved in program advisory boards and as visiting jurors in design and architecture reviews, providing faculty and students feedback on their work. The University is also increasingly involved in community events, from the Air Walk fundraiser in Burbank to the recent debate between Los Angeles City Council candidates held on campus. All provide opportunities for contacts that often evolve into advisory and review roles for members of the community.

Finally, the Board of Trustees, at its annual retreat in November 2009, asked for a presentation by the academic deans concerning faculty and student accomplishments that

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was roundly praised and elicited increased dedication from the trustees to support not only the fiscal health but also the academic mission of the University.

**Recommendations:** While much has been accomplished in the areas of intentional and strategic planning based on the alignment of our resources to student learning, much remains to be done.

1) **Continuous Review of the Alignment of Planning with the MAP:** Although the results of making the Master Academic Plan have already begun to influence the process and direction of University planning, some units have not fully engaged in creating their portions of the MAP. The real power of intentional alignment will only become manifest once all units have a functioning academic plan and the University's strategic and campus master plans are continually reviewed to assure alignment to its priorities.

2) **Stronger Alignment of Budget Planning and Strategic Planning:** Both budget and strategic planning need to become much more conscious of and aligned to our recently established educational principles and the emerging assessment data that various units across campus are generating and utilizing. Clear communications and integration need to be enhanced and maintained as the University's programs and procedures increase in size and complexity. Budget allocations need to be more explicitly linked to the University's identity, aspirations and principles in order to build consensus and support for strategic directions and decision in an increasingly stringent economic environment.

3) **Stronger Arguments for Resource Allocation Based on Results of Student Learning:** We also have yet to make explicit and thoroughly documented use of assessment data derived from direct evaluation of student work in making arguments and plans for resource allocations and strategic planning. Although we have a history of making reference to several indirect measures, of using anecdotal evidence, and employing limited direct evidence, we believe that our use of formal assessment methods in future planning efforts will fundamentally strengthen the directions we have already laid out as well as provide new directions for us to consider.

4) **Greater Transparency in Communication of Processes and Results:** We need to fully develop the power of the University portal, including maintaining, updating and increasing the information available therein (as well as on the University's public website). Little is more frustrating than going to a source where you expect to find information, only to struggle to figure out where to find it and, once figured out, find nothing on-line. There are still lacunae of missing and outdated information on the portal that need remedying. Likewise, our efforts to involve the community more widely in our assessment and planning efforts need to be more thorough, frequent and robust. As we build on the advancements and successes of the past few years, we expect to be able to meet these challenges and enhance the alignment of our resources and our aspirations.
Chapter 3

Producing Educational Success: From Students to Graduates

In 2009, the University administered the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The report on responding seniors (145 of 341 or 41%) indicated significantly higher levels of academic challenge and use of active and collaborative learning than in all comparison groups. In fact, senior students at Woodbury reported greater academic challenge and active and collaborative learning than the average for the top 10% NSSE 2009 schools in those categories.

These benchmarks represent a significant change upward from Woodbury's 2005 report (NSSE Benchmarks). The results are attributable to the University's specific actions to develop active and collaborative learning and to maintain the high level of academic challenge. It serves as an instance of the University’s use of educational data to determine the success of its students and to develop plans that respond concretely to those findings.

Theory and Environment

Understanding student learning and success starts from having a clear picture of who the University's students are in terms of demographic distribution, socioeconomic status, and preparation for university-level work. It includes knowing how well students progress through their programs in terms of retention and graduation. In the Institutional Portfolio reside several reports containing basic data on our students.

They confirm that Woodbury University’s students are a diverse group in terms of age, ethnicity and gender (although those patterns vary from program to program), tend strongly to come from families of lower socioeconomic status, require significant remedial work and yet remain and graduate in increasingly strong rates approaching 80% and 60% respectively, rates above peers that educate similar types of students using similar resources.

Age, Ethnicity and Gender: Two-thirds of our students are 25 and under; 35% between the ages of 17-21 (45% of undergraduates); and 32% between the ages of 22-25 (31% of undergraduates). 33% are age 26 or older (24% of undergraduates). This pattern holds across the academic units of the University save for the School of Media, Culture & Design where 63% of students are 17-21. The School of Business’ relatively large graduate program, the School of Architecture’s five-year program and historically older population, and the absence of a graduate program in the School of Media, Culture & Design account for this difference.

By ethnicity, our students are 43% White, non-Hispanic, 29% Hispanic (33% among undergraduates; 17% among graduate students), 12% Non-resident Alien (72% of these are from Asia or the Pacific Islands), 9% Asian or Pacific Islander, 5% Black, non-Hispanic, and 1% unknown. There are 20% Non-resident Aliens among graduate students, 10% among undergraduates. Within schools, this varies somewhat. For example, 38% of students in the School of Architecture are Hispanic, while only 26% of School of Business students are Hispanic.

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By gender, the University overall is 53% female and 47% male, but this hides great discrepancies based on school and program. In the School of Media, Culture & Design and in the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies, women outnumber men 2 to 1, in the School of Business, 3 to 2, but in the School of Architecture, men outnumber women 3 to 2. This varies even more by program. For example, students in architecture are 62% male while in Interior Architecture they are 89% female. The programs in Fashion Design, Fashion Marketing, Marketing and Psychology have similar gender distributions as Interior Architecture.

By ethnicity and gender, the University's full time undergraduate students are 23% White, non-Hispanic female, 20% White non-Hispanic male, 17% Hispanic female and 17% Hispanic male. The University's full time graduate students are 29% White, non-Hispanic female, 19% White non-Hispanic male, 11% Hispanic female and 9% Hispanic male. By age and gender, 24% of the University's full-time undergraduate students are male and age 21 and under while 33% are female and age 21 and under. ([IPEDS 2008 fall enrollment])

**Socioeconomic and First Generation Status:** A major indicator of students' low socioeconomic status comes from financial aid data. Of all the students in the first-year cohort in 2007, 80% (130 of 159) received financial aid: 50% received Pell grants averaging $3000; 34% received state grants averaging $7600; 80% received institutional aid averaging $9100, and 80% received federal loans averaging $3700 ([IPEDS 2008 Student Financial]). For all students enrolled in Fall 2008, 69% of Hispanic undergraduates received a Pell grant (including 73% of all Hispanic graduates that year) while other groups as well as both genders were generally closer to 50% in 2007. The percentage of Pell grant recipients among university entrants, however, has been trending lower over time, with 48% of all entrants receiving Pell grants in 2005 declining to 36% in 2008 ([2008 Financial Aid Report]).

Another indication of students' socioeconomic status is the level of their parents' educational attainment. For the incoming freshman class in the fall of 2009, just over 30% reported on the one hand that their father or their mother had graduated with a bachelor's degree or higher. About 20%, on the other hand, reported that either their father or mother had not graduated from high school. Additionally, more than 40% have a low sense of financial security and/or are highly prone to dropping out as shown by the College Student Inventory, given to newly admitted students each year ([2009 CSI]).

**Remediation Needs:** The most recent SAT score distribution for incoming freshmen at the university in 2008 indicated that 25% scored at or below 390 in critical reading (13% nationally) and 420 in math (19% nationally). It also revealed that 25% scored at or above 510 in critical reading (51% nationally) and 540 in math (44% nationally) ([IPEDS 2008 Institutional Characteristics]; College Board: Interpreting and Using SAT scores). These scores are not unexpected given the student demographic and the close correlation of the SAT with parental income and education.

The scores reflect both the academic vulnerability of our students and the University's need of remediation and other types of academic interventions. The number of students requiring a remedial academic writing course has steadily increased from 38 in the fall of 2007 to 53 in the fall of 2009. The number requiring remedial mathematics has held steady over the same period of time: about 120 students enrolled in elementary...
algebra each fall semester and about another 100 enrolled in intermediate algebra each spring semester. Assuming that most of these are first-year students, more than 85% required remedial mathematics and 38% required remedial writing (drawn from Self-Service class lists).

**Retention and Graduation:** Over the past 12 years, retention across the University has improved. From 1997 until 2003, average retention from first to second year was 78.4%; from 2004 until 2009 retention has been 80.4%. The most recent five-year average of 80% across the University is mirrored in most programs and program cohorts, but ranges from 73% in Marketing and 75% in Psychology to 82% in Architecture and Fashion Marketing. In terms of gender, for freshmen students, the five-year average for female students is 77.4% while for male students it is 80%.

For transfer students, the five-year average for female students is 81.2% while for male students it is 84.4%. Overall, male students are more likely to persist to their second year of studies than female students. In terms of ethnicity, for freshmen students, the five-year average for Hispanic students is 79.8% while for White, non-Hispanic students it is 78.6%. For transfer students, the five-year average for Hispanic students is 82.0% while for White, non-Hispanic students it is 85.1%. Overall, by the beginning of their third year, a five-year average of 71% of students who entered as freshmen remain at the University, while 76% of transfer students either remain or have graduated (12%).

The 2001 cohort’s 4-year graduation rate for transfer students was 46%, which was also the rate for students who had dropped by that time (the drop rates were higher for both male and Hispanic students; 53% and 54% respectively). The rates for the School of Architecture and the School of Business were not much different, save for male students in Business who dropped at a 61% rate. The 2005 cohort's 4-year graduation rate for transfer students improved to 58%, while the rate for students who had dropped by that time fell to 32% and the gender difference in Business disappeared. The graduation rates for the School of Architecture (55%) and the School of Business (63%) were also improved over 2001’s cohort. And if one were to examine 5-year graduation rates for transfer students, rates of 64% and 61% were achieved by the 2002 and 2004 cohorts respectively.

The 2001 cohort’s 6-year graduation rate for freshmen students was 51%; 46% had dropped by that time. However, the rates for the School of Architecture and the School of Business were rather different here: 58% graduated in Architecture while only 45% had graduated in Business. Of students who dropped, 38% had done so in Architecture while 53% had done so in Business. The 2003 cohort’s data was corrupted, so similar 6-year graduation and retention rates are not available for that group. Nevertheless, 5-year graduation rates for freshmen entering in 2001, 2002 and 2004 average 49% and 4-year graduation rates for freshmen entering in 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2005 average 29%. The latter figure, of course, omits the students in the five-year Bachelor of Architecture program. For comparison, 4-year graduation rates for freshmen entering in 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2005 in the School of Business average 40% and in the School of Media, Culture & Design average 43%.

In graduate programs, the average three-year graduation rate for the Masters of Business Administration for students entering in 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005 and 2006 is 76%; when separating by gender, female students graduated at an 82% rate while male students graduated at a 69% rate. In the Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership program, the
The one-year graduation rate is 95% (College Grad and Persistence Report Fall 2009). Additionally, a 2009 survey of 2007-09 undergraduate and graduate alumni found that 63% felt the University had prepared them for entry into the job market, 29% were accepted into a graduate or professional school (half of them at Woodbury); and 89% would recommend the University to others.

**Summation of Demographic Data:** The picture that emerges from these reports is of a student body that is primarily under 25 years of age, mostly White or Hispanic (with an increasing international component), a little more likely to be female than male (although this is highly degree-program dependent), and the first in their family to attend a university. Undergraduates frequently require significant remedial education and substantial financial aid, often in the form of a Pell grant. Many students are at significant risk of dropping out. Nevertheless, 80% of undergraduates will make it to their second year, more than 70% will either reach their third year or, if a transfer student, have graduated by then, and eventually, about 60% will achieve a degree from the University. For graduate students, 91% will reach their second year or graduate by then, and about 85% will achieve a degree from the University.

**Thesis**

The University’s academic major departments make a significant impact on student learning. Students generally achieve satisfactory to excellent results in meeting the University’s learning outcomes and those areas of deficient achievement are addressed and remedies applied. The faculty members of the University are using regular, cyclical, and documented direct assessment to complement the long tradition of regular, informal, and verbal direct and indirect assessment of student work. Assessments of students’ progress at mid-course, often through portfolio reviews in the design disciplines and upper-division seminars in the others, are on-going. In the School of Architecture, a portfolio review of students in the Architecture program at the end of the third year takes place. End of second-year/beginning of third-year portfolio reviews are regularly held in the other design disciplines and used to track students into remedial course work.

School of Business students are assessed in their common financial management seminar which occurs in the beginning of the third year for most. Student work in first- and second- year general education courses is currently assessed and in the third-and fourth-year seminars will be assessed in the coming year. Capstone assessment takes place in all departments and provides summative data concerning students’ achievement of learning objectives. In the School of Business the capstones involve simulations, where performance is benchmarked against national and international schools of business. In the School of Architecture, primary assessment is done through public review of capstone senior (Interior Architecture) and fifth-year (Architecture) projects. Reflections on capstones as well as other student work have also led to partnerships with the Writing program in developing specific curricular elements that address students’ ability to conduct research writing and communicate across inter-cultural lines.

In the design departments of the School of Media, Culture & Design (Animation, Fashion, Graphic Design), similar public reviews of senior-year work are held. In the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies (Interdisciplinary Studies & Politics and History),
students present their senior theses to an audience of faculty and students. Communication and Psychology plan for a similar public presentation of senior projects. Faculty in the three Schools and in the Institute now assess senior work against department outcomes and recommend programmatic changes based on these results.

**School of Architecture:** According to the student and alumni survey conducted in spring/summer 2007, the strengths of the architecture program are the quality of its design studio instruction, including how students are prepared to think and design critically, while its weaknesses are in inadequate professional practice preparation and weak math/physics, structures, and building technology courses (NAAB 2008 report, 71-2). There is a third-year portfolio review process described and a rubric for evaluation included; in the past, the faculty discussion of these results took place at a department assessment meeting where no written record of the analysis was made but decisions on curricular reform were taken (144-48).

This past year, a written report summarized the efforts of the past two years and the plans for next year. The formal review of student work that took place as part of the site visit for NAAB reaccreditation in 2008 resulted in highlighting weaknesses in building and professionalism, two of the three tracks Architecture organizes its learning outcomes under (the others are critical thinking, representation and design). Curricular adjustments were initiated in 2008-09, realigning outcomes so students had to clearly demonstrate competency in these areas in their presentations and design work.

In the spring of 2009, the third-year portfolio review instrument was modified and applied. Results revealed that while most students had attained a satisfactory achievement level in the five tracks, the instrument itself and the review process needed improvement. A new version was successfully tested on entering transfer student portfolios in summer 2009, and a second version was developed for assessing Master of Architecture applicants' portfolios. In fifth-year degree project, a renewed focus on Building and Professionalism was used to test the changes of the previous year (based on the review of 2008) and the faculty found that that new model is moving in the right direction, but weaker students are still underperforming (Assessment plan and progress in Findings of Summer 09 Assessment folder).

The department of Interior Architecture has recently conducted a review of senior projects as well, using a rubric that encapsulated the learning outcomes of the program. The faculty viewed the projects collectively after the annual public review and found that students performed well in terms of basic research and graphic representation, as well as in formal considerations of space, but improvements were necessary in citations, human interactions with spatial design, integration of building systems, the quality of light, and understanding of site and context. Several curricular reforms have been proposed and implemented in response to these assessments (***SP09-SeniorProject documents in Findings of Summer 09 Assessment folder). The faculty of the School have created an Interdepartmental Curriculum Workgroup to address the results of assessment as well as propose new areas for study and decision-making (results)

**School of Business:** The members of the faculty have developed a rigorous plan of student assessment (AACSB 2009 Annual Report, 7-10). It is based on the evaluation of student projects by external practitioners: the CAPSIM (Capstone Business Simulation, a team-
based Internet-accessed simulation of the Electronic Sensor Industry for both undergraduates and graduate students) and the COMP-X (an individual simulation project for graduate students). The simulations allow for the evaluation of student work in terms of business integration, teamwork, communication, analytical, leadership, ethical, and global skills. Results from these competitions indicated a correlation between student performance and overall GPA in the graduate program.

Pre-tests in the financial management undergraduate course indicate consistent student weakness in understanding balance sheets and income statements, as well as components of current assets, current liabilities and interpretation of equity accounts. The course thus consistently concentrates on an extensive accounting review emphasizing these issues. Post-tests generally show a 36% increase in students’ comprehension (See ACBSP 2008 Self-Study Report). It is worth noting that a recent examination of the performance of MBA students led to a new writing requirement at the graduate level and new entrance requirements that spring from the learning outcomes of the program and capture more carefully detail about student background and ability. These changes will allow for a greater likelihood of success through strategic interventions. As a result of this review of admission in light of the learning outcomes of the MBA program, other programs in the university have begun to review their admission requirements as well.

School of Media, Culture & Design: The members of the design departments’ faculty meet annually at the conclusion of the academic year to assess student work and develop plans for the coming year. In July 2007, as part of the NASAD accreditation effort, the departments acknowledged the following assessment results and needs. In Foundation, there was the need to improve the freehand drawing skills of students in the entry-level courses (90).

In Animation, there was the need also to remediate the uneven artistic skills of incoming animation students. This was to be done through the institution of a placement portfolio upon admission, annual student progress reviews, and the standardization of evaluation among the faculty (111-12). In Fashion Design, the faculty noted the need to emphasize the critique of design as well as technical skill and construction (136). In Interior Architecture (now part of the School of Architecture), the faculty noted the need to address normative materials and furnishings in design as well as immediate, non-digital forms of representation (187).

Since the 2007 report, the departments of Foundation, Fashion Design, Psychology and Communication have recently developed assessment rubrics and plans, are in the process of conducting their first studies with them, and should have results to report by spring 2010. However, the department of Animation has conducted two assessments of student portfolios (collected at the end of each academic year across all four class levels), tracking students across two years of work so far.

The collective faculty reviews have been helpful in identifying students for remedial assistance in several areas, from design skills to narrative abilities. Rubrics were revised for 2008-09 and continue to be updated; the last set of reviews identified the need for improving students’ writing skills and adopted several suggestions for accomplishing this, including creating a writing-intensive course in the major (see AN Progress Port Summaries and An Assessment Narrative in Findings of Summer 09 Assessment folder).
Likewise, the department of Graphic Design has been continuously reviewing student work in an organized, formal manner for three years. In the Spring of 2009, the faculty reviewed second-year portfolios to determine readiness for upper-division work and found that students were proficient or exemplary in identifying and solving visual communication problems, design development, and aesthetic visual organization. Further development was necessary in the areas of articulating design solutions and research skills. As with the Animation department, remediation needs were identified and program changes proposed (GD Assessment Data Analysis in Findings of Summer 09 Assessment folder).

As in Architecture, the design programs have begun to review transfer student portfolios to allow for appropriate placement in program courses. As in the MBA program, this has led to discussion of admission requirements generally. The only action taken to date concerns the transfer of major courses from the community colleges. The design programs have begun to withdraw articulation agreements from colleges that do not have strong assessment programs based on learning outcomes shared with the university and where student portfolios have been consistently weak in areas where college coursework and university coursework overlaps.

**Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies**: The Institute houses two small major programs, one in Interdisciplinary Studies, the other in Politics and History. Assessment in the former has been ad hoc, as the students pursue individualized majors (often having changed from a major in one of the design fields) and there are generally three to five graduates per year.

Faculty involved in the program meet annually to review the senior projects in general and make recommendations. The result of those discussions, which found the projects to be insufficiently interdisciplinary and dominated by the student’s original discipline, recommended several curricular changes to address these issues, including new introductory and research courses in interdisciplinary studies and an increase of the professors supervising the senior thesis from one to two (IS Major Revision).

The program review for Politics and History was completed in 2008. An assessment of senior seminar research papers from the past six years found that the average essay was proficient (a score of 3 on a 4-point scale), but noted problems in research methods and bibliographic sourcing. This analysis, along with other indirect findings in the review, led to a revision of the program, updating the learning outcomes, simplifying and focusing course offerings, making the fourth-year methods course more rigorous, and expanding the research sequence of the program by adding an introductory methodology course, all of which were implemented in fall 2009 (see Politics History Program Review and Politics and History Modifying Change). An assessment review of the introductory interdisciplinary studies courses which are required of all majors in the program, is discussed below in the section on Interdisciplinary Studies.

**General Education**: The General Education Program has a significant impact on student learning. The vast majority of the curriculum and student enrollments in the general education program lie in the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies. Recent assessments of curriculum in art history, interdisciplinary studies, mathematics, physics and writing demonstrate that students are making satisfactory progress with the learning outcomes of...
the existing program and that course-level adjustments will be necessary as the newer learning outcomes become part of student and faculty expectations.

**Art History:** An assessment of fifty randomly selected essays written by students in several sections of the History of Contemporary Art and the History of Modern Art lower-division courses over the past three years was made against the department’s eleven new learning outcomes using a newly developed rubric. The essays were written for courses that had not made these learning outcomes explicit, but the analysis was done in order to see how well the new outcomes were evident in pre-existing work so that targeted adjustments can be made. The three-member faculty group began with a norming session. Two readers evaluated each essay, and a third was used in the case of discrepancies in scores of greater than one point, which occurred about 11% of the time.

The assessment revealed that students on average were performing towards the upper end of satisfactorily (a score of 1.5 to 2.0 on a four point scale) on eight of the eleven outcomes. No average was above 2.0 and only one reached that high. On two outcomes (number 2, focusing on knowledge of Modernism, and number 8, centering on visual culture in design) students scored on average at the low end of satisfactory and on one (number 7, evaluating curatorial practice) they were on average clearly below expectations. The low scores came in two areas of the program that were recently added (numbers 7 and 8) and one that needed to be made more theoretically explicit. The faculty of the department will look at the course syllabi for the coming year and seek to find ways to emphasize the three deficient outcomes without losing the students’ satisfactory performance in the other eight.

**Interdisciplinary Studies:** An assessment of 185 randomly selected essays written by students in several sections of the lower-division Interdisciplinary Core courses (Journeys, Natures, Conflicts and Knowledges) over the past four years was made against the department of Interdisciplinary Studies learning outcomes and the Department of Politics and History’s learning outcomes. The courses are a blend of history, literature, philosophy and politics, serving as either humanities or social science general education courses or as major courses in the Politics and History degree.

As with Art History, the outcomes assessed were written for courses that had not made these learning outcomes explicit, but the analysis was done in order to see how well the new outcomes were evident in pre-existing work so that targeted adjustments can be made. A rubric was developed that synthesized the learning outcomes into four groups (see Assessment Rubric INDS POHI in Initial Assessment Rubrics folder). The five-member faculty group used a norming session to begin, each essay was read by two faculty members, and the third reader was used in the case of discrepancies in scores of greater than one point, which occurred only 5% of the time.

The assessment revealed that students on average were performing at the low end of the above average range (on a four point scale) on three of the four synthesized learning outcomes. On one outcome (number 4, focusing on making an analysis of relationships across texts, images, and historical periods), students scored on average at the high end of satisfactory. The faculty members of the departments have looked at the course syllabi for the coming semester and will rearrange the sequence of sources in the course, which had been strictly chronological, into one juxtaposing classical and contemporary texts in order
to find ways to emphasize the one deficient outcome without losing the students’ satisfactory performance in the other three.

**Mathematics and Physics:** An assessment of common problems in the final exams of three algebra courses (elementary, intermediate and college) focused on two of the department’s ten learning outcomes, the first regarding correctly explaining mathematical and/or scientific concepts and principles and their symbolic representations, and the third, applying mathematical and/or scientific concepts and principles to simple real life problems. The department faculty blind-graded the exams and compared student scores on targeted problems from the finals.

The assessment demonstrated that while students were adept at graphically representing problems and solutions, they had difficulty in actually solving equations, mostly due to confusion about mathematical concepts and failure to apply successfully certain basic skills such as factoring. The department has decided to use writing assignments designed to increase student understanding of mathematical language and concepts as well as make written responses to interpretive mathematical exercises that focus on process in order to aid the learning process.

In Physics, two independent studies (study 1 and 2) were conducted by the full-time members of the faculty using the same base of written work and recorded oral interviews from fourteen students. One used the learning outcomes from the syllabus of the course at the time and found that in terms of applying physics reasoning, concepts and principles to daily and architectural problems, more than half of the students performed in an exemplary fashion while another quarter performed above expectations (a total of 11 of 14 students), with an average score of 3.3 on a four-point scale.

The second assessment, looking also at student physics reasoning but using the new departmental learning outcomes, found a significantly lower average of 2.4, but 10 of the 14 scored at the satisfactory level or higher. The department is working on a common rubric that will be used by all members of the faculty in a common assessment program to begin this year.

**Academic Writing:** Initial placement in academic writing courses is done through a timed-essay or portfolio submission prior to enrollment at the University. These regular sessions evaluate student writing with two readers and have a good rate of inter-rater reliability (85+%). In 2008, for example, 23% of students were placed into the remedial writing course (in 2007, the amount was 20%). Once enrolled, and given that a grade of C or better is required for a student to pass from one course in academic writing to the next, all students who receive a C or lower in a course have a portfolio of work evaluated by a team of faculty to ensure standard evaluations and confidence in placement for the student in the next semester.

These regular “C- portfolio workshops” also help in sharing standards and norming grading expectations across the faculty. A common rubric for each course is employed (see rubrics for AW 100, AW 111 and AW 112 in Initial Assessment Rubrics). The last such session in Spring 2009 presented 4 portfolios in Rhetoric and Design, 14 portfolios in Academic Writing I and II each and 7 portfolios in Bridge to Academic Writing. Of these 39 portfolios (from 233 students enrolled), 23 clearly did not meet the assessment standard for a grade of C and the students were required to retake the course.

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Additionally, the department has had in place a program to review writing portfolios from incoming transfer students who had completed the equivalent of WRIT 112, Academic Writing II, as a way to assess the ability of these students to enter into upper-division work, one of the goals of the University’s first-year academic writing program. Students who did not pass the portfolio review (or who failed to submit an acceptable portfolio) are required to enroll in WRIT 212, Writing and Design. A review of the assessments over three semesters from 2008 to 2009 showed that approximately 55% of transfer students did attempt to provide a portfolio and approximately only 18% with acceptable portfolios passed the review. The result has been a proposal to require all students transferring in the equivalent of WRIT 112 to enroll in WRIT 212 unless they submit a portfolio for review (see assessment summary and HGL 18).

In the 2008-09 academic year, an experiment in collaborative teaching between professors of architectural history and academic writing was conducted where the faculty co-taught discussion sections and designed and evaluated writing assignments in an effort to improve architecture students’ writing abilities. Pre- and post-test essays were administered and evaluated and found no significant effect. The lack of learning gains was attributed hypothetically to lack of close collaboration between the faculty from different disciplines. These findings, though negative, are useful as we seek to develop writing-intensive courses in the major disciplines (Assessment Report).

Summation of General Education Review: Overall, the results of the different assessments show that students are generally meeting the faculty’s expectations for learning across the several disciplines that make up the general education program. In the areas assessed, students are capable of meeting the basic requirements of the curriculum, but rarely exceed expectations or excel at their work. This confirms the anecdotal observations of faculty, staff and student learning communities in 2006 as well as the efforts of the Student Success Task Force, where the need for an invigorated, meaningful and engaging general education curriculum were first noted.

The University's initial efforts at general education reform came in the form of a new set of faculty, staff and student learning communities that were conducted in late 2007 and early 2008. These learning communities, working from a common plan but meeting, researching and discussing separately, came to remarkably similar conclusions. They reviewed their best experiences in a general education curriculum, generating a list of preferred practices that were then compared to research on general education theory and practice and on model general education programs. They developed possible strategies and structures for general education, working collaboratively towards a common proposal. The result was a clear determination for a more engaging, demanding and integrative approach to general education than the distribution model derived from the IGETC paradigm, one that was unique to Woodbury, its culture and its students.

At the University, general education is now identified with the University’s six principles. The curriculum maps of most of the major programs chart the achievement of those six principles through program coursework. However, a reformed general education proposes to go further. It proposes to articulate foundational courses with program courses and to assess the achievement of the University’s principles in the assessment of capstone work in the program. This move will make general education a joint
responsibility of those who teach foundational courses and those who teach in the major programs and who serve as the model of education.

This approach will work because already the general education of students is shared across programs, history courses in various disciplines being a prime example; it is ‘purposeful, substantial and effective’; and it is in line with our identity and mission. After the WASC visit, the proposal for revision that was circulated before summer 2009 as the result of two years of intensive work will move forward. Its delay was necessitated by the need for each program, now fully occupied with demonstrating effective learning, to demonstrate how it will effect the general education of its students. (see Learning Community Syllabus, Gen Ed Learning Communities Summary, and Gen Ed Reform).

Office of Student Development: Professional and personal development programs, as well as co-curricular activities and programs, play a significant role in student learning. The 2005 and 2009 NSSE have been the chief assessment tool for these programs. The OSD also used the Profile of the American College Student in 2007-08 (the response rate was quite low and the results inconclusive) and made an assessment of fraternity and sorority life through a national student survey conducted by the Educational Benchmarking Institute in 2009.

The latter noted significant self-report strengths in diverse interactions and leadership development, with slight self-reported weakness in respect for diversity and significant weakness in commitment to community service. The survey also noted increased likelihood for alcohol consumption and unprotected sexual encounters.

The results of the NSSE were positive for the University as a whole. Results for senior-year students were more useful as the population of first-year respondents was skewed towards residential and international students, making the conclusions a little less reliable. In the following, only the results from senior-year students, whose profile was much closer to the University’s own, will be discussed. According to the NSSE, it is likely that the University is among the top 50% of NSSE schools in student-faculty interaction, and 2009 scores increased slightly over 2005.

The University is also likely among the top 10% of NSSE schools in level of academic challenge and active and collaborative learning, both areas that strongly increased over 2005. The University is also likely among the top 10% of NSSE schools in having a supportive campus environment. This last measure is particularly important to OSD, as its panoply of services, from advising to health care to counseling, focuses on supporting students.

Providing enriching educational experiences, a focus of the Student Success Task Force (SSTF) since the first NSSE administration in 2005, reached equivalency with peer institutions in 2005, but still lagged behind the top 50% NSSE schools. The Student Success Task Force set out to address the need for enriching educational experiences. They have implemented improvements in communication, co-curricular process, and increased faculty development programs, but major work remains (see SSTF Tasks Oct 2009). A reconstituted committee was created this fall, with a charge to create a permanent structure to the Professional and Personal Development Courses (PPDV) and to review the results of NSSE and FSSE in order to target five areas for improvement.

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Strategic Direction and Achievements

The evidence for achievement in learning, both direct and indirect, is strong and exists in multiple forms and places. Tracking of retention and graduation rates, disaggregated for gender, ethnicity, and program, and even by Pell-grant recipients, are increasingly complex and publicly posted in the University's intranet portal. National surveys and instruments create comparative data and evidence for use and analysis. Physical work in the design disciplines is archived and stored in several places around campus and a new structure for archiving student work is under construction.

Digital and paper copies of student work are now housed within the Moodle course management system, as well as in department archives. These archives are used regularly for assessment and improvement, as evidenced above and in accreditation reports and program reviews. All departments, not just those in the design fields, both understand the need for and are actively engaged in collecting student work for such purposes.

Demographic Assessment: Measuring student success across demographic data lines, including transfer status, ethnicity, age, time at Woodbury, and other variables, is still done primarily through an analysis of graduation and retention rates. The collection and dissemination of demographic data through the University portal, the use of national institutional survey measurements such as the CSI, NSSE, and this year the FSSE, provide rich indirect information that complements the direct assessment work of the academic departments.

As noted above, some conclusions are possible, such as the significant gender differential in graduation rates in the graduate business program and the slight difference in undergraduate transfer and freshman graduation rates. Tracking the correlations between student performances as measured in assessment reports regarding learning outcomes and knowledge about students gained from indirect measures and demographic variables is still a work in progress and an opportunity for further research.

Survey Assessment: As summarized above, national survey data from NSSE and CSI, among others, show that the University is highly successful in creating challenging, collaborative and supportive learning environments, while actively seeking to improve satisfactorily engaging and interactive learning experiences, especially given the number of at-risk students the University serves. Focus groups enhance this knowledge by confirming hypotheses that such surveys suggest, aiding in creating proposals for improving services in student development as well as changes to the general education curriculum. One of its great challenges lies in developing further its understanding of how particular disciplines, activities and learning experiences are affected by the challenges these students face.

Direct Assessment: We know that students are able to accomplish successfully a variety of significant outcomes. The assessments noted above, especially those of portfolios and capstone course work, make clear that students are capable of significant achievement. The members of the faculty are confident in students’ general abilities and level of academic performance. One can also find strong performances in graphic representation and three-dimensional physical communication skills, as well as oral communication and fundamental critical thinking skills, including basic problem solving, across many areas.

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Writing abilities, however, need further development. The faculty have clearly identified through this process that although the majority of students are successfully negotiating the rigorous academic writing program, there is still the need for further development of students' writing skills, especially as applied to research in their major disciplines. In terms of other areas generally noted for attention are students' research skills, including the proper and consistent citation of sources, the adept application of advanced technical skills in the students' major disciplines, and higher order critical thinking abilities such as contextualizing ideas, making connections, noting interactions, and solving complex problems. But given what we know of where these students generally start from, their accomplishments as demonstrated in the University’s assessment process can be judged remarkable.

**Improvements and Future Goals**

Making all of this assessment work relevant, effective and enduring is the work of the faculty. In the fall of 2008, the University officially had 51 full-time faculty members and 71 FTE part-time for a 9 to 1 student to faculty ratio ([IPEDS 2008 fall enrollment](#)). By fall 2009, when one includes all those who the Faculty Association recognizes as faculty, the number of full-time faculty is 59 ([Summary Data Form](#)). Much of the work undertaken and described above has involved faculty learning about how people learn, how learning can be measured, and how more effective pedagogical approaches can be developed; in short learning about learning.

These professors are supported and their development assisted through the efforts of programs in the work of the Institute for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. The faculty also exercise ownership and discuss academic standards at the institutional, program and course level, as well as the measures, means and methods of evaluating and documenting student achievement and success through several University bodies, ranging from individual departments to faculty committees.

**Institute for Excellence in Teaching and Learning**: The Institute (IETL) focuses on assisting faculty in creating dynamic learning environments and effective pedagogy, providing services, programs and resources dedicated to more significant learning experiences for Woodbury students. Through the Institute, opportunities for faculty learning about pedagogical knowledge and practice are created, ranging from workshops to learning communities that have effectively stimulated numerous conversations across campus about assessment, student learning and the exchange of teaching methods.

New members of the faculty, especially among the adjunct faculty, are assisted in becoming more effective teachers through personal orientations and frequent follow-ups. Through regular classroom observations and consultations, faculty members are able to discuss their teaching concerns and examine the effectiveness of their teaching practices. Early feedback from students whose professors have received this assistance and mentoring demonstrate improvements in the learning environment and creates an opportunity for faculty to reshape their courses.

Transdisciplinary learning communities, co-sponsored with the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies, have provided forums and collegial connections for faculty looking for support and collaboration in exploring issues in teaching and learning, focusing
particularly in creating effective teaching philosophies that can be used as a foundation for creating and exploring teaching and learning (see new faculty learning community on Moodle).

**Educational Planning:** As a response to the adoption of these significant assessment measures and practices, the University’s faculty has taken even greater collective control over academic standards at all levels as well as over the means of assessment. In a truly bottom-up process, faculty at the department level, under the guidance of their chairs, deans and the assistance of the Educational Effectiveness Review Task Force, have directly tackled the challenge of making existing expectations of student work over into learning outcomes, integrating those outcomes into syllabi across the curriculum, and documenting and sharing results from existing evaluations of collective student work so that these become rigorous assessments driven by faculty-written rubrics and discussions. The process has been intensive, thorough, at times uneven and stressful, but one wholly owned by the faculty, and not just the full-time faculty.

One of the benefits of the process has been the closer integration of several adjunct faculty members into the life of the University. These faculty members often bring experience and knowledge of assessment from other institutions and have been more than eager to share that with the University, widely participating in review sessions, rubric writing meetings, and even writing progress reports and conducting assessment projects. Since fall 2008, a number of programs have held sessions on assessment devoted to training adjunct faculty. This year’s fall faculty development workshops had sessions devoted specifically to helping adjunct faculty learn about both classroom and curriculum assessment. These sessions workshops have had record attendance and been characterized by strong engagement by the participants and desire for even more such sessions.

Once these milestones were accomplished, committees and task forces, staffed by faculty from across the University, have assisted in shaping and revising the University’s curricular processes, from syllabi templates to the language of outcomes, from assessment plans to program reviews. The Educational Effectiveness Review Task Force, which has facilitated the process of assessment review to date, will merge with the Faculty Association’s recently developed *Educational Planning Committee*, which has been overseeing the development of new programs and the review of existing ones. The experience of the two bodies will come together to create a faculty-driven and -owned program review process that will respond to the necessities of professional and regional accreditation, the demands of effective and informative assessment and, above all, the requirements of the University’s aspiring and unique students.

**Recommendations:** The results of assessment have led the University to a new understanding of its educational effectiveness. Systemic change has been underway since the first identity retreat in October 2005. It is now more focused and directed by the nature, needs, and work of the University’s students. From improvements in assessment itself to changes in general education to refinements of disciplinary efforts, the University has a new appreciation of the tasks before it.

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1) Greater Refinement of Analyses: In terms of the assessment process, the University will need to fine-tune its analyses to locate the connection between student demographics and success at the level of the individual. Understanding the effect, for example, of financial strain and low socio-economic status on individual students will help the University better understand the unique types of interventions that may be required.

2) Completing Cycles of Assessment: In addition, the University will require many more cycles of assessment and the resulting learning about learning to fully institutionalize its current processes. EPC is at work on a full integration of this assessment cycle and its results into the current program review process. This work needs to be finished and implemented. It should be noted that one of the lessons of implementing the assessment process has been that a significant amount of time is needed by the faculty to reflect on, react to, and realize the full fruits of the assessment process. The University has built capacity to recognize that effort within the new workload framework (See Workload and Compensation Taskforce Report). But in order for this recognition to be effective, mechanisms for the evaluation of faculty work will need to be aligned to the role of faculty in the assessment cycle.

3) Addressing Broader University Findings: Finally, preliminary results of assessment point to some wider institutional trends that need to be attended to. For instance, we notice the need for greater attention on student research writing, from issues of source attribution to application of research to design and business problems, is clearly indicated. Such issues transcend any particular program and must find a way to be recognized and acted on, perhaps through the new general education program and process. For students to have an intentional education that produces mastery within a major and general skills, knowledge, and behavior aligned to the University’s six principles requires a coordinated effort involving all three Schools, both Institutes, the Library, and the Office of Student Development. Thankfully, the collaboration and cooperation established among these units of the University during this assessment review process bodes well for further efforts to address these issues.
Chapter 4

Teaching and Learning Effectively: Action Research for Continuous Improvement

The University’s faculty as a whole has never been more fully engaged in its efforts to individually and collectively understand the extent of student learning on campus as well as explore its own learning about that learning. Nor has it ever more fully committed to developing more effective teaching methodologies and approaches based on this fuller understanding of how the particular students at the University learn. Information about students’ backgrounds, experiences, difficulties and gifts are available in quantities never before available from the Office of Student Development and the Institutional Researcher in terms of national surveys, demographic data and records of student retention and graduation. The members of the faculty are beginning to find ways to use this information in their evaluations and assessments of programs and student success.

The Institute for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, as well as the members of the Educational Effective Review Task Force, provides educational opportunities and guidance concerning the use and application of this information as well as the design and implementation of assessment and program review practices. The Curriculum Committee and the Education Planning Committee oversee the process and are undertaking substantial development of their own roles as mentors and guides to creating more effective curriculum change and program reviews.

Last, but certainly not least, the members of the faculty, recently reorganized into and reenergized by new departments, schools and the institute, have widely embraced the need to review student work not only on a regular basis, but also in a more systematic, sharable, and documentable manner so that the conditions of common learning that have been created over the past few years may be continued and sustained. As an institution developing along this path, the University is successfully struggling to find ways to integrate these elements more effectively into a comprehensive, attentive and responsive effort to improve student learning.

Theory and Environment

The University’s educational effectiveness work has focused on creating a thorough, robust, continuous, and sustainable assessment practice that moves from collecting comprehensive and strategic data and student work, moves through faculty-driven and -authored reviews, and culminates implemented recommendations for instructional and curricular improvement. All efforts, documented in the chapters above, lead to this goal. This work would have little meaning, however, if it did not improve the performance of both the University’s students and its faculty and staff.

Outcome and Assessment Development: This knowledge of the University’s students’ learning is put to use in several ways. Beginning at the departmental level, the process of turning program goals and expectations into measurable learning outcomes and then testing those outcomes in review processes against the student work itself has led to a
sharpening of focus on what the faculty actually desires the students to learn and intensified discussion about how to go about teaching effectively.

One can look at the different iterations of learning outcomes, curriculum maps and assessment plans, as well as changes in the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators between December 2007 and December 2009 to track the learning of the faculty on a departmental level over the past couple of years to see how the process has led to greater sophistication and refinement of these outcomes and plans (compare drafts of outcomes and maps in portal to those in the HGL as well as the December 2007 and December 2009 IEEIs).

For example, if one examines the Department of Mathematics and Natural Sciences’ early and later efforts to create outcomes and a curriculum map, one will see definitive improvements in focus and clarity from the summer of 2009 until late this fall. Outcomes were reduced from fourteen to ten, removing redundancies and streamlining what was a difficult task of constructing synthetic and comprehensive outcomes for courses in several disciplines. The curriculum map was changed to reflect the emphasized outcomes in each course rather than trying to make a claim that all outcomes were covered in all courses.

The emerging assessment plan will take a much sharper look at student learning because of these learning activities by the department’s faculty. Other departments within the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies have undergone such transformations in the ways they discuss and think about student learning and their collective planning for and knowledge of it.

Similarly, the Department of Architecture, already given a list of thirty-four student learning criteria by the NAAB accreditation requirements, had to find a way to incorporate these criteria into properly assessable and manageable outcomes. The creation of five tracks that organize these criteria allows not only for the focus of a clearer curriculum map but also the development of track-specific rubrics for each. The Department of Interior Architecture’s remarkable melding of different CIDA and NASAD accreditation standards, the University’s principles, and its own sense of what students should learn has resulted in a significant step forward in its ability to directly assess student work and control the results of learning through significant pedagogical processes. More important, perhaps, it has changed the shape of departmental conversation about learning.

The School of Business, in integrating its disparate departments in a common Bachelor of Business Administration degree with a common core curriculum, has been assisted in this task by the need to express common learning outcomes and assessment plans. In the School of Media, Culture & Design, the initiatives of the Graphic Design department in developing a template for curriculum maps helped lead the way for other departments in figuring out how to visually represent the interconnections between outcomes and courses, leading to further refinements in alignment. All of the design departments, moreover, set a path for the public presentation and review of student work that led to further collaboration with other departments, and these subsequent conversations have also enriched the ways the design departments see their student reviews.

Moreover, this development had three other interesting results: 1) it led to changes in both course and curriculum review, requiring that changes to curricula be explained in the context of the program’s learning outcomes, curricular maps, and assessable results; 2) it led to the adoption of a new University-wide syllabus template that requires clear
connections to program outcomes in reference to the curriculum map, and requires clear connection of learning activities with outcomes, and an assessment planned aligned to both; and 3) it led to the planning processes for courses and for new curriculum that began with student learning outcomes and worked backward to curriculum and courses.

**Program Review Development:** The University's program review process was once simple, external, and insular. Departments that had professional accreditations were reviewed by their external bodies with little reference to institutional learning contexts and objectives save for the ways they impacted the program directly. Discussions were held between the faculty, deans, and chief academic officer concerning the reviews, but rarely did the results of the review become more widely known unless it was to advance the position of the department within the University. Departments without external accreditation were reviewed only to get ready for the appearance of a WASC visiting team.

Such planning and expectations for program review are now a thing of the past. Program reviews, whether for professional accreditation or not, must be clearly aligned to institutional learning objectives, embodied in the six principles and elaborated in the context of each department’s objectives in its learning outcomes. The most recent non-professional program reviews, those of the Politics and History department and the Communication department, followed a plan introduced in 2006. It called for an examination of the programs’ mission, objectives, and student learning outcomes, as well as a description of the curriculum and its needs, but also asked for information and analysis on resources, enrollment trends, market and professional contexts, and improvement plans.

The 2006 plan states that assessment is at the core of the review, but it is not emphasized in the outline guide to the sections of the review. It did not ask explicitly and specifically for detailed curricular assessment based on rubrics, faculty review and analysis, and recommendations at the course or curricular level. Such ambitions were implied, and one department carried out a direct assessment of senior seminar papers. Such assessment, however, was not the obvious and clearly stated focus of the process, and even the one review that undertook direct assessment could have been much improved by a policy that more clearly enunciated the institutional expectations.

In addition, self-studies for professional accreditations were subsumed into this process and the EPC was empowered to require additional information so that the self-studies would fit the institutional requirements for review. However, most often the accreditation report was allowed to stand on its own.

Although a considerable improvement on past practice, this model has shown its own need for revision. The Educational Planning Committee, which reviews all program reviews, has proposed that reviews for both non-professionally and professionally accredited programs will be required to measure themselves against comparable programs, align themselves with University principles and WASC’s standards for program review, widen the audience for the review, and focus on data collection, assessment and plans for continuous improvement.

One of the hallmarks of the educational effectiveness review process for the University has been how the members of the faculty have gone about using their experience with assessment, program review, and professional accreditation to consistently work towards improving their practices and sharing their own learning
collaboratively with each other, as well as through refinement of the myriad processes that inform faculty practice, from classroom to policy to committee.

**Thesis**

The University and its faculty close the loop from goals and outcomes to data collection and evidence production to interpretation and use in a variety of ways to improve learning and the processes that support learning. This process leads to reformed goals, outcomes and assessments, to improved results of learning, to stronger University programs, and to alignment of resources. This process has also led to more self-reflective, innovative, and effective teaching, concerned with the results of practice and helping to lead change.

**Closing the Loops:** Increased use of direct assessment of student work that is both systematic and documented has increased considerably within programs and departments, allowing them to begin to close multiple loops, from program outcomes to syllabi and on to assignments as well as from program outcomes to assessments to curricular reform. Some departments, such as Graphic Design, have been through an entire three-year cycle of assessment for their program and are looking forward to the assessments and reviews that will evaluate the changes in their programs already implemented.

Most others, such as Interior Architecture, have made a series of changes based on a review of capstone work and await an assessment of those changes in the near future. Still others, such as Psychology, are just at the beginning stages of this development. All, however, are progressing down similar paths, using the assessment of student work to guide instructional and curricular change, from recommendations to improve student performance in specific outcomes such as lighting design to more general abilities such as research skills. They have also been using the process to sharpen their expected outcomes, articulate these outcomes more clearly in syllabi, revise the sequencing and number of courses in the curriculum, and educate themselves in program requirements and expectations.

The recent process of tying program learning outcomes into all syllabi and posting them to a syllabus library, especially for those departments that had been tied to professional qualifications, was a decided learning experience, both in terms of deciding on the most significant outcomes, but also in beginning to understand the connection between outcomes and assignments, rubrics and grading. Even on the latter point, on establishing rubrics and grading, departments outside of Writing have begun to think through ways to make expectations more uniform and clear to students and to themselves.

**Pedagogy and Assessment:** The creation of a Syllabus Library, with more than 350 current syllabi on-line (and hundreds more historical examples available), has established a resource for students and faculty that has not been seen at the University before. Once hidden in department files, then dispersed through the course management system in often hard to find places, virtually all course syllabi are now on display for all members of the community to see. The University’s new syllabus template and requirements have created more transparent and informative syllabi as well.

Professionally accredited programs, again, long had to follow standard templates for syllabi, but now those requirements are integrated in a standard for the entire university.
These requirements establish the need not only for learning outcomes, but for a description of the course’s pedagogical process and assignments as well as assessment and grading practices. It also creates a fairly common format to ease student understanding and facilitate communication between faculty about pedagogy and assessment.

A random review of some of the syllabi posted to the library this fall shows that most are following the new guidelines (while the occasional syllabus still appears in the old formats) and that they are making expectations for students, both in terms of outcomes and assignments, much clearer. Faculty are coming to understand that the syllabus itself is more than a contract or an outline, but often the first moment of teaching and learning, and thus has to have a pedagogical, not just an informational, intent.

Further inspection also reveals interesting pedagogical developments at the course level. The **AN 361** - Computer Animation, syllabus is a lively document that not only contains the necessary information, but presents it in an engaging manner while clearly setting the tone of the professor’s expectations for student work. The **AR 487** - Design Studio 4A, syllabus presents clear indications to students of faculty expectations as well as lays out in detail the nature of each of the five major assignments well in advance so students can prepare accordingly.

Similar clarity and intentionality can be seen in the **AW 112** - Academic Writing II, **CO 120** - Public Speaking, and **MA 049** - Elementary Algebra syllabi. All are fundamental courses in general education, all follow departmental as well as University syllabus templates, and all give students a detailed roadmap of the course, its assessments and its expectations. Others, such as that for **PD 100** - Transition to College, a first-year orientation course, include a detailed rubric for evaluating student reflection papers.

At the other end of the spectrum, **MG 483** - Business Policy and Strategy, a capstone course for all business majors, contains clear delineations of assignments, advice for better performance, and an evaluation rubric for oral presentations. The wealth of ideas, methods, approaches and evaluation techniques, in short the diverse pedagogical talents of the University’s faculty, are on display and provide a rich resource for further faculty learning while providing a much improved resources for students. In Spring 2010, Faculty Senate is planning on an assessment of the syllabus changes stimulated by the new requirements.

**Strategic Direction and Achievements**

All of this evidence, from the analysis of demographics to the assessment of student work, from the development of learning outcomes to the construction of improved syllabi, is used to direct faculty development, program review, accreditation efforts and co-curricular programs. The evidence presented above illustrates the depth of the University’s commitments to these processes, not just from the compulsion of accreditation, although that is often the impetus, but now from its own self-sustaining need and desire to create improvement systems that are in place so that the University’s faculty, and even its staff, is continuously learning about learning and remaking itself as a learning organization.

**From Committees to Communities**: Faculty learning communities have been a wonderful asset in terms of developing faculty knowledge and awareness and have served as an example of a new way of getting things done effectively and creatively. From the first on teaching portfolios to the most recent on integrating new full-time faculty, they have
helped the faculty not only educate and train the participants, but created learning that is shared again in wider circles. For instance, the teaching philosophies developed in the first learning community were used as teaching examples in the most recent.

The results of these efforts have reshaped the expectations of the Faculty Personnel Committee, which oversees promotions and contract renewals, making the need for reflective learning about learning an integral part of the application process for faculty (see Faculty Personnel Policy – Part C). University committees, used to task management and agenda fulfillment, are beginning to think of themselves as learning groups, investing in research, discussion and critical analysis while fulfilling their various functions.

The evolution of the Educational Planning Committee is a case in point. Created to handle University-wide curricular issues and relieve some of the burden on the Curriculum Committee, the EPC has taken on the task of shaping program review, new program approval processes and substantial change proposals. Meanwhile, the Curriculum Committee has sharpened its review process and begun to see itself as a consultative and mentoring body working with faculty to improve instruction and curriculum more than a regulatory body that enforces rules (see agendas and reports in University Portal).

The Budget Advisory Committee is also moving towards a more research oriented and problem solving stance, as opposed to one of collating and prioritizing University needs. In this way, the changes introduced in faculty-driven bodies are finding their way into committees containing faculty and staff and having a positive influence on how the University conducts its business. The integration of the Office of Student Development into Academic Affairs has especially demonstrated a way that a formerly administrative staff unit can be reformed and improved by adopting this attitude towards organizational learning, while also contributing significant ideas and insights to the academic units with which it collaborates.

The work of the Student Success Task Force, outlined in Chapter 3, was a solid example of what may have been at one time a purely functional committee transforming itself into a learning community under the impetus of the information from the NSSE survey and the need to address significant issues on campus, from internal communication to general education reform. Overall, from the course syllabus to the strategic plan level, from academic departments to University committees, the University is well on its way from being an educational institution to becoming a learning organization.

**Improvements and Future Goals**

The University thus sustains a continual discussion across the campus concerning student and organizational learning, so as to create a culture of learning, develop pedagogical knowledge across campus, and integrate course-, program-, and university-level learning outcomes in order to create the systematic and regular improvement of learning. The whole direction of the educational effectiveness review points solidly in this direction.

The University is a learning organization, but it has farther to travel before it can rightly claim to be a fully developed one. Significant improvements have been made, progress has been won, and a new direction set, and it has been set through a focus of energy, initiative, and belief that informs the whole university. The direction of change has been institutionalized, although changes themselves are not complete. The challenge of
coming years will be to sustain this energy, maintain direction, and remain open to the new insights that will come.

**Recommendations:** The University's increased emphasis on educational research and student learning has had numerous beneficial and significant effects, some expected and some wonderfully unexpected. Moreover, it has made us more aware of the need to seek further improvements in our research, our processes, and our resources in order to move further along the path we are now dedicated to pursuing.

1) **Reforming and Making Program Review More Effective:** Change to the program review process, one that enfolds professionally accredited departments, needs to advance apace. Programs need to maintain their momentum towards completing annual assessments that culminate in a multi-year program review grounded in the documented, and hopefully rubric-driven, direct evaluation of student work and resulting in changes directed at improving student learning.

2) **Taking a Three-fold Approach to Advancing Learning:** Learning outcomes, curriculum maps, and assessment plans have been well constructed. Now the effects of this work must show themselves even more completely.

- 2a) All course syllabi should reflect the innovations and explanatory power of those model syllabi in the on-line library, detailing assignment requirements, evaluation rubrics and the connections between these two items and the learning outcomes of the course.
- 2b) Results of assessment and departmental planning need to be driven into master academic planning and into the University's strategic planning process and from there into the processes for budgeting and resource allocation.
- 2c) The requirements for effective teaching, found in the faculty's evaluation policies, should reflect a commitment to assessment and improving pedagogy and learning.

3) **Increasing and Deepening the Dialogue across Campus:** There is a continuing need for formal and informal discussions and learning across academic departments and with the Office of Student Development. These large interactions that transcend individual programs can be facilitated by the two Institutes, Excellence in Teaching and Learning and Transdisciplinary Studies, which have among their primary missions the improvement of learning and the learning environment. In addition, programs in OSD should be more fully articulated with the assessment of learning in the academic programs, so that a supportive environment for learning may be shaped even more effectively.

4) **Increased Formal Mentoring in Continuous Improvement:** To further institutional learning, the Curriculum, Educational Planning, and Faculty Personnel Committees should be encouraged to continue evolving and formalize their advisory and mentoring functions, assisting faculty in the development of effective learning experiences and curriculum. For instance, the process for considering new curriculum might include submission of preliminary drafts of a proposal for comment before a final draft is presented.

5) **Enhancing the Role of Faculty Assessment Officers:** Finally, it is important to build an institution-wide assessment function that can aid programs in continuing their efforts of
continuous assessment. The School of Architecture has an assessment officer and the School of Business will have one in January. The School of Media, Culture & Design and the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies have people occupying that position ad hoc for the purpose of the Educational Effectiveness Review. These last two positions need to be formally integrated into the structure of their respective academic units. We envision that these representatives can form the core of a committee linked to the Institute for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, supporting each other, defining common institutional needs, and carrying out the functions of assessment in an organized fashion.