REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM

EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

To Whittier College

Date of visit

March 12-15, 2013

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Team Roster

Dan Angel, Chair
Kathi A. Ketcheson, Assistant Chair
Diane Cordero de Noriega
Maryann Jones

Barbara Gross Davis, WASC Liaison

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OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of Institution and Visit

Whittier College was founded by the Religious Society of Friends in 1887 and chartered by the State of California in 1901. Named for a prominent Quaker, poet, and leader of the abolitionist movement, John Greenleaf Whittier, Whittier has been a secular institution since the 1940's, but remains proud of its Quaker heritage and values. Through its commitment to community service and diversity, Whittier provides opportunities, at home and abroad, for students to become "active citizens and effective communicators who embrace diversity and act with integrity."

Enrollment growth at the outset of World War II prompted an expansion of the campus that continued into the 1990's. Three of the major campus buildings were constructed in the 40's and 50's, seven in the 60's, three more in the 70's and 80's, and five since the 1990's. Construction of a Campus Center was completed in 2008.

Situated on 74 acres, the Whittier campus comprises 29 academic and administrative facilities, seven residence halls, a chapel, an outdoor amphitheater, art gallery, campus center, two auditoriums seating more than 100 each and three Faculty Masters Houses. The Law School constitutes another 15 acres. In Fall Term 2012, Whittier enrolled 2,448 students, of which 1,655 were undergraduates and 112 graduates; 15 were enrolled in non-credit courses and 666 enrolled in the Law School. The student body was highly diverse: 32% were Hispanic; 20% Asian, Black, or Native American; 2% were international students; and 7% were of unknown race or ethnicity. Women represented 52% of students; 48% were men. The faculty, including both full-

and part-time, numbered 169, of which 22% were persons of color, or from countries outside the U.S.

The mission of the institution is to provide a liberal arts education that prepares students from diverse backgrounds to excel in a complex global society. Whittier College offers 30 majors in 23 disciplines leading to the bachelor's degree and one master's degree in education, which may be achieved with or without a teaching credential.

In 1975, Whittier Law School became part of Whittier College. Located in Costa Mesa, the Law School is accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA) and the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) and offers programs leading to the Doctor of Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree. International students may earn an LL.M. in U.S. Legal Studies. The Law School's strengths include business law, criminal law, public interest law, trial and appellate law, intellectual property, international, and children's rights law.

Accreditation History

Whittier's accreditation was reaffirmed in February of 2002. The Commission scheduled the proposal for the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) and Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) for May 1, 2009; the CPR was scheduled for fall of 2011 and the EER for fall of 2012. In June of 2005, the dates for the EER were extended from one year to 18-24 months following the CPR; as a result, the EER was rescheduled for spring 2013. In July 2008, the proposal was rescheduled for October 15, 2009, 18 months before the CPR. The proposal was accepted in December 2009; it included responses to the Commission's four recommendations. Revisions to the research questions identified in the proposal ere approved in November 2010.

The proposal also addressed the two-year probationary status that was placed on the Law School by the ABA in 2005, as a result of low first-time bar passage rates. Changes in budgetary

practices, as well as in admissions, resulted in an increase in bar passage rates from 40% in 2005 to 84% in 2008. Probationary status was lifted by the ABA in 2008.

The CPR was conducted on November 15-17, 2011. In the Commission action letter of February 24, 2012, the Commission received the team report and recommendation to proceed with the EER in spring 2013. The Commission also requested that the institution respond to three issues raised in the letter regarding the strategic plan, assessment of student learning outcomes, and creation of a dedicated institutional research function.

The EER report was organized around three themes intended to provide a comprehensive assessment of the institution: 1) Community; 2) Culture; and 3) Undergraduate Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity.

Structure of the Visit

The EER visit was conducted March 12-15, 2013. The team was chaired by Dan Angel, President, Golden Gate University, with assistant chair Kathi A. Ketcheson, Director of Institutional Research and Planning at Portland State University, and team members Diane Cordero de Noriega, Professor Emerita and Provost (retired), California State University, Monterey Bay; and Maryann Jones, Dean Emerita, Western State University College of Law. Barbara Gross Davis, WASC Vice President, provided staff support.

The team reviewed the institution's EER report and conducted interviews on campus with Whittier trustees and executive leadership, faculty, staff, and students over a three-day period. Dan Angel and Maryann Jones conducted a separate review of the Whittier Law School on Tuesday, March 12, 2013.

B. Alignment with the Proposal

In its proposal, Whittier specifically addressed Standards 2 and 4 and described its academic program review processes and assessment of its core learning capacities at both the undergraduate and graduate levels as providing the necessary infrastructure to support the EER. In compliance with the standards, the institution described its process for defining its mission, goals, learning outcomes and assessment plans, and for making them publicly available, and its continuing work with the Law School to formulate assessment goals, outcomes and practices. It also described a strategic planning process that would be flexible in taking advantage of opportunities, despite the economic downturn of recent years.

In organizing its report around three themes—Community, Culture, and Undergraduate Research, Scholarship and Creative Activities—Whittier focused its attention on using data to make changes in areas most relevant to its mission and core values. The College recognized that it would need to have systems in place to collect and analyze data within and across themes, and a process for identifying areas needing improvement. In 2009, an assistant dean was hired to support assessment and data management. Working directly with programs and departments to develop goals, outcomes and plans, the assistant dean was to serve as a member of an "institutional research team," which included part-time effort from two associate deans, as well as from other relevant staff members in student affairs and advancement. This group would provide the needed data and analysis for the EER. In addition, following the CPR, the accreditation steering committee and the budget group would work together to align funding priorities with goals for the EER. Evaluation of student support services and co-curricular activities would be woven through all three themes. The report also would describe the process for using departmental reviews to support budget decisions.

In the team's view, the report did a good job of addressing the three themes and the institution's internal evaluation and review processes, but could have benefitted from a clearer presentation of data and analysis. Even given the EER report's page number constraints, additional data tables and summaries embedded in the text of the theme narratives would have been very helpful to the team in understanding the materials presented in the report.

In its review of the online documents, the team agreed that the themes had been consistent throughout the CPR and EER and that Whittier had used the self-study process effectively to address the issues identified in the proposal. The themes identified in the proposal have served as a framework for improvement in the institution's planning and assessment processes, as well as a road map for achieving its goals. The team observed that Whittier had taken the accreditation process seriously and agreed that the report did a good job of addressing the institution's goals of establishing a culture of evidence and continuous improvement.

C. Response to Issues Raised in the Capacity and Preparatory Review

The team agreed that the EER report specifically addressed each of the issues raised by the Commission in its action letter following the CPR visit: strategic planning, assessment, and institutional research. It was evident that substantial progress had been made in embedding assessment in continuous evaluation and improvement processes at both Whittier College and the Law School. A strategic plan was submitted in time for the EER, as requested, and planning activities were underway. The team, however, was concerned about the short time frame for the strategic plan (three years) and the continuing lack of a dedicated institutional research function.

Adequate systems to demonstrate quality assurance appeared to be in place through a robust program review and assessment process, although the connection between program review and the budget process was not clearly described in the report. The team also continued to

have questions about the integration of the undergraduate research program with the curriculum, and about the integration of the Law School with Whittier College. One indication of the latter was the apparent confusion over scheduling of the EER visit, which occurred during the Law School's spring break when neither faculty nor students would have been available to meet with the team. The team notes, however, that this issue was addressed during the visit and that the Law School ensured that faculty and students were available for interviews, despite the scheduling conflict.

SECTION II

EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS
UNDER THE STANDARDS

I. Theme 1: Community

Whittier College places a high value on community, both in its campus culture and its learning communities. Students interviewed by the team were enthusiastic about the Whittier community and commented positively that it is a place where "everyone knows everyone." In contrast to their perceptions of faculty/student interactions at a large university, students commented that Whittier faculty notice when a student is missing from class and follow up to find out why. Many students stated that Whittier is their home away from home and that they consider it to be a very a caring campus community. They enjoy the numerous opportunities to be engaged in campus life. All of the students interviewed cited small classes and caring faculty as reasons for attending Whittier.

Student Success: Community is one of the College's Liberal Education Learning Goals and is assessed through surveys and other data collection instruments as part of the institution's ongoing assessment and evaluation activities. Retention and student success are viewed as

aspects of community. To support students in the crucial first year and persistence through graduation, Whittier has focused resources in its First-Year Program, and also has begun to examine the student experience for sophomores and transfer students. With an increase in enrollment of transfer students during Fall Term 2012, the College formed a committee that included enrollment management, student affairs, student learning assessment, institutional research and faculty leaders to expand efforts already underway to collect and analyze data and to develop instruments to collect indirect measures of attitudes, satisfaction and progress (CFR 2.10, 4.4. 4.5).

Appendix III of the campus's EER report included tables reporting retention and graduation rates for new freshmen and transfer students, from 2002 to 2010; no recent data for 2011 or 2012 were provided in the table, although the narrative indicates that the "…Fall 2012 FY retention rate was 86.%." It is not clear if this was the rate for the 2012 or 2011 cohort, however. Also, the cohort sizes reported in the appendix table for 2009 and 2010 were identical, with an identical retention rate—perhaps this is accurate, but it bears further review. Also, retention rates for subgroups by gender, race and ethnicity were provide without the corresponding cohort numbers, making evaluation of apparent gains or losses difficult to assess. It is a common practice to provide both numbers and percentages in retention tables, and also to provide graduation rates alongside retention rates—usually in the same table—to allow for a comprehensive analysis of the data.

For new freshmen, retention rates for the past five years of reported data—initial cohorts for fall 2006 through 2010—revealed fluctuations, but recent improvement. The data for 2009 and 2010 (if accurate) show an identical retention rate for an initial cohort of 358 students of 82%. This is up from 79% for the 2008 cohort, 81% for 2007, and 79% for 2006. Graduation

rates were reported for five years, beginning with the 2002 initial cohort. These rates have

fluctuated from a low of 54% for the 2005 cohort of 350 students, to a high of 66% for the 2004

cohort of 394 students, settling at 62% for the 2006 cohort of 344.

For transfer students, retention rates dipped from 84% for the 2007 cohort (62 students)

to 78% for the 2008 cohort (58 students), but increased for the 2010 cohort (103 students) to

84%, again. A graduation rate was reported for the 2007 cohort of transfer students, but not for

new freshmen. Graduation rates for transfers increased steadily over the last three years, from

67% for the 2005 cohort (82 students), to 72% for the 2006 cohort (64 students), and 71% for the

2007 cohort (62 students). With the substantial increases in the numbers of transfer students—

123 in 2009 and 103 in 2010—Whittier's efforts to address student success for this group will be

an important area of emphasis for the campus.

As mentioned, it was difficult for the team to assess student success data for subgroups

by race and ethnicity without knowing how many students were in each cohort. The data for

African-American students was particularly hard to assess, with retention rates for new freshmen

ranging from 88% in 2008 to 48% in 2009 and 79% in 2010. Rates appeared to fluctuate for

other groups, as well, although no explanation of these trends was found in any of the materials

provided in the review, or in interviews with staff.

Assessment of Community: As noted in the team's CPR report, Whittier relies heavily

on data collected from surveys and questionnaires. The EER report narrative detailed the

administration and analysis of the Community Assessment Survey (CAS) and the work that had

been done with the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Wabash study, and the

HEDs survey. As stated in the narrative, Whittier's approach to examining student success

through community "…examined the attitudes, practices and performances of our first and

second-year students," noting that the research on student success indicates that specific practices and student attitudes lead to better student success. Curricular practices, such as "linked courses" and "Living-Learning Communities" have been designed to enhance interactions among students and faculty and to increase learning. Survey research on student attitudes has been combined with these and other organizational practices—such as implementation of an early alert system—to create a feedback loop for continuous improvement.

The goals for community are as follows:

1. Students will develop an understanding of a competence in the use of signs and symbols to construct, create, perceive and communicate meaning.
2. Students will engage in the academic, social and co-curricular aspects of the college community.
3. Students will develop the skills, attitudes and dispositions to be successful college students and an educated community member. Students will grow intellectually, personally and interpersonally.

Assessment and data analysis focused on the achievement of these goals. Findings validated the close connection and supportive atmosphere provided to students by Whittier faculty. They also indicated that underprepared and less-connected students were likely to do poorly in their classes, or to fail to persist or to graduate.

The theme narrative also described a number of activities designed to assess community and student success, including: 1) an assessment conducted in the First-Year Writing Seminar; 2) the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE); 3) First-Year Community Survey; 4) academic performance indicators; and 5) an assessment of faculty experiences. Retention data also were discussed. Methods used to assess student success appear to fit Whittier's culture and make sense within its institutional context. For outsiders, however, the approach appears somewhat complicated, and the team noted some problems in the presentation of data—specifically, means were reported for a multiple response question ("select all that

apply") on the survey administered in the Writing Seminar, when simple frequencies or crosstabs may have provided a clearer summary of the findings. The team encourages Whittier to spend more time making meaning of the data that it has assembled and has begun to analyze, and to being planning appropriate action steps to support student success as a component of Community (CFR 4.4).

Co-curricular support for Community: In interviews conducted by the team, Whittier staff indicated that the major factors influencing retention and completion were: 1) preparation for college; 2) finances; and, 3) connections with the campus community. To help create connections, Whittier's co-curricular programs help students find an affinity group that is open, caring and celebratory, and which provides a welcoming and supporting atmosphere. In addition, Whittier is in the process of developing a co-curricular transcript to document student engagement and leadership. Each director of each department in Student Affairs has developed a five –year assessment plan. Each year, the departments assess one program and each department's results are shared with the whole team. In 2012-2013, students were involved in the presentation of the results (CFR 2.11, 4.4).

Conclusion: Whittier has a well-developed process for assessing multiple dimensions of its core value of Community and its relationship to student learning and student success. It has developed a solid body of research and findings in this area. The team suggests that Whittier focus its attention on actions that will lead to closing the loop and ensuring continuous improvement. An enhanced institutional research function would help Whittier present, understand and use its student success data more effectively.

II. Theme 2: Culture

Whittier has a longtime commitment to building and maintaining a diverse student body. Almost half of the student body is made up of students of color, and the campus has been designated a Hispanic Serving institution (CFR 1.5). Whittier was able to achieve this level of diversity by subsidizing less-affluent students. The Strategic Plan for 2002-2011 set this as a priority and the Positioning Plan also highlighted culture and diversity as one of the characteristics that makes Whittier a national model for educational opportunity and multi-culturally enriching experiences. The Positioning Plan also recognized that Whittier's location in the "dynamic economic, cultural and social hub of Southern California, the portal to Asia and Latin America" provides a unique venue and opportunity for applied learning. Furthermore, the Positioning Plan highlighted four areas of focus, one of which was "Build on Whittier's unique diversity and our founding ambitions to attract a higher proportion of students from around the world" (CFR 4.1).

In addition to recruiting a diverse student body, Whittier has made culture and diversity the cornerstones of curricular and co-curricular programming. The Liberal Education Program included students' knowledge of culture and diversity in its five primary learning goals (CFR 2.1):

1. Develop the capacity to recognize, differentiate and interpret multiple perspectives across cultures.
2. Define and discuss the dimensions of culture and identify the connections between themselves and others in relation to physical, historical, social, and global contexts.
3. Apply theories, principles, and practices to contemporary and/or historical cultures
4. Analyze ways cultures influence each other and,
5. Explain and challenge one's own cultural narratives about the world.

The outcomes were based on WASC's statement on the dimensions for diversity in higher education, namely: 1) how do students experience diversity on campus? 2) what is the effect of

diversity on the campus culture? and, 3) are students gaining cultural competence as a result of their experiences and study? (WASC Diversity Statement.)

For the EER visit, the campus chose to assess the effectiveness of the first of these outcomes through courses identified in the Liberal Education Culture requirement. A research plan was organized around four pieces of evidence: 1) a direct assessment of freshman and senior written responses to a vignette; 2) freshman and senior responses to the Miville-Guzman Universality Diversity Scale; 3) data from focus group discussions with community partners; and, 4) instructors' evaluations of students assignments or papers. Unfortunately, evaluation of student assignments was not completed in time for the EER. The findings were not conclusive. No differences were found between freshmen and seniors results for the vignette exercise, nor in their responses to the survey. Some gender differences were noted, however, with females showing more openness to diversity than males.

Focus groups with community partners revealed that Whittier students exhibit high degrees of respectfulness, responsibility, and the ability to work well with others in their interactions with community members. Whittier students' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are highly valued by the community.

To close the loop, the results of these assessments will be presented to the faculty Educational Policies Committee (EPC) and the Liberal Education sub-committee. The information will be used in analyzing new courses that seek approval for inclusion in the culture requirement. Furthermore, the results will be presented to departments for consideration of any appropriate curricular changes. To provide additional information to inform these discussions, the team suggests that Whittier complete the assessment of student assignments, which could

provide more detailed and authentic assessment of students' knowledge and attitude shifts as a result of participating in these classes.

In addition to interviewing the culture committee on the research conducted for the EER report, team members interviewed students who attended an open meeting. Students were asked how they experienced culture and diversity on the campus. They were openly enthusiastic about their experiences at Whittier, and their responses were consistent. One student described her relationship with her roommate, saying: "She is from the east coast and I am from California. I am Latina and she is not. She is Republican and I am a Democrat. We share about where we come from. We share the cuisine from our respective homes. We have lively political discussions. It's great!" Other students talked about getting to know students from different countries and how much they have learned about different cultures while at Whittier. They discussed what they had learned in classes that meet the culture requirement, and how those classes had helped them in their community field experiences.

Conclusion: Whittier provides a full and rich experience in the classroom, in co-curricular activities, in the living environment and in field experiences with respect to culture and diversity. Whittier is living its mission and vision (CFR 1.1, 1.2).

III. Theme 3: Undergraduate Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity

The third reflective essay of the EER report discussed Undergraduate Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity (URSCA). The institution views URSCA as integral to the Liberal Education goals, the "Four C's:" Community, Communication, Cultural Perspectives, and Connections. URSCA brings together "integrative skills and interdisciplinary learning" and helps achieve the goal of "producing students who show demonstrated abilities in higher –order skills that require theory, praxis, critical thinking and communicative skills." The institutional

commitment to URSCA began in 2008, while the acronym was first used in 2009. URSCA was aligned with the College's mission to prepare students for life beyond the walls of the academy, as well as with institutional goals of maintaining diversity and increasing persistence (CFR 2.8, 2.9).

At the time of the CPR, the initiative had not been fully integrated into the curriculum. The plan was for the faculty to develop a rubric for URSCA, which would then be disseminated to the departments. Data would be collected, analyzed and disseminated. Building on these activities, the institution established two areas of inquiry for its URSCA theme: (1) how URSCA influences retention; and (2) whether students are learning to think analytically and critically from participating in URSCA (CFR 1.2, 2.2a 2.5).

The institution had made measurable progress with the initiative since the CPR. The institution's 2012 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) results indicated that nearly half of the College's seniors reported having worked with a faculty member on activities other than coursework. A rubric was developed for assessment of students' URSCA activities that measured facility with English, sophisticated intellectual analysis, employment of scholarly apparatus appropriate to the field, appropriateness of methods for the field, placement in broader theoretical context, and logical outcomes. These rubrics were used to assess the results of two day-long "URSCA Day" events in 2011 and 2012. The results indicated that students who participated in the 2012 event outperformed 2011 participants in all categories. The aggregate results were strong (ranging from 3.39 to 3.78 in the six categories, on a scale of 1 -4, with 4 being highest). As many of the activities were group projects, results were not disaggregated by gender, race, or ethnicity (CFR 2.5, 2.8).

URSCA Day student participation increased from 38 in 2011 to 60 in 2012. Student participation by ethnicity closely mirrored Whittier's overall student body, but a disproportionate number of women participated (63.33% women, 36.67% men). Whittier studied the reasons for the gender disparity and found that students from a wide variety of majors had participated, but some majors, such as Biology and Sociology, were overrepresented. This demographic distribution was also evident in the participation of Whittier students at Southern California Conferences for Undergraduate Research. Based upon the number of proposals received at the time of the EER visit, 2013's URSCA day will be even larger than the one in 2012.

In addition to the formal URSCA Day, which has had limited participation, all students are required to take a Senior Capstone course and to engage in research activities. Additionally, the faculty reported engaging in a wide range of other research activities with their students, which was confirmed during the team's open meeting with students. Close collaboration with faculty was cited by the students as one of the many benefits of the educational experience at Whittier.

Faculty members who met with the team voiced support for the URSCA initiative and recognized it as a natural fit with Whittier's mission. Nonetheless, they expressed that participation in URSCA activities represents an increase in faculty workload, with no concomitant increase in compensation. Furthermore, the team noted the lack of a position such as director of undergraduate research, and that URSCA activities were overseen by a small group of faculty. In general, the team observed a decentralized approach to managing URSCA activities on campus, and noted that efforts to capture data on URSCA activities were in the beginning stages.

The College has recognized the need to increase funding for undergraduate research and has hired a full-time grants manage to assist with pre- and post-award administration, as well as to assist faculty in obtaining and managing grants. This position is housed in Academic Affairs. As a result, the number of fellowships has increased. Since 2008, Whittier has received funding for 82 fellowships, totaling $1,642,910. Work has begun on development of institutional policies for grant management. Two grants supported improvement of research infrastructure: one from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and another from National Endowment for the Humanities.

A newly formed Committee on the Future of the Liberal Arts conducted a study of the curriculum, with URSCA as a component. As a result, the Committee considered introducing URSCA earlier in the curriculum, in alignment with the 2015 Positioning Plan and its focus on three curricular goals: integration of high impact practices, preparation for career entry, and academic excellence. Accordingly, the institution will consider expanding URSCA opportunities, particularly for first- and second-year students.

Conclusion: While the team congratulates Whittier for its progress in developing a culture of undergraduate research, full integration of URSCA into the curriculum had not yet been achieved at the time of the visit. Whittier can point with pride to results showing that its students have strong research and analytical skills, and that participation by underrepresented groups mirrors their representation in the total enrollment. The team observed that gender disparity in participation in URSCA Day might be an area of further examination, along with ways to involve more academic departments in URSCA day activities. To increase URSCA activity and ensure long-term sustainability, additional support for faculty participation in URSCA activities, as well as a more centralized approach to managing URSCA, may needed.

This will become more important as more data are collected, analyzed and disseminated to stakeholders.

SCHOOL OF LAW

Whittier Law School was founded in 1966 as the Beverly School of Law. It became part of Whittier College in 1975. Whittier Law School is fully approved by the American Bar Association and is a member of the Association of American Law Schools. The School formerly offered both full- and part-time options, but has discontinued the part-time evening program because of declining enrollments. The Law School is located approximately 26 miles from the main campus and occupies an attractive campus on 14 acres, with four buildings.

In 2013, the Law School enrolled 590 students, with a student/faculty ratio of 21:1. The student body was diverse, with approximately 50% women, 50% men, and 48% underrepresented ethnic and racial groups. As discussed more fully below, the Law School's finances were stable, and the dean reported that the Law School would not operate at a deficit for the next fiscal year, even in the event of reduced enrollment in incoming class. In addition to a fairly traditional curriculum, the Law School offers significant opportunities for its students to participate in experiential learning through a variety of clinics, practice centers, and skills courses (CFR 1.5, 2.1, 2.2b, 3.5).

On March 12, 2013, two members of the team, and the WASC liaison, visited Whittier Law School. These were the same team members who had visited the Law School in November 2011, as part of the CPR visit. During the EER visit, the team met with the Law School dean, members of the Assessment Committee, the Faculty Governance Committee, academic support and bar pass faculty, and also conducted open meetings for faculty and students. The team reviewed the EER report, the School's program learning outcomes, assessment plan, curriculum

map, assessment rubrics, course syllabi, and budget information. The team also received a copy of the Law School's new five-year strategic plan.

Issues from the CPR action letter and Law School response: In its March 18, 2012, action letter, the Commission addressed the issues surrounding assessment and institutional research at the Law School. The Commission referenced the team's observation: "The Law School's assessment efforts were significantly behind those of the rest of Whittier College, which has made significant and commendable strides in assessment and program review." The Commission recommended "further work in assessment at the Law School," and underscored the need for a robust institutional research and assessment capability.

Whittier's EER report addressed the Commission's concerns and pointed to changes initiated after the CPR visit. Citing bar examination results and career placement rates as key indicators of institutional assessment, the report discussed changes made to the curriculum and bar passage program, as well as to the Career Development Office, as a result of various assessment activities. Regarding "individualized assessment," the report stated that faculty had adopted program learning outcomes, incorporated learning outcomes into course syllabi, increased formative assessments in some courses, and conducted a "formal assessment of one of the learning goals adopted by the faculty." The report did not address increased data collection and analysis at the Law School.

Assessment of student learning and data collection: The Law School had made considerable progress in assessment of student learning since the CPR visit, attributable in no small part to the enthusiastic efforts of the Assessment Committee. The members of the committee had embraced the value of assessing student learning and had gained considerable expertise over the last two years. The faculty had begun to develop a culture of assessment and

evidence-based decision making and had increased their knowledge of assessment practices dramatically. They had adopted program learning outcomes appropriate for a graduate degree in law. There were seven stated learning outcomes: (1) Graduates will demonstrate knowledge of law and its role in society; (2) Graduates will demonstrate analytical and problem-solving skills; (3) Graduates will communicate effectively; (4) Graduates will demonstrate competency in legal practice skills; (5) Graduates will possess the requisite skills to recognize and resolve dilemmas in an ethical manner; (6) Graduates will demonstrate professionalism; and (7) Graduates will demonstrate knowledge of the importance of services to the profession and to the community at large (CFR 2.3).

The Law School, through the efforts of the Assessment Committee, had assessed learning outcome four and had developed rubrics and established a process for assessing learning outcomes three and five. The next step was to develop rubrics for outcomes one and two and to begin the process of assessment. In response to team comments following the CPR, the Assessment Committee amended the assessment plan to ensure that all program outcomes would be assessed within a time frame that would allow the Law School to interpret the results and feed them back into an improvement cycle.

For individual courses, faculty members had begun to incorporate student learning outcomes into course syllabi. Since the CPR, the Law School had ensured that the faculty received formal training on assessment of student learning, including how to construct course learning outcomes and rubrics. Faculty members had begun to develop rubrics for assessing these course learning outcomes, and were working with the Assessment Committee to do so. The team's meeting with faculty members verified the extent to which faculty members were actively creating and utilizing rubrics, engaging in an increasing number of formative

assessments, and viewing assessment as central to what they do as opposed to an added duty (CFR 2.3).

Regarding formative assessment at the course level, the Law School had initiated a requirement that first-year students receive a midterm examination with feedback in one course, and that students who perform poorly on this midterm examination would be referred to the Academic Support Program for individualized assistance. Furthermore, the Law School had begun to offer at least one required, first-year course in small sections (35 – 40 students), and required faculty teaching small sections to give at least three formative assessments with feedback.

The Law School identified its major institutional measures as bar passage and graduate employment rates, both valuable tools for assessing student outcomes. While it was too early to assess the extent to which changes to the institution's bar passage programs would impact bar passage rates, assessment of various components of the program was underway and some course coverage had changed as a result. Furthermore, analysis of bar performance by grade point average had resulted in mandatory remedial courses for students with grade point averages predictive of poor bar examination performance.

The Law School conducted research to determine the extent to which certain variables predict bar passage. The study concluded that Law School grade point average was the only accurate predictor of bar passage. The team noted that the bar examination covers only a subset of what the Law School expects its graduates to have achieved, but found that the Law School was doing much more summative assessment and was not using the bar examination as a proxy for assessment of the full set of programmatic learning outcomes (CFR 2.3).

Following an assessment of the second major institutional goal of graduate employment rates, the Law School hired more professional staff in the career services office, created a five year strategic plan, and put several initiatives in place to bring employers to campus to help improve the placement rates for students. The team suggests that the Law School may wish to focus on how and when these changes would be assessed and what would be done with the information (CFR 2.11).

The Law School does not participate in the Whittier College program review process. Nonetheless, given all of the assessment activities going on at the Law School, the periodic review conducted by their programmatic accreditor, the American Bar Association, and annual participation in the LSSSE survey (Law School Survey of Student Engagement), the Law School is actively engaged in reviewing all aspects of its program. Although, as noted above, the faculty had adopted programmatic learning outcomes, only one of the seven—competency in legal practice skills--had been assessed by the two faculty members in charge of the Law School's assessment efforts, rather than by faculty engaged in teaching the curriculum (CFR 2.7).

The Law School maintains its data in the manner required by the American Bar Association, and recently began to address the WASC requirement for a robust and systematic institutional research function. It had made progress in achieving capacity to both collect and utilize data, but still did not consistently collect and analyze student data disaggregated by demographic categories. Also, it was unclear whether there was a plan for the dissemination and use of these data, once collected (CFR 2.10 4.5).

Bar examination: The Law School devoted considerable resources to improving its students' performance on the California Bar Examination. It had robust academic support and bar passage programs and, after several years of results that lagged substantially behind other

ABA approved schools, saw a significant increase in passage rates on the July 2012 examination. In July 2012, the Law School was compliant with the bar passage standards of the American Bar Association.

Bar Administration	Average for California ABA Schools	Whittier Law School
February 2010	60%	13%
July 2010	75%	53%
February 2011	63%	55%
July 2011	76%	56%
February 2012	62%	46%
July 2012	77%	70%

Graduates of the Law School from underrepresented groups passed the bar examination at approximately the same rate as majority students. As the institution has identified bar passage as one of its two key institutional assessment measures, periodic comprehensive assessment of admissions, retention, curriculum, and bar preparatory and academic support programs will need to occur, along with a plan for disseminating and using the information (CFR 2.7).

The Law School can be commended for the improvement in bar passage rates and, particularly, for the positive results in July 2012. The Law School aspires to bar passage rates consistently above the average of California ABA accredited institutions. Once students who have been the beneficiaries of the enhanced academic support and bar pass programs take the bar examination, the Law School planned to assess these programs in a comprehensive manner and make any changes indicated by the data.

Financial sustainability: Nationally, applications to law schools have been down substantially in recent years, and the Law School is expecting lower enrollments over the next several years. The team found that the institution had engaged in early and comprehensive planning for this eventuality and had involved all key stakeholders in the planning process. The

Law School benefited from operational surpluses over the last several years. The team concluded that the Law School had adequate net asset reserves from annual operating budgets, quasi-endowment, and reserves for capital renewal to absorb lower enrollments without a detrimental diminution in the credentials of its incoming students. Furthermore, the members of the Board of Trustees with whom the team met expressed their unqualified support for the Law School, as well as a commitment to do all necessary to see the Law School through this time of uncertainty and change.

Integration with Whittier College: It appeared to the team that the Law School was not well-integrated with Whittier College. The Law School dean is not included in Whittier's management team meetings, ostensibly because of the physical distance between the two campuses. In addition, there appeared to be little or no interaction between the faculty and students of the Law School and Whittier College. As noted in the team's CPR report, without better integration and communication, synergies between the two campuses may be missed.

Conclusion: The Law School had made considerable progress since the CPR. Bar passage rates had improved and the School had greatly increased the academic support its students received. Program learning outcomes had been developed, one program outcome had been assessed, and two others were underway. Syllabi contained learning outcomes and there were more formative assessments underway in courses. A robust bar passage program was in place. Improvements had been made in career services and more opportunities for experiential learning were being made available. Students were being taught more of the skills necessary to complete successfully in the workplace. Despite challenging times ahead for all of legal education, the Law School was well positioned financially.

The Law School was in the early stages of developing a culture of evidence-based decision making. The team observed that improvements in data collection, dissemination, and analysis were needed. While the Law School had established student learning outcomes at both the course and program level, and was working diligently on assessment, the Law School's efforts lagged behind Whittier College in this regard. Faculty members were not fully engaged in assessment; much of the activities were being undertaken only by the Assessment Committee. Rubrics had not been developed for all of the outcomes. Finally, it did not appear that the Law School was integrated fully into the life of the College. Both the Law School and College could benefit from a closer relationship that would take advantage of many opportunities.

Program Review

Assessment at Whittier College is embedded in an annual department review process in which departments select at least one learning outcome as a focus (CFR 2.7) and add an additional learning outcome for the five-year Academic Program review. This model keeps the academic program review process active and fresh as departments work toward the five-year process. The evidence indicated that every department had engaged in this assessment process at some level. Annual reports were documented in the online materials for the team's EER review. In addition, several departments had conducted the five-year review.

The team received the full Academic Program Review documents for two departments: Religious Studies and Music. In addition, team members met with faculty and administrators from these departments to ask questions about the process, results and future planning. In both departments, evidence was available to demonstrate that the programs have been systematically assessing learning objectives, using pre- and posttest instruments, surveys, student portfolio reviews and feeding results back into a cycle of improvement.

Whittier's program review process includes both internal and external review. Internal reviews include members of the Assessment Committee. External reviewers are selected thoughtfully and their feedback is taken seriously. Departments submit reports and findings of the program review process to the Assessment Committee, which reviews the report and provides feedback. The departments use the feedback for improvement, such as modifications to the curriculum, or identifying new areas for assessment (CFR 2.7).

In interviews with the team, faculty indicated that they were not aware of how the results of program review are integrated into campus budget and planning (CFR 4.2). The team was not able to find evidence during this visit of use of program review in budget and planning. While the faculty's "Academic Plan 2020" is a separate document from the College's Positioning Plan, faculty support the integration of high impact practices, such as service learning, internships, faculty/student research and study abroad, into the curriculum, as described in the Positioning Plan.

Sustainability

Sustainability has two dimensions: financial viability and educational effectiveness. One major indication of Whittier's sustainability is that the College did not have to eliminate academic programs, layoff faculty and staff, provide less financial aid to needy students, or significantly cut support programs due to financial exigency during the national recession of 2008-2011. Also, over the past decade faculty salaries have increased an average of 3.9% per year.

Whittier has generated annual increases in total net assets for all years since 2001, with the exception of Fiscal Year 02, FY08 and FY09. The endowment grew from $55 million in 2001 to $78 million in 2011, and was $80 million during the EER site visit. Although

outstanding debt grew from $20 million in FY02 to $54million in FY11, it was mostly due to the strategic decision in 2004 to issue $60 million in revenue bonds for the purchase of the Law School campus and to complete renovations on both campuses. Certainly, some needs have not been fully met, including those of an ageing infrastructure, but the team found no sustainability issues at the college.

Law School enrollments nationally have declined, due to a large drop in the number of students taking the LSAT and a sharp decline in available jobs. But the Whittier Law School has received financial help. Over the past few years, the overhead/indirect annual charge has been reduced from $1.5 million to $1 million and surplus funds are available over the next 3-5 years, as Whittier's "new normal" Law School enrollment is being determined.

Whittier College has put in place a strong infrastructure for educational effectiveness that includes robust assessment and program review processes. The team concluded that the institution will be able to sustain its efforts for the foreseeable future.

Planning

When the team visited Whittier in November 2011, it noted that, although the College had a fully developed strategic plan for 2001-2011, it did not have a plan that would lead into a new cycle, even though a number of planning elements seemed to be in place (CFR 4.1, 4.3). Consequently, the Commission's action letter recommended that, "Whittier College update its last strategic plan to bring these and other plans together in a more comprehensive plan."

Substantial work had been done to address this since the CPR visit and, in February of 2013, the Board of Trustees approved *Whittier College 2015: Positioning Plan*. President Herzberger, in a March 2013 memo to the visiting team, noted that, "The College's positioning plan was designed to focus attention and resources and to track progress in meeting established

goals." The plan referenced more than 20 development and review meetings with the College community. There were also numerous written reports, including a final report on the 2001-2011 Plan completed in July 2012, as the college celebrated its 125th Anniversary.

The new plan was based on seven of Whittier's longstanding strengths, and also the realization that the plan was being enacted during a period of significant change for higher education. The plan expressed four interrelated goals:

1) To perfect a learning-centered approach to design and deliver a Whittier education and becoming a model for the nation;

2) To strengthen and spread Whittier's reputation regionally, nationally, and internationally;

3) To shift Whittier's business model in order to boost the College's financial strengths and to achieve aspirations for the students and College; and,

4) To create a physical environment for learning and living to compliment teaching.

Accomplishment of these goals would be measured through a number of Hallmarks of Success, to be achieved by 2015. These included renovation of the Stauffer Academic Building; improving first-year and second-year retention; increasing alternative business revenue; increasing the number of international students; enhancing students' successful transition to employment, or professional schools; and ensuring that the students' experience would include key high impact educational practices. The compact three-year time frame, as opposed to a more typical five- or 10-year time frame for planning, was designed to stress the urgency in addressing institutional priorities.

One issue that surfaced in meetings with the faculty was an apparently widely-held view that the Positioning Plan "came top-down, rather than bottom-up," and that there was "no faculty

ownership." Since the Positioning Plan has such a short time frame for completion, efforts to gain broad faculty buy- in are of major importance (CFR 4.1).

Institutional Research

The CPR report and the subsequent Commission action letter recommended that Whittier identify a dedicated institutional research function to improve the quality and communication of data for planning, assessment and decision support (CFR 2.7, 2.10, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5.). At the time of the EER visit, a list of duties for an institutional research director position had been developed, but a search had not begun to fill a dedicated position. At the time of the CPR, Whittier had taken a team approach to institutional research, in which a part-time associate dean fulfilled the role of institutional research and assessment coordinator, but enrollment management, advancement and other areas were responsible for collecting and analyzing their own data. While this appeared to work reasonably well in the past, it was clear to the team in both the CPR and EER visits that the campus would benefit from a dedicated function with full-time staff.

As in the CPR report, data in the institution's EER report were presented inconsistently or without the clarity and directness that might be expected if prepared with the help of a dedicated institutional research function. For example, retention rates for subgroups of the student population continued to be reported only as percentages, without a corresponding cohort size, or headcount that would add meaning to the changes over time. It is an accepted format in most institutional research offices to report both the beginning cohort headcount and the headcounts and percentage changes for retained students each year, and to include graduation rates in the same table.

Also, there were no comprehensive tables reporting the overall enrollment, or data showing the proportion each subgroup represented of the total. It was necessary for the team to

compute some of these statistics for inclusion in its report. While Whittier can be commended for its research-based approach, the team observed that there was a heavy reliance on surveys and validated external instruments, and rather less emphasis on what could be learned by examining data from the student data base, or by incorporating student characteristics in the analysis of data generated by these instruments (CFR 2.10, 4.3, 4.4).

A dedicated IR function would have knowledge of the tools, techniques and trends common in institutional research that could help the institution make the most effective use of data. In addition, a dedicated IR function, with assessment in its portfolio, could take advantage of resources offered online and through annual conferences by the Association for Institutional Research and the various organizations and conferences focused on assessment of student learning.

In the team's view, it is critical that Whittier move forward with identification of a dedicated institutional research and assessment function (CFR 4.5).

SECTION III
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings and Recommendations from the CPR

Commendations

1. The first-year program demonstrates Whittier's commitment to building community.

2. Whittier's faculty and staff are dedicated to promoting student learning.

3. The Law School has made great strides since 2008.

Recommendations

1. Develop a new strategic plan and assure greater alignment of planning activities.

2. Strengthen support for institutional research and assessment.

3. Improve institutional research and assessment in the Law School.

Findings and Recommendations from the EER

The following are the team's commendations and recommendations, based on its review

of the institution's EER report and the campus visit.

Commendations

1. **The Whittier College Board of Trustees is active, engaged and supportive.**

2. **Significant progress has been made in strategic planning since the CPR, resulting in *Whittier College 2015: Positioning Plan*.**

3. **The Law School has made significant progress in assessment of student learning and has begun to develop a culture of assessment and evidence-driven decision making.**

4. **Substantial progress has been made in both assessment and program review.**

5. **Faculty members at Whittier College are deeply committed to their students and to the value the institution places on community.**

Recommendations

1. **Being efforts as soon as possible to secure faculty buy-in for goals outlined in the Positioning Plan.**

The strategic plan had a very short time line of only three years. Although the rationale

for this was described adequately, the leadership must move quickly to ensure faculty buy-in in

order to achieve the goals set out by the plan. The team's meetings with faculty suggested a

strong sentiment that the plan was developed from the top down and that the faculty had not

taken ownership of the plan or its goals (CFR 4.1, 4.2).

2. **Undertake efforts to more fully integrate the Law School into the College and to improve communication between the two campuses.**

The 26 miles separating the two campuses should not serve as an impediment to

interaction and mutually-beneficial synergies. The miscommunication regarding the dates for the

EER visit appeared to signal a need to explore better coordination and communication between administrators located at the Law School and Whittier College campuses (CFR 3.8)

3. **Take steps to further support and develop URSCA and to more fully integrate it into the curriculum.**

While participation in URSCA Day had increased, as well as support for student participation in activities related to the program, the numbers remained small. URSCA continued to be the responsibility of a small group of faculty, with no central oversight. There appeared to be little institutional support for faculty engaged in URSCA activities, and no centralized system for collecting and analyzing data on the program (CFR 2.5, 4.5).

4. **Integrate program review, academic planning and budget planning through a clearly defined process that links action plans with agreed upon commitments.**

While student learning assessment was clearly embedded in program reviews, no evidence was provided that academic and budget planning were linked with the program review process (CFR 4.2).

5. **Move forward with identifying the critical role of a director of institutional research and assessment in planning, assessment and decision support.**

Identification of an individual who could serve as a leader would help to ensure clarity in the presentation, standardization and usefulness of data (CFRs 4.4, 4.5).

Team Report Appendix   Institution: Whittier College
OFF-CAMPUS SITE   Kind of Visit: EER
                                                            Date: March 12, 2013

A completed copy of this form should be appended to the team report for all visits in which off-campus sites were reviewed[1]. One form should be used for each site visited. Teams are not required to include a narrative about this matter in the team report but may include recommendations, as appropriate, in the Findings and Recommendations section of the team report.

1. Site Name and Address
    Whittier Law School
    Harbor Blvd
    Costa Mesa, CA

2. Background Information (number of programs offered at this site; degree levels; FTE of faculty and enrollment; brief history at this site; designation as a regional center or off-campus site by WASC)

    The law school is located on 14 acres in Orange County and has four buildings and ample parking. The school is located near the commercial and legal centers of the County. The current FTE is 590 students.

    The law school offers a JD program, an LLM for foreign lawyers, as well as a variety of clinics, international, and certificate programs. There are 22 tenured or tenure track faculty members, 10 members on long-term contracts, as well as approximately thirty members of the adjunct faculty. The student-faculty ratio is approximately 21:1.

    More detailed information is contained in the team report, attached hereto.

3. Nature of the Review (material examined and persons/committees interviewed)

EER of Whittier College.

The visit was conducted by two team members and the WASC liaison, the same team who visited the law school during the CPR.

The team spent an entire day at the law school, meeting with administrators, faculty, and students.

The team reviewed the EER report and appendices as well as documents provided to the team on site.

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[1] See Protocol for Review of Off-Campus Sites to determine whether and how many sites will be visited.

Observations and Findings

Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	Follow-up Required (identify the issues)
Fit with Mission. How does the institution conceive of this and other off-campus sites relative to its mission, operations, and administrative structure? How is the site planned and operationalized? (CFRs 1.2, 3.1, 3.5, 4.1)	The following items are addressed in the team report, attached hereto	
Connection to the Institution. How visible and deep is the presence of the institution at the off-campus site? In what ways does the institution integrate off-campus students into the life and culture of the institution? (CFRs 1.2, 2.10)		
Quality of the Learning Site. How does the physical environment foster learning and faculty-student contact? What kind of oversight ensures that the off-campus site is well managed? (CFRs 1.8, 2.1, 2.5, 3.1, 3.5)		
Student Support Services. CPR: What is the site's capacity for providing advising, counseling, library, computing services and other appropriate student services? Or how are these otherwise provided? *EER:* What do data show about the effectiveness of these services? (CFRs 2.11-2.13, 3.6, 3.7)		
Faculty. Who teaches the courses, e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct? In what ways does the institution ensure that off-campus faculty are involved in the academic oversight of the programs at this site? How do these faculty members participate in curriculum development and assessment of student learning? (CFRs 2.4, 3.1-3.4, 4.6)		
Curriculum and Delivery. Who designs the programs and courses at this site? How are they approved and evaluated? Are the programs and courses comparable in content, outcomes and quality to those on the main campus? (CFR 2.1-2.3, 4.6) [Also submit credit hour report.]		
Retention and Graduation. What data on retention and graduation are collected on students enrolled at this off-campus site? What do these data show? What disparities are evident? Are rates comparable to programs at the main campus? If any concerns exist, how are these being addressed? (CFRs 2.6, 2.10)		
Student Learning. CPR: How does the institution assess student learning at off-campus sites? Is this process comparable to that used on the main campus? *EER*: What are the results of student learning assessment? How do these compare with learning results from the main campus? (CFRs 2.6, 4.6, 4.7)		
Quality Assurance Processes: CPR: How are the institution's quality assurance processes designed or modified to cover off-campus sites? *EER:* What evidence is provided that off-campus programs and courses are educationally effective? (CFRs 4.4-4.8)		

APPENDIX II

STUDENT COMPLAINTS REVIEW

Institution: Whittier College
Date: March 14, 2013

A completed copy of this form should be appended to the team report. Teams are not required to include a narrative about this matter in the team report but may include recommendations, as appropriate, in the Findings and Recommendations section of the team report.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)	Verified Yes/No
Policy on student complaints	Does the institution have a formal policy on student complaints?	Yes
	Comments: The Student Grievance Policy is located on page 54 of the Student Handbook. The policy defines a grievance, describes the process and timeline for filing a grievance, identifies to whom grievances should be addressed (depending on the nature of the grievance), and provides a contact person for additional information or questions.	
Process(is)/ procedure	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints?	Yes
	Does the institution adhere to this procedure?	Yes
	Comments: Students are encouraged to explore informal resolution first with the affected party. If that is unsuccessful, the student can bring the grievance to the attention of the relevant administrative officer where it will be reviewed and investigated.	
Records	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints?	Yes
	Comments: Student complaints are kept in hard copy locked files. Each of the offices handling student complaints maintains its own records.	