

Introduction

I. Structure and Context for the Capacity and Preparatory Review:

Whittier College is a small private liberal arts institution, founded in 1887 by members of the Society of Friends. Though the college no longer has any formal association with that society, our identity today is tied closely with our history. Quaker values deriving from that association still influence our ideals and practices. Located on a 75 acre campus seventeen miles east of downtown Los Angeles, Whittier's primary mission is undergraduate education, but we also offer graduate programs in education. Additionally, like a select group of liberal arts colleges, Whittier has a law school.

In 1975, Whittier Law School became part of Whittier College and it is now – with a beautiful stand-alone campus in Costa Mesa - the oldest Law School fully-accredited by the American Bar Association and the Association of American Law Schools in Orange County, California. It offers a full-time day program, a part-time day program, and a part-time evening program leading to the Doctor of Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree. Foreign law students may also earn an LL.M. in U.S. Legal Studies. The School's strengths include Business Law, Criminal Law, Public Interest Law, Trial and Appellate Law, and the burgeoning fields of Intellectual Property Law, International Law, and Children's Rights.

Whittier College's 2009 Institutional Proposal describes the academic and social principles upon which the college was founded, and the ways that our Mission Statement provides a framework for defining the academic, co-curricular, and administrative elements of the College. The Institutional Proposal also summarized how the Whittier College "core curriculum" provides an academic framework for collaboration and transformation through its emphasis on cultural perspectives and the importance of connections between different fields of knowledge. Both critical thinking (the development of the skills and methods necessary for systematic investigation - i.e., the ability to define, analyze, and synthesize using a variety of methods and technologies) and the practical application of knowledge inform all elements of the program and are central to the transformation that distinguishes Whittier College graduates.

The 2009 Institutional Proposal also describes the administrative and academic governance structures in place at Whittier College, noting the leadership provided by President Sharon Herzberger, the senior staff, the Board of Trustees, and the faculty (Organizational Structure; Key Financial Indicators).

II. Overview: Whittier College and its Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity

As stated in the 2008 *WASC Handbook for Accreditation*, Whittier College is required to demonstrate a commitment to institutional capacity—that is, we must demonstrate that we have the administrative and faculty structures in place to study the college's educational program, reflect on what we find, and modify our program accordingly. Furthermore, we must illustrate that "[Whittier College] functions with clear purposes, high levels of institutional integrity, fiscal stability, and organizational structures to fulfill its purposes."

This Capacity and Preparatory Review report is comprised of three reflective essays—Community at Whittier College; Diversity and Liberal Education at Whittier College; Promoting Connections through Undergraduate Research. The CPR report also includes a collection of appended data tables, reports, and other reference documents that provide quantitative and qualitative evidence of the college's commitment to institutional capacity, and our efforts to use this capacity to study our educational effectiveness.

III. Responses to Issues Raised in Previous Action Letters.

A. Visiting Team Report and Commission Letter; Whittier College's 2002 Reaccreditation

Whittier was last reaccredited by WASC in 2002 in a process in which the College sought to design for itself an accreditation framework that would enable us to reflect on "the extent to which individual projects and programs resonate with the College's over-arching institutional goals and mission, and to discover new directions and programs that would sustain our mission and excellence." That Self-Study was organized to reflect on a series of

issues, including: the core curriculum and the Whittier Scholars Program; department and program assessment; personnel issues; diversity issues; retention; the capital campaign; the library; support for disabled students; and campus renovations.

The Commission applauded the College's ability to launch a successful capital campaign, stabilize enrollment and increase retention, and renovate substantial parts of the campus, even as there was then considerable turnover in the senior administration. With recognition of our progress, the Commission's Action Letter contained four important recommendations, to which we responded.

1. That the newly revised Liberal Education Program build into its implementation a mechanism for assessing the mechanism of the core in meeting student learning and strategic goals.

- We began our assessment of the Liberal Education Program by examining the gateway writing course required of all first year students. Our data showed that Hispanic students were not as successful as peers from other ethnic backgrounds in this course, and other data indicated that these students often learned best studying in more informal groups under the guidance of a mentor. As a result of this information, we took two steps that have dramatically improved our results: first, we established a Living and Learning Community program where students who were in the same writing class also share living space in the same residence hall. Second, we created a "linked" course structure wherein students in the writing classes also take a subject class together, so that groups of about fifteen students are linked through participation in both classes and in living arrangements. In addition, the freshman writing instructor also serves as the student mentor until they declare a major.
- The role of the Assessment Committee on campus has grown considerably, and the language of assessment has become ingrained in campus culture. The administration gave concrete support to assessment by naming an Associate Dean whose responsibilities explicitly include assessment (half-time), as well as the First-Year Program. She, together with the Assessment Committee, developed a comprehensive plan for assessment. The Faculty Assessment Committee began with a program to assess each year one of the 4C's that comprise the Liberal Education Program.

As of June 2011, the Assessment Committee has completed an examination of *Community and Culture*.

2. That the College integrate learning outcomes into programmatic reviews and that programmatic reviews be separated from the preparation for an accreditation visit. The Commission asked that Whittier go beyond collecting student satisfaction measures in seeking to assess the effectiveness of its academic programs.

(A) All academic departments have developed mission, goals, learning outcomes and curricular maps. Each department has been asked to complete an assessment of one of their learning outcomes annually. Departments have submitted a long term plan (five years) for assessing all of their learning outcomes. The annual assessment is designed to contribute to the five year department review. The Inventory of Effective Educational Indicators shows the progress of our assessment efforts for both academic affairs and for the co-curriculum.

(B) The Assessment Committee and the Associate Dean have crafted a completely revised program for analyzing the effectiveness of the academic programs through a comprehensive self study. The measures for analysis go well beyond "student satisfaction" data to include the following:

- Providing for a comprehensive departmental-level assessment, the College has developed a process that is assessment-rich and provides a mechanism for "closing the loop." Departments now have two options: either a traditional review or a theme-based review. Consistent with Commission recommendations, all departments are now on a five year cycle for department review. Moreover, there is a mechanism for college-wide review of departmental reviews that involves reports to both the College's Assessment Committee and the Faculty's Educational Policy Committee. This provides a mechanism to review the department conclusions as well as assess interdepartmental trends. The conclusions of the committee are used in any considerations of curricular policy across disciplines, and are folded into the budgetary

process for cases such as position requests. Recommendations are then sent to the Dean of the Faculty for review.

- Over the past five years we have brought departments through the assessment process of developing a mission and goals, then learning outcomes, then a plan to assess the learning outcomes; then a process of analyzing the data, reflecting on the results in the context of curriculum and students' learning; finally, using the results for change.
- In an attempt to integrate the department review process into our assessment model as well as into the College culture, we completely revised the criteria for review as well as the process. The ultimate goal is for departments to assess their learning outcomes over a 4 year cycle culminating, in a department review in the 5th year. Currently all of our departments will be assessed at least once in the new cycle by the fall of 2012. We will assess the "academic programs" in 2013 (Environmental Sciences, Gender and Women's Studies, Global and Cross Cultural Studies). Two of our programs were recently reviewed with our departments: Social Work (2009) and the Whittier Scholars Program (2011).
- An interactive course web site was developed to both showcase and house assessment work, allowing departments to view each other's progress and provide a mechanism for the Assessment Committee to work on department-level assessment with faculty from each department through the web site itself. Members of the Assessment Committee provide input on the development of learning outcomes and methodology for assessing outcomes, and they help in analyzing and interpreting data directly through the web site. A rubric was developed, based on the WASC rubric on assessing learning outcomes. Each department's assessment project is "scored" based on the rubric.
- The annual assessments have already elicited curricular changes based on evidence of student learning. For example, the Economics Department found that students were not learning the objectives established in their introductory courses at the level they expected. This led the faculty to re-evaluate their introductory courses so that more time could be devoted to the objectives, allowing students to gain a better foundation of knowledge. They also did an analysis of student learning of specific content through a comparison of the different sections of the course and the pedagogical approaches used.
- The Department of Education and Child Development examined the learning outcomes established for their field methods course CHDV 220. A rubric was developed and student papers were evaluated by the faculty in the department, pointing to weaknesses in writing research papers. It was decided that more class time needed to be devoted to the writing and analysis components of this course, and less time on alternative assignments such as poster presentations, observations, and interviews.

(c) Whittier College was awarded a grant by the Teagle Foundation in 2008 that has helped us develop a systematic way to provide data for departments to use in their assessment plans. Through the use of a data reporting system, "ARGOS," departments will now have the ability to develop custom reports using multiple sources of internal and external data, including data held in our Banner System as well as national data such as NSSE, HEDS. The data management model will first be tested through the examination of two specific learning effectiveness issues: 1) improving underrepresented minority students' performance in gateway courses in math, science, and writing that are critical predictors of later student success; and 2) measuring the impact and effectiveness of community-based learning initiatives on student engagement and learning.

3. That the College establishes a budgeting process that would establish greater alignment between curricular demands and available resources, with priorities that recognized that not all good ideas could be funded.

Budgets reflect an institution's goals. Therefore, at Whittier we establish criteria and priorities that guide our budget deliberations. The Strategic Plan calls for us to develop a more distinctive and attractive program, improve our reputation, and thus attract a larger body of well-qualified applicants who will matriculate as strong and committed Whittier College students. We recognize that not everything included in the Strategic Plan can be accomplished or funded in a given year, and our current budget priorities have driven budget allocation decisions since 2005. Therefore, the Budget Group establishes annual budget priorities. While all budgets are reviewed and reallocations are sometimes made, the Group focuses primarily on allocating new resources. Because budget lines

have not been increased “across the board” in the last nine years, some revenue has been available to allocate through the planning process to strategic initiatives.

- *Financial stability and integrity.* Strengthening activities include supporting student recruitment and retention, enhancing reputation and visibility, securing grants, maintaining the endowment’s spending rate at 5%, and realistic but opportunistic budgeting. The College has reduced our spending rate to 5%, and we have shifted substantial revenue to our First Year Program, with resulting increases in retention and graduation rates. In addition, we put \$250,000 into a complete revision and rebuilding of our website and \$115,000 into the creation of new admission materials, with good results, including an 18% increase in applications.
- *Enriching the Academic Experiences.* We preserve the integrity of, and promote progress in, our core educational mission by implementing the results of program reviews and providing necessary academic support for departments, as well as library, media, and technology resources. Additionally, select areas of distinction are being created by developing strategic clusters. These academic clusters form the centerpiece of fundraising in our upcoming Capital Campaign. Critical to Whittier’s academic experience is recruiting and retaining the very best among faculty and staff by offering competitive compensation packages. We are making progress in achieving faculty salary parity by continuing to implement the multi-pronged approach endorsed by the Board of Trustees at its November 2003 meeting. Beginning with the 2005-2006 academic year, salary increases were in the 5-6% range, with a total increase of 22.5% between the 2004-2005 and 2008-2009 academic years. Though we have made progress relative to our comparison group in some areas from year-to-year, our comparison schools have been progressing as well. Perhaps the best way to think about this is that, as compared to the past, we have not fallen significantly behind in the salary market, are offering competitive entry level salaries, and have eliminated salary compression and equity concerns. Even during the recent economic “Great Recession,” Whittier College was able to provide modest salary increases, and for the 2011-12 year, the salary pool was 5%. A recent survey conducted by HEDS - the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium - showed that nearly two-thirds of 92 participating colleges were not able to provide salary increases during 2009-10, while Whittier gave 1.5%. An important point is that there is significant variation in the number of comparison schools that actually provide us with data. For example, in the 2008-2009 data, one of the missing schools is towards the low end in compensation for full professors. The absence of these data had the impact of increasing the average salaries and hence the parity gap at that rank.
- *Improving student recruitment.* Recruitment efforts and messages have been updated. We are leveraging our designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution in the nation, California, and Los Angeles/Orange County areas. The role of the College’s coaches in recruitment has expanded, and strategic decisions about facilities improvements have been made. Financial aid funds are used to maintain academic profile while maximizing net revenue and supporting retention. In fact, net revenue from tuition has increased from about \$16M in 2002-03 to about \$30M in 2011-12.
- *Improving student retention.* The aspects of Whittier College that make us distinctive as a national liberal arts college (e.g., location, practical liberal arts, interdisciplinary focus, diversity of our student body) have been promoted through investment in the first-year experience and additional attention to the engagement and success of sophomores. After dropping to a low of 72.3% for the Fall 2005 entering class, first-year retention rose to 80.6% for the Fall 2007 class, as the new first-year programs took effect. Retention of the fall 2008 entering class saw a slightly lower rate at 79.3%, but the Fall 2009 class near record of 82.1%, while very preliminary data show that the rate for the 2010 entering class is near 84%.
- *Preserving and enhancing the physical plant and support services.* We have, and will continue to address campus environment issues with an emphasis on providing safe, well-maintained, program-appropriate, and aesthetically pleasing campus facilities. During 2002 to 2004, improvement projects included a library expansion and renovation that doubled building capacity and created The Rose Hills Foundation Center for Library and Information Resources. In April 2004, the College issued \$60 million of variable-rate demand revenue and refunding bonds. From that bond issuance, approximately \$17 million refunded bonds issued in 1993, \$24 million was used for the acquisition of land and buildings previously leased by

the College for use of the Law School campus, and \$16 million was used for Whittier campus projects. These projects included the renovation of Stauffer and Johnson residence halls including interior upgrades and improvements to the electrical, mechanical and plumbing systems; expansion and renovation of the Campus Center, including the addition of A.J. Villalobos Hall, a complete renovation of the dining facility, and addition of a north wing to create a student lounge and new space for student services; renovation to Hoover Hall, one of oldest and highest-use academic buildings including the replacement of the HVAC mechanical system, electrical and plumbing system improvements, and refurbishing of the interior. All projects included ADA improvements as required by building codes.

4. That the Board of Trustees approve the Faculty Handbook, which includes the Academic Freedom Statement, and notify the Commission by September 1, 2002 that this had been adopted.

As reflected in the minutes of the Plenary Session of the Board of Trustees meeting on November 1, 2002, the Board “adopted in principle the American Association of University Professors’ 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure.” The Statement was then and is now posted on the College’s web site under: (1) [Academic Requirements, Policies and Procedures](#) and (2) [Faculty Resources](#) (Via email from Martha Balslem in September 2003, WASC indicated that the College had made a “fully satisfactory response” and that we were “current” with WASC).

IV. Whittier College’s 2009 Institutional Proposal.

Our commitment to reflection and review continued following the approval of our December 2009 Institutional Proposal. A December 14, 2009 letter from Teri Cannon, Executive Associate Director of WASC, summarized two recommendations for the college’s consideration: (1) That the College clarify the outcomes and the work product for the two stages of the review, explaining what we wished to accomplish at the capacity stage and at the final effectiveness stage of the review, and (2) That the College formulate a plan that more explicitly included Whittier Law School in the reviews, either through connections to the themes or through some other method. The panel thought it important to remind the College that WASC expectations about student learning outcomes and assessment of these outcomes extended to all programs, including at the Law School.

The WASC Steering Committee took these recommendations seriously and addressed each in turn in a letter to Teri Cannon on February 9, 2010.

1. For the CPR: We noted that our CPR will attempt to ensure that decision-making is based on evidence and that our processes for gathering evidence have buy-in from our entire community. Our plan was to examine our current data and our plan is, when necessary, to put in place mechanisms for evaluation and assessment to collect the type of evidence we need to make carefully planned decisions. Some questions include: (a) do we have the capacity in place to accomplish this? (b) are we prepared to undertake our EER? (c) do we have the systems in place to not only meet our goals but to continually gain insight and knowledge so we can grow as an institution? We submitted a work flow plan that elucidated our specific goals for each of our themes, and the ties each of these themes had with specific WASC Standards.

2. For the EER: We noted that our overall (Institutional) goals include: (1) To enhance the development and use of indicators of institutional performance and educational effectiveness; (2) To enhance Whittier's use of indicators of institutional performance and educational effectiveness for our institutional planning and decision making.; (3) To engage the faculty on issues of assessing and improving teaching and learning and to help Whittier align support systems for the faculty more effectively; (4) To identify and assess barriers to student success and graduation; (5) To ensure that we live up to our commitment to diversity by identifying barriers to student success; and (6) We also elucidated the goals for each of the three themes.

3. Regarding the Law School’s involvement in the Review: We noted that the Whittier Law School had begun a comprehensive strategic planning process that was dovetailing with the ABA’s movement towards Outcome

Measures. While the ABA's measures are still at the draft stage, as of April 2011, the Whittier Law School Faculty adopted institutional student learning outcomes and will begin its assessment process in fall 2011. The Law School also adopted seven learning outcomes with the criterion to meet them (refer to Standards).

V. Approach to the CPR in Relation to the Institutional Proposal.

The Capacity and Preparatory Review report continues the analysis of, and reflections on, the specific goals and research questions identified in the Institutional Proposal for the themes of Whittier College's self-study: Essay 1 focuses on Community; Essay 2 focuses on Diversity; and Essay 3 focuses on Undergraduate Research and Scholarly Activity (URSCA). The research questions for each theme that are presented in the Institutional Proposal and in the Response to the WASC Letter are carefully addressed through research and analysis of relevant data, consultations with outside consultants, and examples of best practices at other institutions. These essays are a distillation of reports provided by our WASC Steering Committee's "Subcommittees on Themes." These theme committees, constituted by faculty with help from relevant college staff, have worked together for several years. Though they are Ad Hoc committees (i.e., not permanent faculty committees), they have often served concurrent terms on the Faculty Assessment Committee, providing a continuity of intellectual thought and admirable service. Each "Theme Sub-Committee" has been responsible for answering the research questions in the Institutional Proposal, assessing the validity of the related research hypotheses, and summarizing the extent to which Whittier College has in place the capacity to fulfill institutional goals related to these themes.

VI. Evidence of Campus-Wide Engagement in the Re-accreditation Process.

Whittier began its discussions for our next WASC review during the 2006-7 academic year. The Academic Vice President and WASC ALO, Dr. Susan Gotsch, attended a WASC workshop. To begin early planning, the Academic Vice President and ALO sent out a proposal to department chairs in the spring of 2007. She noted the need for college-wide development of a proposal, and she explained that the process was heading in the direction of a streamlined, collaborative program review process.

The planning process developed into a college-wide discussion about the nature and shape of the proposal. Service on WASC Visiting Committees and the WASC workshops proved very useful. President Herzberger demonstrated her commitment to the accreditation process with service on two WASC Visiting Review Teams (October of 2007 and March of 2009), and Dr. Gotsch served on a Visiting Team in October of 2006. The college recognized the value of the WASC conferences. In fall of 2007, the college sent the chair of the College's faculty assessment committee, the Associate Dean for the First Year Experience and Assessment, the Dean of Students, the Director of the Library to the WASC conference; in 2008 the Dean of the Faculty attended a workshop; and in 2009, the President's Executive Assistant and the Associate Dean, together with two faculty, attended another conference and workshop.

Participation in the WASC workshops led to discussions with the senior staff during the winter and spring of 2008. Based on the recommendations of the Dean of the Faculty and the team that attended the WASC meeting, the Senior Staff decided in February of 2008 to choose a Thematic, rather than a Traditional, format for reaccreditation. Following the decision by the Senior Staff, an invitation was sent to all members of the community to participate in discussions regarding the development of the topics, themes or questions that could be asked and answered as part of the WASC reaccreditation process. The first step in the process was to identify the themes and develop a proposal that described what was to be studied, how it would be studied, and why it was important to the future of the College. Specifically, groups were asked to consider the following in suggesting themes:

1. Themes should be institutionally focused;
2. Themes should cross boundaries and be interdisciplinary in nature;
3. Topics should be focused on things the College is already working on; things the College needs to improve, wants information on for marketing or fundraising, or think that the questions would help the institution move forward. In essence, this would provide an opportunity to look at something that was

already being done at the College and would have substantial benefit for the College to analyze systematically;

4. New areas for examination should not be discouraged as long as those areas would help the College clarify specific issues; and
5. The topics should be able to be assessed in ways that are doable and useable.

Senior staff members were asked to engage their respective constituent groups to ensure broad campus input. The faculty Educational Policies Committee (EPC) served as the “clearing house” for vetting the various ideas. Feedback from various faculty groups, the Student Senate, Student Life, and departmental offices was received and summarized in March 2008. Three themes emerged as possibilities for study:

1. The development of *community* as it relates to the first-year experience and specific components such as living-learning communities, declaration of major, advising, collaborative learning, faculty-staff interaction, and co-curricular engagement;
2. Learning through *diversity* as a key characteristic of Whittier College, the only Annapolis Group HSI, examining how well the institution is prepared to provide a good learning environment for a diverse student body by studying access, retention, institutional receptivity, and achievement in student learning and leadership;
3. Connections between various disciplines and experiences, specifically community-based learning and *undergraduate research*.

Based on this input, at the end of May 2008, the Faculty and Staff WASC committee developed the three themes that form the basis for the Self-Study. The College community began to formulate more explicit plans during the 2008-9 academic years. The Board of Trustees was involved in the process and informed regarding the initial foci. In November 2008, President Herzberger sent a letter to the members of Steering Committee, charging them to develop a proposal. Members were chosen from the wider college community, and included faculty, administrators, a student representative, and a liaison to the Law School. Discussions continued with the Deans Council and the Faculty Executive Committee. At its May 2009 meeting, the Board of Trustees engaged in a brief presentation about the themes as they had evolved; trustees provided some input and acknowledged that these areas of inquiry would be beneficial for the College’s future.

With the arrival of the new Vice President for Academic Affairs, Charlotte Borst, who became the College’s Academic Liaison Officer, the planning process continued. The structure for preparation was to have a Steering Committee chaired by a faculty member, Mike McBride. Members included the VPAA/WASC Liaison, the Chair of each Theme Committee, the Director and Associate Director of Assessment, the Chairs of each ‘theme group’, the Chair of the Faculty, the Associate Dean of Faculty and the Dean of Students. The Committee’s for the three themes involved current standing committees that embarked on a two-year capacity analysis. The Assessment Committee was responsible for the Diversity/Culture theme, the Enrollment and Student Affairs Committee was responsible for the Community Theme, and an Ad-hoc Committee was developed for the Undergraduate Research Theme. Each group produced a report that serves as the basis for the Reflective Essay that will be submitted with our CPR. These committees will continue and have already begun their work on the EER.

With the naming of Penelope Bryan as the Dean of the Whittier Law School in 2009, the law school faculty also began to think more broadly about learning outcomes. During the 2010-2011 academic year, the Whittier Law School faculty developed and adopted seven institutional student learning outcomes (SLOs). The process began in fall 2010 with the appointment of the Experiential Learning and Assessment Strategic Planning Committee (the Committee). The Committee met multiple times to discuss fundamental institutional objectives, and then presented a draft of nine possible SLOs to the whole faculty. During the spring, the faculty discussed, refined, and ultimately finalized seven institutional SLOs, including their corresponding criteria. The faculty voted to approve the SLOs and criteria on April 21, 2011.

Whittier College's CPR report is the result of the work of several faculty committees at both the Whittier campus and the Whittier Law School. It has been shared with and reviewed by key groups of faculty, staff and administrators. We believe firmly that Whittier College's Capacity and Preparatory Review demonstrates the following:

1. Whittier College "functions with clear purposes, high levels of institutional integrity, fiscal stability, and organizational structures to fulfill its purposes." (WASC's Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity).
2. Whittier College is prepared (and has even begun) to fulfill its obligations for the WASC Educational Effectiveness Review.

For this third phase of the reaccreditation process, Whittier will demonstrate a strong commitment to WASC's Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness by showing that the College has identified and implemented "clear and appropriate educational objectives at the institutional and program level" and that the College employs processes of review, including the use of data, that assure our students are learning and performing at a level appropriate for the degree awarded.

As a final note, although it is traditional in Capacity and Preparatory Review reports to include in-line references to the standards and criteria for review (CFR), we have taken a different approach that is more appropriate to the structure of this analysis. Because the standards and CFRs are meant to guide the comprehensive assessment of an institution, and we are undergoing a more narrow theme-based review, we felt that merely using in-line references would not allow us to address the scope of the standards. Instead, we have included Appendix 1 where we address each standard and CFR in detail.