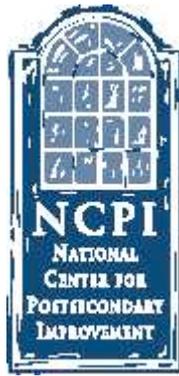# Wake Forest University

A Case Study on the
Institutional Dynamics and Climate for
Student Assessment and Academic Innovation



Conducted by:
Marvin W. Peterson, *Research Director*
Thomas E. Perorazio, *Coordinator*
Sylvia Hurtado, Associate Professor
Mary Ziskin

**INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT**

### A.    *Brief Institutional Description*

Wake Forest University (WFU) is a private, four-year, residential, liberal arts institution that also has graduate and professional schools. The tradition of liberal learning remains strong and is central to the mission of the undergraduate and graduate programs. The university takes pride in its ability to offer the resources and training of larger universities in the setting of a small, more intimate environment. Located in Winston-Salem, NC, the institution was established in 1834 at Wake Forest, NC and is one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in the state. WFU was founded in cooperation with the N.C. Baptist State Convention and its ties to the Baptist heritage remain a significant influence on the ethos of the institution.

WFU last received accreditation from the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in 1997. It participated in SACS' "Alternate Model for Institutional Self-Study and Reaffirmation of Accreditation," a program in which accepted institutions provided documented evidence of compliance. Planning initiatives were also reviewed by consultants as part of the SACS visiting committee. This most recent accreditation has raised awareness among faculty and departments regarding the importance of outcomes assessment and demonstrated results. This awareness has transcended into the academic planning and improvement initiatives.

An important development that must be known to fully understand WFU is its recent strategic plan. Adopted in 1995 and known as the Plan for the Class of 2000 (PTC 2000), the plan (among many other things) provides each incoming student with an IBM ThinkPad and color printer. The laptops are upgraded after two years and become the student's property upon graduation. Faculty, who also receive laptops, are encouraged to use technology in their classrooms, and the students are becoming more accomplished in their use of technology. The result has been the integration of computer and information technology into the entire teaching and learning enterprise. This embrace of technology has not gone unnoticed; WFU was ranked as the "most-wired" liberal arts college in the U.S. by Yahoo! Internet Life Magazine for its innovation and support services.

During the 1999-2000 year, WFU enrolled 6,147 students, with 3,850 of them being undergraduates, 2,164 in the graduate and professional schools, and 133 in Allied Health. WFU is also very selective. The average SAT is 1300, and more than 2/3 of its incoming freshmen having graduated in the top 10 percent of their high school classes, while less than 12 percent of the freshman cohort are outside their high school's top 20 percent. Twenty eight percent of these students came from within the state of North Carolina, while 72 percent were out-of-state. Also, 70 percent of the students receive some form of financial aid. Minority enrollment for the fall of 1999 was about 12 percent, with African-Americans comprising a little more than 8 percent of the student body, Asian students comprising 2 percent, and other ethnic groups and non-resident aliens comprising less than 1 percent each. In 1999-2000, WFU had 348 full-time undergraduate faculty and a student-faculty ratio of 10.5:1.

### B.    *The Undergraduate Schools*

Originally consisting of only Wake Forest College, WFU is now comprised of seven parts. The two undergraduate components are Wake Forest College and the Calloway School of Business and Accountancy. Wake Forest College is the undergraduate college of arts and sciences and is the academic unit to which all students are initially admitted. WFC has the largest enrollment of all the colleges and is the center of the institution's academic life. It offers courses in over 40 fields of study leading <u>to</u> the baccalaureate degree, as well as minors and opportunities for study in many other areas. The Calloway School awards baccalaureate degrees in accountancy, business, analytical finance, information systems, and mathematical business.

The undergraduate colleges are governed by the Board of Trustees, the WFU administration, and their respective faculties. The deans of the individual schools report to the Senior Vice-President- the chief academic officer of the institution- and are responsible for the academic planning and administration of their schools.

## *C. Other Schools*

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences offers advanced work and confers the masters of Arts, the M.A in education and liberal studies, an M. S. in arts and sciences, and the Ph.D. in biology, chemistry, physics, and 11 biomedical sciences.

There are also four professional schools. The School of Law confers the juris doctor and masters in American law degrees and the Babcock School of Management offers the M.B.A; the two also offer a joint program. The Divinity School, just established in 1999, offers the master of divinity degree. And the Wake Forest School of Medicine offers the doctor of medicine degree and allied health programs. It is located about four miles away from the other colleges and schools on the Bowman Gray Campus, near the downtown area. All other parts of the campus are collected together in northwest Winston-Salem on the Reynolda Campus, covering approximately 340 acres. Finally, it should also be noted that WFU also offers instruction abroad for its students at houses it owns in Venice, London, and Vienna.

## II. INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH TO STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### *A. History of the Emergence of Assessment at WFU*

From 1988-2000, there have been three major institutional developments that were fundamental to the emergence of the current pattern of student assessment activity. The most important is a regular and ongoing process of strategic planning that has addressed several major institutional needs over this time span. The second major development is the university's active engagement with the SACS accreditation criteria, particularly their focus on improving institutional effectiveness. Finally, the third development fostering student assessment is the emergence of departmentally based planning and assessment activity, especially the internal process for evaluating academic programs.

<u>Strategic Planning</u>

The introduction and development of strategic planning has been a key focus of the current president, who was hired to conduct long range planning as part of his overall responsibilities. There have been three waves of institutional planning during the administration of the current president, and a fourth is currently underway.

The initial planning effort (1988-1992) focused on space needs. The President and the VP for Finance and Administration initially developed a process to build WFU as part of its transition from a college to a university. They felt a new physical configuration was needed to help the university fulfill its mission. During a second major wave of planning, it was decided that the law school and the professional schools had to be strengthened to make them of the same quality as the undergraduate departments. The other outcomes of the academic plan did not greatly change the curriculum, although women's studies and international education were added. Otherwise, it did not greatly alter the academic arena.

However, the campus approach to planning was changed. The President and the VP established a pattern for making planning a regular tool to help identify problems and opportunities.  This planning wave produced three ongoing, institution-wide planning processes. The first is an academic planning procedure in which departments submit annual reports to the Provost. The Program Planning Committee also examines these when it is reconstituted every 3-4 years for 18 months to make recommendations on major academic initiatives. The second planning process was a master physical/campus plan (headed by the VP for Finance & Administration) which is now regularly reviewed by the Capital Planning committee. Finally, this planning wave produced an institutional financial plan (also headed by the VP for Finance & Administration). The Budget Planning Committee makes ten-year financial projections based on external economic factors.

The third major wave of strategic planning by the President and VP produced significant change in the academic enterprise. This effort (1992-1994) was headed by the Provost and was undertaken by the Program Planning Committee. Data on students was collected regarding their satisfaction with academic programs and experiences and faculty needs were ascertained through surveys and many open hearings. A new initiative that outlined academic goals and recommendations for the next decade emerged from this planning process. This initiative was the Plan for the Class of 2000 (PTC 2000). During the spring of 1995, there were extensive campus wide discussions regarding the plan before it was approved in April 1995 by the faculty and the Board of Trustees. The PTC 2000 had three major components: 1) improvement of the first-year experience, 2) use of information technology for learning (all incoming freshmen were given laptops), and 3) the overall improvement of the intellectual climate on campus. Other recommendations included the addition of 40 faculty to lower the student-faculty ratio from 13/1 to 11/1, study abroad scholarships and fellowships for students collaborating with faculty on research projects. PTC 2000 is also important for the development of student assessment because it gave rise to the Evaluation Committee, which uses assessment data to evaluate the effectiveness and success of the plan (see Sec. III C).

A new wave of strategic planning is currently underway (headed by the Senior VP, acting as Interim Provost) and will focus specifically on the intellectual climate issue, including student and faculty life and relationships and residential living and learning. The Division of Student

Life is heavily involved in this effort because it has been collecting data on students and their experiences for several years. Discussions with campus leaders revealed that this issue is of primary concern and there is some sense that the time has come for action and the implementation of some of the ideas already proposed.

Accreditation
The second major development important to the emergence of assessment at WFU is the work the institution has done to satisfy the SACS criteria for institutional effectiveness. In 1992-93, WFU moved into preparation for reaccreditation and in November of 1994 submitted a proposal to be considered under the pilot "Alternative Model" program. Under this process, the institution submitted documents and engaged in its own self-study of the qualitative and subjective areas of institutional improvement from 1995-1997. Still, they had to satisfy all of SACS *Criteria for Accreditation*. The Provost charged part of the Steering Committee with looking at accreditation while another focused on the strategic component of their academic planning process. The accreditation visit occurred in March of 1997. Following the visit, WFU was given 17 recommendations for compliance-- the most important of which was to focus on institutional effectiveness, an area not sufficiently addressed in the original report.

Following the SACS accreditation review, the executive officers, the faculty, and the campus gave greater priority to assessment. There had not been much formalized student assessment in place before the accreditation process. Departments were asked to formally demonstrate institutional effectiveness in their annual reports using assessment data. Department chairs had to report what they were doing regarding outcomes and had to specify their mission, purpose, goals, assessment processes, etc.

One significant change ensued. SACS had noticed that some of the 1995-96 reports had been weak and did not cover assessment at all. Following these efforts, the 1996-1997 annual reports showed a marked improvement regarding assessment activity within departments. Other changes include an initiative by the division of Student Life to gather more data on students and all aspects of their WFU experiences, a centrally coordinated system for collecting data institution wide, and the use of more assessment data by departments to evaluate their activities and programs.

Departmental Planning and Assessment
The third development in the history of assessment at WFU was the emergence of a campus wide system for ongoing planning and improvement centered in the departments. This was a by-product of the strategic planning efforts and attention to the accreditation review process. There exists now an integrated planning process for institutional effectiveness that is departmentally based, but also connected to the planning efforts of the academic and administrative divisions and the entire institution. This first began around 1990 with the advent of annual reports (see Sec. II B) and Academic Program Review, which is completed every seven years (see Sec. II B). Each of these processes feed data collected by the department from student assessment back into the evaluation and decision making procedures. This allows for the incorporation of assessment data into the planning cycle of the departments and those at higher levels of the institution. On the whole, the planning mechanism is quite decentralized because of an administrative

philosophy that those most knowledgeable of and closest to the ongoing processes of the department should also be responsible for reviewing them and implementing changes.

It will become clear that strategic planning and an integrated planning process based at the departmental level and focused on institutional effectiveness combine to reveal that WFU has a extensive process for academic planning and institutional improvement that values assessment information regarding performance. It is a complex framework in which most of the information is gathered locally and combined with institutional data by higher levels of administration to produce a coordinated planning cycle. Its emphasis is whether WFU and its units are achieving academic and strategic priorities rather than on comparisons with peer institutions or "benchmarking."

## B.      Areas of Assessment

WFU has a management approach driven by a focus on planning, a concern for examining data, including student assessment in various areas, and a philosophy focused on the improvement of WFU. Three main approaches to assessment comprise the major student assessment activity on campus.  These are: 1) Institution-wide assessment, including data collection and surveys administered by the Office of Institutional Research (OIR), 2) the Departmental and Program Review processes, and 3) Student Life, which collects data on student experiences and perceptions. Other groups, including the Executive Council, Program Planning, the Evaluation Committee, and academic administrators also contribute, but are most often users, not producers, of student assessment data.

Institution wide assessment
Institution wide assessment is primarily centered in the Office of Institutional Research (OIR). This office works with the Associate Provost, the Evaluation Committee, and other interested parties. They have developed a plan for regularly collecting and analyzing student assessment data.

To support the institution's planning and evaluation efforts, OIR collects quantitative data through several institution-wide surveys that are administered periodically. WFU participates in the annual CIRPS Freshmen Survey, which is administered during the orientation program by the University Counseling Center, although OIR analyzes the data. From 1996-1998, OIR administered the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) to first-year, sophomore, and junior students. Beginning in 2000, the CSEQ will be administered every other year. Seniors have been surveyed annually from 1993-1998 using the HEDS Senior Survey. It will now also be given every other year, starting in 2000. HEDS surveys were also administered to alumni in 1994 and 1998, and will now be given at five year intervals, with the next survey scheduled in 2003. There is also an in-house survey to assess student's experiences with computers for educational purposes.

Quantitative data is also collected on faculty in three ways. WFU participated in the HERI Faculty Survey in 1998 and is scheduled to do so again in 2001 and 2004, pending approval by the Evaluation Committee. The Evaluation Committee has also developed an internal survey of

faculty that it administered in 1994, 1998, and 2000 to assess the strategic plan. The Department of Communication also administers a faculty survey on computer usage.

WFU has not been as successful in collecting qualitative data. Beginning with the class of 2000, incoming freshmen were asked to write essays on their expectations from college. The intent was to follow up with them during the spring of their senior year, but that follow up was only done on a voluntary basis. As might be expected, very few seniors returned to write their second essays for comparison. The institution has plans to increase the response rate of 2001 seniors in an effort to strengthen the qualitative study of its students. The next focus for assessment will be on life outside the classroom and the academic/intellectual atmosphere on campus.

*Peer Comparisons*
Wake Forest conducts a significant amount of assessment on peer institutions. One of the goals of the Plan for the Class of 2000 was to raise Reynolda campus faculty salaries to the mean at each rank of nine "Cross Admit" institutions. A considerable amount of in depth analysis of salaries at these peer institutions took place in 1999-2000 resulting in the "Salary Opportunity Plan" which provided an additional $3,000,000 into the salary pool for 2000-2002. Another goal of the Plan for the Class of 2000 was to reduce the student faculty ratio from 13/1 to 11/1 to reach the mean of student faculty ratios at the private Cross Admit institutions. Research on these nine institutions takes place continually in a number of other areas as well.

Wake Forest belongs to the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Consortium consisting of 137 private institutions nationally. HEDS provides to OIR reports with data on peer institutions in a number of areas including enrollment, admissions, faculty salaries, endowment, financial aid, retention and graduation rates and tuition. Wake Forest has recently used the comparative information on endowment and financial aid to set goals for the upcoming $300 million campaign.

Additionally, HEDS designs and makes available senior and alumni/ae surveys and subsequently provides in reports both unmasked and masked survey results on Wake Forest and chosen peer institutions. Earlier, the survey results from peer institutions were used in the goal setting process of the Plan for the Class of 2000. The Evaluation Committee continues to analyze the peer institution results as the committee assesses the outcomes of the Plan for the Class of 2000.

Departmentally Based Assessment
Departmentally based academic planning developed around 1990. The planning unit at WFU is the academic department and assessment of plans and major initiatives are reviewed in the administrative hierarchy to refine their implementation. Procedures for program review were adopted in 1995 that allow for the incorporation of results from assessment tools and other feedback into this departmental planning cycle.


*Program Review*
Planning for the Program Review process itself was begun in 1992 under the Provost who tapped the Dean of the Graduate School to head the Program Review Task Force. The Task Force facilitated a process that gave faculty and students the opportunity to provide input. The Task

Force decided that, rather than distinguish between undergraduate and graduate programs, the departments would be reviewed as a whole and by undergraduate and graduate programs every seven years.

The program review process is now coordinated by the Director of OIR and has specific guidelines and criteria. One review cycle takes about 13 months. First, the Director of OIR and the Deans of WF College and the Graduate School meet with the chairs from the department to be reviewed in early May. Then the chair and the department are given about five months to conduct a self study, during which time they also identify external reviewers who will visit the campus later. In mid-November, the self-study report is submitted to an Internal Review Committee of elected faculty (chair is chosen by the Deans), and by January $1^{st}$, the self-study report is submitted for review by the Provost, Deans, and the external reviewers. In mid-February, the external reviewers visit the campus for two days, and then submit their findings back to the Internal Review Committee by mid-March. This committee submits its final report to the Deans and Provost by May $1^{st}$. The department works with the Deans and Provost to develop its Memorandum of Understanding by the end of May. The Memo details a timetable for the implementation of any recommendations emerging from the review. A follow-up study is conducted one year after the completion of the Memo of Understanding to ensure that data gathered from the assessment process and the recommendations were appropriately acted upon.

While examining all levels of departmental activity, a considerable amount of attention is given to student assessment data in the process. Departments draw on data from the OIR for their self-studies (mostly student experience, satisfaction, and alumni surveys). These include the CSEQ, the HEDS Senior and Alumni surveys, exit interviews of leaving students, as well as current student body characteristics, (GPAs, diversity, etc.). This use of student assessment data is not centrally mandated. Faculty talk about the kinds of trends they see in GRE scores, admission to graduate/professional schools, licensure exams. The reason it continues is the departments feel peer pressure to keep their own standards up.

Examination of student and department outcomes varies by department. Some will rate performances by faculty. Some departments will have capstones in which a project, paper, or recital is reviewed by a full committee. Or a department might look at the performance of its alumni in a graduate program. For some departments, the link of program review to IR gives them some connection to student life, because otherwise they might have little contact with that part of the student experience. Some of the smaller departments feel there needs to be an examination of the qualitative/quantitative issue, because they cannot maintain the data they need. A few chairs have mentioned that they are starting to create databases they need to do their own, others are working with OIR to have them maintain the data.

*Annual Reports*
A system of annual reports is an integral part of WFU's plan for institutional effectiveness. At the end of each academic year, each administrative unit and committee, as well as every department and school, must submit a report to the dean or direct supervisor. The report must summarize major activities during the year, including the progress made on objectives from prior years. For this it must specify the data and criteria used to demonstrate the achievement of previous objectives. It must also set forth objectives for the next year and the next five years. Departments

are given the authority to design their own approach to the annual report but must include a summary of the reports of individual faculty in their unit. Chairs submit reports to the Dean of the College and Den of the Graduate School (as appropriate), Provost and Vice President for Finance and Administration while the academic deans submit reports to the Provost and Vice President for Finance and Administration.

Student Life
Since its formation in 1989, the Division of Student Life has utilized annual reports, surveys, and other evaluative measures to undertake planning for the following year. Each office submits reports at the end of each year, including goals and objectives for the upcoming year. Most of their work with student assessment touches on students' experiences and perceptions regarding campus life. There is also a considerable emphasis on examining each service unit's performance using assessment data on student satisfaction. This data draws on the OIR institution-wide surveys but also involves extensive data collection efforts spearheaded by Student Life. There are times when they will share data with academic departments, but for the most part, academic units focus on data about teaching.

In 1992, the Provost reached out to open conversations between the academic and student life areas of the student experience. The Student Life Committee worked on ways to improve the intellectual climate on campus during the strategic planning of 1995. In 1997, a group funded by the Lilly Endowment submitted 14 recommendations to improve the intellectual and cultural climate on campus. At this point, the assessment within Student Life is coalescing around the improvement of the intellectual climate on campus. This area will part of the major focus during the upcoming strategic planning effort (chaired by the Interim Provost) which will focus on improving the academic climate on campus.

The collection of CSEQ data grew out of a consultative relationship with George Kuh to help define the issues surrounding academic life on campus. His report led to much discussion on campus of a list of priorities that are targeted at improving the experience for first year students. Use of the CSEQ has helped debunk some of the myths students and faculty have about students' time. The student myth is that they have to spend too much time doing work for courses (students call the school "Work Forest"), but the survey revealed that students spend less time on classes, homework, and attending intellectual events than even the faculty thought. There is also a faculty myth that students spend too much time on student activities, but survey results showed that not to be the case. Given this information, one of the issues to be studied in the planning for the intellectual climate is to determine exactly what students are doing with their time.

There is the perception that the academic administration pays too little attention to student life. The division does many studies on a variety of topics like alcohol, student behaviors, eating disorders, community service programs, honor integrity, and others. It is hoped that more of this information will be used in the next planning phase dealing with relationships between students and faculty. Student Life is also assisting in the longitudinal study on the use of computers; it is examining its social impacts as a part of the evaluation of PTC 2000.

*Summary*

The three major developments to emerge from the institutional planning over the past 12 years, strategic planning, departmentally based academic planning and review, and assessment activities at several levels, all reflect a data oriented approach to academic management. There is a flow of assessment information upwards to those responsible for undertaking planning initiatives. The Executive Council regularly reviews the data on institution wide assessment reports. The Provost and the Dean of WF College regularly examine data in departmental reviews and in academic planning and evaluation committees. Student Life is data driven regarding its programs and how they affect students' experiences. The emphasis is whether WFU and its units (academic and student life) are achieving strategic priorities, while peer comparisons or benchmarking, also play a role in that evaluation.

## C.        *Student Assessment Activity and Types of Data, Instruments, & Collection*

The student assessment data collected at the institutional level is primarily quantitative and comes through the form of questionnaires and surveys administered to students, alumni, and faculty (see Sec. II B). Overall, the information gathered is focused on objective outcomes, rather than cognitive or affective outcomes.  Most of the surveys used by OIR are available nationally, except for the in-house faculty surveys that were developed by the Evaluation Committee for the assessment of PTC 2000 and the Department of Communication.

The CSEQ collects information on how students use their time. Administration of this survey resulted of a planning and consultation relationship with George Kuh in 1995-96 regarding the academic climate on campus.  Analysis of data collected from the CIRP Freshmen Survey has allowed WFU to learn about the changing demographics of new students over time. The HEDS Senior Survey lets WFU assess graduating seniors' overall experiences, while the HEDS Alumni Survey lets them determine the effects of those experiences five years out. There is also an in-house survey developed to measure students' expectations and comfort with using computers for educational purposes. Results from the computer surveys help determine what kind of computer training is needed.

First year students are also surveyed about their experiences with the new First Year Seminar (FYS) courses--part of PTC 2000. Students are asked to rate the program on its rigor, how it compares with other courses, and if they feel it helped them develop the intellectual skills outlined in the goals for the seminars, such as reading, writing, technical expertise, and critical analysis.

The data on undergraduate faculty is collected through the HERI Faculty Survey, and two in-house surveys. The WFU Faculty Survey was developed to help the Evaluation Committee assess the effectiveness of the strategic plan (PTC 2000), while the computer survey was administered to determine faculty members' comfort and ability to use computers for teaching.

As part of their program review and annual reporting processes, departments target their majors and their alumni regarding their satisfaction with their programs. The focus is on improvement to make the programs useful and worthwhile. Common procedures include exit interviews for students who dropout or transfer, contact with alumni to ask how their education is serving them, and surveys of graduating seniors about their preparation and opinions of their classes.

There is a cultural disposition towards independence and autonomy for the departments because they are best qualified to make decisions regarding goals and how to measure them. Some departments work with Student Life and the data they collect, but that is more informal and grows out of a relationship over time. Most departments are likely to focus on teaching and the effective delivery of material. Some departments collect unique forms of data, such as the degree progress of majors or students' intentions with regards to graduate school or specific jobs. However, there does not seem to be any systematic method for gathering information about graduates from employers directly. Some departments feel that it would be difficult to get consistent and useable data from such a diverse array of employers.

There is little collection of qualitative data institution wide, although OIR does some. The HEDS Senior Survey allows for open-ended comments, and these comments are read with an item analysis conducted by OIR as part of the overall analysis of the survey results. Other qualitative data is collected in the context of academic program reviews and reports, but is unsystematic. There is a need for pre- and post qualitative data on students (written essays) on students' experiences. Also, OIR doesn't get detailed statistics on how departments assess learning, although grade inflation studies are periodically conducted by OIR and disseminated to the Deans. They do get info from Student Affairs on satisfaction with services, but departments assess students in coursework. There is also no systematic data on whether students are changing in preferred ways. WFU doesn't do any longitudinal studies in this area, but anecdotal data is received when students are asked to reflect back on their experiences.

### D.      Reports

At the institutional level, OIR publishes a 50-page *Fact Book* each year that summarizes data on students, faculty, staff, as well as university facilities and finances. It is distributed to the Trustees, Board of Visitors, Alumni Council, and internally to Executive Council for their use in planning and evaluation. Regarding students, the *Fact Book* contains information on admission and enrollments, retention rates, characteristics of the entering such as test scores, and information on current students as geographic distribution and their affiliation with Greek organizations. The *Fact Book* also contains information about graduating students such as degrees and majors, placement rates and areas, entry into graduate and professional schools, and graduates with distinction. All in all, this publication compiles approximately 60 statistical studies relevant to the WFU community.

The Director of OIR makes periodic reports to the Executive Council (President, Provost, VPs and Deans) and the Reynolda Cabinet (President and VPs). These bodies occasionally ask for summaries of statistical studies, but there is no formal, regular reporting to them. The Evaluation Committee (EC) also gets reports on the data centrally collected by OIR. Smaller work groups within the EC take relevant information to the appropriate department chairs, but then it becomes the chairs' responsibility to use the information. The work groups also make a full report back to the EC once a year.

Program reviews and departmental annual reports go to the immediate supervisors--deans and department chairs. The findings from these reports stay within the departments or school; they are not generally shared with anyone who is not directly or indirectly connected with that school

or department. Many administrative and service units also file annual reports indicating student and customer satisfaction with their services/performance, and department heads outline areas for improvement. The Board of Trustees receives regular reports from the President and the Executive Council about planning efforts and the status of specific initiatives.

## III.    INSTITUTION-WIDE SUPPORT PATTERNS

### A.    *Mission / Purpose*

There is no specific mention in the Mission and Purpose Statement of the assessment of student learning or the evaluation of academic programs and services for institutional improvement. However, several academic leaders consider assessment part of the purpose of the institution. There is the sense that assessment facilitates planning as a management tool to address the institution's problems and help individuals work towards effectiveness. Assessment was done informally prior to the most recent strategic planning initiative and has become driven internally by the faculty so that the institution can demonstrate to outside stakeholders and observers that it is maintaining its quality.

### B.    *Institution-wide Events/ Activities Related to Assessment*

It seems that many of the events that facilitated the initial push towards greater assessment can be traced back to the efforts of the Provost beginning around 1992. Some ideas continue while others have faded away. For example, the provost encouraged the formation of one faculty group interested in issues of teaching effectiveness in the early 1990s. This was a group of 10-12 who met regularly over dinner for several years. Their findings and recommendations fed into the program planning process that produced FYS and PTC 2000. In the early 90s, the Provost also organized Assessment Seminars for several years. This usually involved bringing in speakers to discuss various topics like teaching effectiveness or improving learning. This series of events provided a stimulus for the planning for the PTC 2000.

These types of events still occur, although less frequently. Administrative of academic departments occasionally convene "best practices conferences" when they perceive a special need for some external group or person to provide consultation or advice on a topic. The past several years have seen conferences on admissions, the first-year orientation process, and the status of women on campus. Regular events are also scheduled. Each year, department chairs hold a planning retreat to discuss topics like the program review process, assessment instruments, and the success of prior year initiatives. Planning retreats are also held twice annually by the President, Provost, VP for Health Affairs, and the Director of Athletics to review the implementation and evaluation of various programs.

In 1995-96, WFU entered into a consultative relationship with Dr. George Kuh from the University of Indiana, who helped faculty, students, and administrators discuss the larger issues surrounding the academic life on campus.  In January of 1996, a group of students, faculty, and staff attended a weekend retreat that produced a list of priorities and recommendations for improving the intellectual climate on campus. Dr. Kuh's final report, issued later in 1996,

provided campus planners with much material for debate, and the conversation continued through a series of articles in the campus newspaper.

Finally, the embrace of technology has created a need for increased training on the equipment (see Sec. V B). The Information Systems Office (ISO) trains faculty on standard software on the machine, and people from the Computer Enhanced Learning Initiative (CELI) train them on specialized software for courses. Also, the library does training on a new program that provided course information. And there are events to share methods for using computers. Students trained by ISO to help faculty use technology in the classes hold an annual conference to present their ideas and projects to the campus.

### C.      *Planning and Coordination of Student Assessment*

WFU has no single office or task force that directs or plans student assessment and no central plan or policy regarding it. Coordination is achieved both formally and informally by a variety of people and groups who either direct some area of student assessment, support it, or regularly rely on such information.

*Formal*
The primary formal coordination at the institutional level comes from the Director of OIR and the various roles performed by that office. First, there is a regular schedule and set of data collections from OIR (see Sec. II B & C). These have been selected/designed by the Director of OIR with the advice and support of the Associate Provost. OIR performs the function of student data collector and provider to the campus community through the annual publication of the *Fact Book* and other reporting duties, as well as providing individual departments specific data upon request. The OIR director also coordinates the departmental program review process, and there is some consistency across departments in thew types of data collected and reviewed.

Formalized assessment also occurs across the institution as the implementation of PTC 2000 is evaluated by a committee of faculty and administrators. The Evaluation Committee (EC), initially begun by the former provost, was charged with evaluating the effectiveness of the Plan for the Class of 2000 but has also evolved into an overall assessment committee in an advisory capacity. The OIR director now chairs the Evaluation Committee and helps coordinate the student assessment process for the committee. At first it considered the areas to assess, the means for evaluating, and used existing institutional surveys. It has now moved towards more nationally-administered surveys and has sanctioned all of the surveys OIR uses to do institution wide assessment (see Sec II B &C). Later, it formed subcommittees to look at various issues because it was decided that they needed a mechanism to feed the information collected back to the university community. The members of the EC also serve as liaisons to various committees and offices throughout the university, so they transmit results. Those working groups are: 1) Intellectual Climate, 2) Career Planning, 3) Faculty/Student Academic Relations, and 4) Information Technology.

Evaluation Committee areas of concern include reviewing the criteria by which programs are judged and what types of supplemental questions should be added to survey instruments. The EC receives and reviews the results and analysis from student, alumni/ae and faculty surveys as well

as the *Fact Book*. All in all, there are 27 key measures of quality on which the EC monitors progress, including the quality of students upon entrance and exit, the quality of their experiences, retention and graduation rates, and the effects of study abroad. Members of the committee feel they have helped departments embrace the SACS requirements for assessment and effectiveness.

Another major coordinated effort to gather assessment data occurs with the First Year Seminar (FYS) program and the FYS Committee. The FYS Committee surveys students about their experiences and satisfaction with their FYS courses. The ratings are anonymous for each course, professor, and student. Then all surveys are combined and the entire FYS program is evaluated at once. The committee has the responsibility to say if they are pleased with the outcomes of the student evaluations and if any changes need to be made to the criteria for course approval. The committee would also propose any new evaluations.

*Informal*
The expectation is that the academic leadership, including the President and all VPs and Deans, will engage in strategic planning periodically and the academic program review will occur at regular intervals, thereby allowing for the assessment and evaluation of units and for the appropriate changes to be made. Informally, there is interaction among and use of assessment information by various groups such as the Executive Council, the Reynolda Cabinet, the Program Planning Committee and other all-university planning groups, and the departments when designing their program review. Other groups like the Evaluation Committee and Division of Student Life lead to the continual suggestion for new data needs, analyses, and reports.

### D.      Support for Student Assessment

Strong institutional support for assessment on campus is embedded in the academic leadership. Executive responsibility and support is different for different data streams, however, primary support is widespread. The President and the VP of Finance & Administration provide support by using assessment information in their strategic planning decisions. Assessment results have been instrumental in helping focus the planning initiatives on critical institutional needs and have helped in the evaluation of academic decisions. Information regularly flows to these administrators through their involvement with the Executive Council and the Reynolda Cabinet, the two highest level committees to make planning and management decisions.

Administrative support for academic planning & program review is given by the Provost, the Dean of WFC, the Senior VP, and the VP for Student Life who all use assessment information routinely. The planning/implementation/evaluation cycle used by academic and administrative departments requires a regular flow of assessment information regarding programs and services. This process requires the collection of information by department chairs and unit leaders, who then forward the results upward to decision-makers. Although the types of information and decision criteria differ amongst units, there is a common need for data in all phases of the planning cycle. The OIR director works and shares campus-wide information with those individuals who collect and compile assessment information. For example, the VP for Student Life and his staff works with advice from OIR.

One group that would like to become more involved and provide more support for assessment is the faculty senate. Currently there are no by-laws of other university policies that give this body the authority to make decisions regarding the program review process or assessment. The senate is trying to become more involved in the long range planning process. However, it is important to note that there was a great deal of faculty input and support for both the program review process and for PTC 2000.

### E.     *Evaluation of Student Assessment Process*
There is no formal, administrative effort to evaluate the assessment efforts in a holistic manner. However, continuous use of data in the planning/implementation/evaluation cycle leads to continuous revision in what is collected, the studies done, and reports prepared in all three streams-- the institution-wide, departmental-level, and student life assessment processes.

There are some important evaluative steps that occur among several units. For example, OIR conducts an annual survey of WFU department chairs and deans regarding the effectiveness of the *Fact Book* to determine if its content and format are useful to users. This has resulted in some changes, including the incorporation of some additional statistical studies. Also, the Evaluation Committee for PTC 2000 reviews the surveys and data collected for the process of evaluating the strategic plan. One of the early changes resulting from this process was the adoption of the CSEQ survey and the development of the in-house faculty survey.

PTC 2000 is being evaluated throughout its implementation by the EC, so there is no group that will take a retrospective look at the plan down the road. The assessment techniques used to evaluate it are continually reviewed as part of the strategic planning process, although there is no single group charged with evaluating instruments or techniques.

## IV.     EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

### A.     *State Level*

WFU is a private institution free from state oversight and its ultimate governing authority rests with the privately appointed Board of Trustees. The institution remains proud of its Baptist heritage that encourages freedom from outside interference. As such, there is no discernable link between state assessment policies and practices at WFU.

### B.     *Accreditation*

It became clear from participant interviews that the most powerful external influence on the creation and maintenance of the assessment initiatives at WFU was the accreditation criteria of SACS. The lasting effect of SACS is most evident in the continued attention given to the institutional effectiveness criteria. The evaluation and approval process in the 1990s seemed to have solidified the belief amongst the administration and faculty that assessment has to be taken seriously to earn reaccredidation (see Sec. II A). And the institution believes too strongly in its academic reputation to do anything that would risk an unfavorable report.

Members of the faculty have indicated that going through the accreditation process and following the institutional effectiveness guidelines have been the most helpful to the departmental planning and assessment efforts. All the administrators and faculty members we interviewed referenced the effectiveness criteria and the importance of assessment to the accreditation process.

Still, this new process for management is not accepted without criticism. Some felt that WFU has a love-hate relationship with SACS. Certainly, the two organizations share goals of self-evaluation and self-improvement, but some feel the SACS guidelines and criteria are too standardized. WFU is less interested in specifically targeting student learning outcomes because they feel the students they attract are so strong. The university and departmental administration are more interested in the unique needs and situations of the individual academic units.

## C.     Other

There are only a few other discernible external influences on the adoption and continuance of assessment. One was that as part of the implementation of PTC 2000, tuition was raised $3000 in order to finance the laptop initiative. This action moved WFU from being one of the least expensive schools in its market to having prices comparable to many of the private schools with which it competed for students. WFU officials felt pressure to justify the raise and demonstrate the quality of the school to external stakeholders. The Evaluation Committee, charged with assessing PTC 2000, was partly born from this kind of thinking.

The consultation with George Kuh in the mid-1990s was also an important influence because it helped the Program Planing Committee focus on specific academic needs regarding faculty-student interaction. The ideas and recommendations from that relationship continue to inform the next round of planning on the intellectual climate.

## V.     ACADEMIC MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES

### A.     Allocation of Resources

The only office on campus that has funds budgeted specifically for student assessment initiatives is OIR. It is funded to perform the institution wide data collection and analysis. As the central office that provides data and reports to other units around campus, WFU has invested most of its resources for assessment in this one unit.

Although it is an academic management priority to provide departments with funds sufficient to meet planning goals, there is nothing specifically targeted for assessment. Deans and provosts know assessment is important for SACS and evaluation of the strategic plan at this time, so they make some internal funds available for it. However, quality performance in student assessment work is occasionally granted to units that produce special reports.

### B.     Student Information Systems

The Information Systems Office (ISO) handles programming for student records and provides tech support for online registration. It also offers training to students and faculty on software. ISO is developing the Wake Information Network (WIN), a network for students and alumni to get information. ISO plans to eventually have WIN be a single portal for all information from marketing and admissions to registration to providing alumni services for life.

It supports offices on campus that perform assessment by providing tech support, creating surveys, posting them on the web, and tabulating results. The funds for this do not come out of ISO's budget. Every department has an Academic Computing Specialist (ACS); someone that works for Deans to facilitate surveys of students as well as providing other technical support services to faculty. This person is the first contact. Faculty and offices develop survey and get approval and mailing lists out of their own budgets, but ISO posts it at no charge; it is not a fee-for-service operation.

ISO also makes available an online course evaluation template so that faculty can design their own forms. The department makes up the general format and faculty can add questions before the finished forms are uploaded to WIN. Students can pull up evaluations for courses they registered for and the results and analysis are sent back to the department head. Students do not see these results; it is a closed system. This is the major assessment tool. Chairs make decisions about how that information is shared with faculty, but the automation makes tabulation and maintenance easier and chairs know how many have been completed. The Dean has encouraged all departments to go to online evaluations, but it is not yet required.

Assessment by ISO itself comes in the form of feedback it collects on how information technology serves students. Every year, 12-20 focus groups are conducted in the dorms and print surveys are distributed. ISO also collects their own data regarding their services. It doesn't really assess learning, but it gives them an idea of how their services are aiding students and faculty with academic work. The senior surveys (HEDS) provide ISO with student perceptions of its services relative to others. They watched that data carefully the first two years, but they perceive the results as focused on faculty/teaching related issues and not on technology related issues, per se. Regarding future assessment needs, ISO has no plans to assess the effect on graduates of having lived in this technological environment, although they said they would be interested in getting data that shows whether specific computer treatments produce certain academic effects.

ISO has provided assistance from 1995 to the present on the longitudinal survey that is evaluating the effect of computing as part of PTC 2000. The Provost and VP for Finance and Administration recognized the need for survey and assessment tool and originally approached the Communication Department about it. The survey is sent to all students at the beginning of the year and is focused on comfort with technology, whether they learn more with it, how its helps communication, and their expectations for dealing with technology. Findings show that some students deal with computerization better than others. ISO recognizes that juniors and seniors have less tech shock, but some training and support is provided to help all students adjust more easily. They work with the student body to find a way to have them deliver technology and teach each other. All of this helps ISO understand what needs of students are and how the computing services are being delivered.

### C.    *Access to Student Assessment Data*

Student assessment data is retained within the unit that collected it. Since OIR collects most of its own data and provides analysis and reports for other offices, it is the central clearinghouse for information. First and foremost, it produces the *Fact Book*, but extensive student assessment data reports and special studies are widely shared. What is made available is primarily done so at the administrative level. This is in the form of reports to the Executive Council and Reynolda Cabinet, the chairs of academic departments, and the directors of administrative offices. OIR also share data and performs analysis for the Program Planning and Evaluation Committees, the Division of Student Life, and to the Program Review Committee. Student survey results (HEDS Senior and CSEQ) are released to the student newspaper for publication, while the faculty and alumni survey results, as well as the *Fact Book*, are posted on the OIR web site.

Data generated by the university's assessment efforts is not housed at the Information Systems Office (ISO). Survey results are retained in the office that administers the survey. ISO does manage the registrar's data and other offices' requests for information regarding students for their own surveys. It has helped to automate the foreign language placement testing and makes those results available to department chairs via a closed network on WIN. As a general rule, ISO does not provide information back to the university community; usually data is returned to the faculty, deans, or the office that conducted an individual survey. Departments make their own packets of information available to the Board of Visitors and other groups.

### D.    *Student Related Policies*

Some students are involved in assessment efforts at different levels across campus. There are a few students that work with the Director of OIR in the collection and analysis of data.  Also, a group of students attended the planning retreat for faculty and administrators with George Kuh that produced recommendations for the academic climate on campus.

Data collection on students themselves occurs at several points of their academic careers: at entry with the CIRP Survey, along the way with the CSEQ, and as seniors and alumni with the HEDS Senior and Alumni Surveys (see Sec. II B&C).

### E.    *Professional Development Opportunities Related to Assessment (for faculty, staff)*

We learned that teams from WFU attended AAHE Assessment Conferences in the early 1990s, as well as workshops sponsored by ACT & ETS about assessment. There were also campus-wide events during this time as the institution prepared for accreditation and went through strategic planning (see Sec. III B). This type of activity seems to have decreased after the provost who spearheaded the initial assessment efforts took another position within the institution. It was unclear whether similar activities will begin again once a new provost is found. There is also some internal training and development efforts regarding the technology and how to incorporate it into teaching (See Sec VI).

*F.*    *Faculty Evaluation and Rewards*

Recommendations for tenure are made in WF College by department chairs and in the professional schools by the deans, all in consultation with tenured faculty. Faculty involvement with assessment-related activity is not necessarily evaluated for promotion and tenure; evaluations of teaching are the primary data involving students that is used. Faculty members are encouraged to participate in assessment activities and in various academic governance processes by the leadership. And some interview participants indicated that there have been a few times when a faculty member was singled out for doing a good job.

A discernible theme was that there is a desire to maintain decentralization. Participants indicated that faculty would probably resist any top-down push to require more assessment efforts of them. The provost had given some mandates, like for student evaluation of teaching, but did grant some leeway to departments. It is also important to note that the Teaching and Learning Center does not evaluate faculty members teaching or involvement in assessment activity; it is a service unit for the improvement of teaching.

*G.*    *Academic Planning and Review*

As has been noted, assessment activity and information is interwoven into the planning and evaluation efforts of the administration and departmental decision-makers. Since the primary planning unit at WFU is the academic department, even when the Program Planning or Evaluation Committees consider student assessment data, the primary focus is mostly department-specific.

## VI.    INNOVATIVE TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

*A.*    *Campus-wide Initiatives*

*Teaching and Learning Center*
The idea for a campus unit to assist faculty with the assessment and teaching issues was born of the discussions taking place in the early and mid- 1990s. The original idea came from the Provost but there was also faculty interest expressed through a faculty committee on teaching and learning issues. idea for a teaching and learning center for faculty was approved in 1997.

The Teaching and Learning Center is a service unit for faculty. Its mission includes making it possible for faculty to share innovative teaching practices with others, find support for their own new ideas, and seek out mentors and colleagues to help with any difficulties in teaching. It fosters cross-disciplinary dialogues among faculty through brown bag discussions and workshops on pedagogy and also houses resources that faculty members can use.  The Center has also been closely involved in the First Year Seminars (FYS) through the development of a manual to help faculty and departments design and revise seminar courses.

The faculty elects a committee on teaching and learning (which meets twice a semester) who then appoint a director. The director is given a reduced teaching load during the year in which they serve. Some faculty would prefer that the Center be staffed with "trained people" as opposed to faculty who temporarily take on the directorship in exchange for course release. However, the general perspective of the faculty is that the Center has turned out well. Teaching was already part of the culture, but having the Center is a symbol to new faculty members about the importance of learning new techniques, training with the technology, and getting students working on things outside of class.

*CELI*
The Computer Learning Initiative (CELI) was a faculty-based initiative (1997-1999) charged with developing effective uses of computers in instruction. The faculty member directing the program was given a reduced teaching load. The mission of CELI was the following:
    To preserve Wake Forest's tradition of personal and individual instruction, enhanced by the resources of computer technology;
    To help Wake Forest take a leadership role in integrating computer-technology into a liberal arts education true to the ideals of "pro humanitate" and intellectual integrity;
    To foster an environment of collaborative and life-long learning by facilitating intellectual exchange within the extended Wake Forest community; and
    To identify, develop, and disseminate computer applications that contribute to learning and scholarship across the wide array of disciplines at Wake Forest University.

*ICCEL*
Another organization on campus that provides faculty with new ideas related to teaching is the International Center for Computer Enhanced Learning (ICCEL). Interestingly enough, this Center is led by the former WFU provost who was so instrumental in the development of the assessment initiatives currently in use.

However, ICCEL is not simply a resource for WFU faculty, although they are certainly beneficiaries of its activities. The Center is a consortium of officials from WFU and other institutions that holds conferences, conducts interactive sessions, and offers consultation to all types of teachers interested in using technology to increase learning. ICCEL's services are offered to higher education institutions, K-12 teachers, corporate trainers, and community groups. It collects and shares best practices from those taking on the challenges of using new methods to enhance learning outcomes.

To date, the information has assisted faculty and administrators from over 400 colleges and universities through its workshops and sessions. ICCEL also makes its findings available through publication of white papers and articles.

*Technical Support for Teaching*
The Information Systems Office (ISO) provides a standard software package with a testing module in it for quizzes and tests, and faculty work with Academic Computing Specialists (ACS) to develop new instruments or techniques. If a faculty member wanted something for a

specialized application, an ACS would help them do it in their department. ISO meets with ACS once a month to get feedback on processes. Also, ISO puts specially trained students (STARS program) to work with faculty to design IT applications for their classes. Approximately 25-40 students participate every year, and they do a presentation at the end of the year on their work for each other and for the campus. That has made a big difference in instruction methods.

Also, technology is infused into everything students do and to that end, ISO and the tech support they provide is an extension of the academic mission. They provide students with a skill and a capacity through the experiences provided in and out of class that they would not do otherwise and that they don't get from any one course.

## B.      *Assessment in Four Focal Departments*

### Math

*Teaching/Learning Practice and Culture*

The Math department at WFU is starting to embrace the technology present on campus and is also active in assessment of its teaching and its students. It also appears there is change afoot in teaching methods. In conversations with faculty, we heard about interactive class sessions that were in contrast to preliminary descriptions of departmental practice as almost exclusively lecture-based.

While characterizing the department as generally "open to innovation," math faculty added that the department does not necessarily follow national trends in teaching. Instead the faculty feel they must decide what is right for WFU Math. "We don't want to do things that don't have benefits," one participant explained, pointing immediately to the benefits of computing in the classroom as an example. Symbolic calculation software, such as the MAPLE package installed on all WFU students' laptops, allows faculty and students to tackle problems that are "computationally intense" and therefore not practical for traditional presentation on a chalkboard.

Interviews revealed a conceptual emphasis in teaching calculus shared by the department faculty. One participant reported a somewhat unified sense that the conceptual/ theoretical aspect of calculus has "*got* to be there," in the courses, "otherwise the students don't know what they're doing; they don't know why they're doing it; they don't know what that answer means." However, a faculty member's ability to present anything other than a trivial problem is greatly enhanced by having MAPLE available in class. The availability of the technology reinforces the teaching of the concept. Without it, an instructor could present the theory, but would not have the ability to back it up with a thorough, complex computational demonstration.
The use of technology in WFU math courses is not limited to the computational software alone. Several math department faculty use course web pages, for example, to distribute, discuss and receive assignments.

*Assessment Practice*

Based on faculty interviews, it appears the Math department performs assessment in several areas. Activities include exit interviews of majors in Bachelor's and Master's programs (conducted through advisors), and feedback regarding classes functioning as "service courses." The department maintains contact with several departments who include math courses among their program pre-requisites. There is also a senior survey, distributed to graduating math majors concerning their future plans, and a survey of graduates five years out collects information about current professional placement and activities, satisfaction, etc. The Department Chair also compiles an "assessment report" annually and distributes it to the faculty.

### *Academic Management*

Math last went through program review 3 - 4 years ago. Faculty members we interviewed indicated that the annual assessment they do aids them in preparing for it. However, there does not appear to be definitive push for learning *outcomes* assessment through the program review process. It seemed that what was in place approximated whatever might be asked for in the context of assessing student learning.

There were several significant changes as a result of the last program review including recommendations that Computer Science be made a separate department, that Master's degree requirements be adjusted, and that the curriculum should include more applied math courses. Also, the department restructured their calculus sequence. Otherwise, there was not much feedback on undergraduate programs or on student assessment. Reviewers and students were "generally complimentary" and alumni provided anecdotal feedback by expressing the value of a math major.

Assessment in the department appears to be driven by the fact that the faculty have developed the program review process and have agreed to do this-- albeit at the behest of a (SACS) requirement for departments to have an assessment process in place. However, plans are controlled at the department level, so there is little administrative pressure for an across the board, uniform kind of assessment practice.

### **Psychology**

### *Teaching/Learning Practice and Culture*

Interview participants noted that the psychology department is characterized by a culture in support of teaching. For example, all new hires are exposed to the idea, from the interview forward, that teaching is very important at WFU. There is also a concern with faculty development. For example, new faculty members are assigned teaching "mentors" for each class they teach. Services available for other faculty include informal classroom observation upon request and departmental teaching seminar. These are informal, discipline- and faculty-driven sessions in which faculty talk among themselves.

Of course, there are a number of changes underway. Two new initiatives are the introduction of greater opportunities for experiential learning in classrooms, and the involvement of undergraduates in research. Technology was an issue of concern because of the changes that it

was bringing to classroom presentation; some expressed a need to temper that trend. Finally, faculty mentioned that the department is struggling to keep class sizes down. As such, physical plant solutions were seen as important.

*Assessment Practice*

The department conceptualizes "assessment" primarily as assessment of teaching. Faculty characterize the internal approach to teaching/learning and assessment as "reasonable" because it seems to operate in formal and informal ways.

The department doesn't focus as much on student learning outcomes specifically as they do of the assessment of teaching activity, admittedly because "it is harder to do." But the faculty do look at two "bracket" courses at the 300-level. These courses involve students in group projects and real-world research problems. The department can look at results from those two courses to see how they are preparing students. Also, the chair conducts "faculty development" interviews that reveal relationships between courses. This translates into an informal assessment of student learning, e.g. whether students seem less prepared on an issue in advanced courses; or if students need the ability to write a results section by 300-level courses. In particular, 300-level courses reveal a lot about how students are learning material in the lower division courses.

For 20 years, the Psychology Department required senior majors to take a national standardized test. However, students would show up and not take it seriously or not put forth the effort. Faculty members saw it as testing for testing sake, so they simply stopped giving it. Now they conduct student evaluations of teaching and encourage new faculty to elicit midterm evaluations from students as well. The department also surveys students after graduation. Faculty describe the survey constructs as, "How are you doing?" and "What did we miss?" types of questions. The surveys have been distributed approximately every seven years in the past. That cycle might well be accelerated in the future to distribute the survey every 5 years.

*Academic Management*

In general the department administration espouses a formative attitude toward the improvement of teaching, and faculty note that the absence of threat or pressure from central administration also allows the department to maintain a formative approach to faculty development. Rewards for teaching include a pervasive culture in support of teaching within the department (so that one reward is fitting in). There is also the university-wide teaching award and the fact that teaching activity is factored into merit raises.

Participants did not provide much information on how assessment information or results are used within the department, or what specific changes were traceable to assessment activity.

**English**

*Teaching/Learning Practice and Culture*

The WFU English department has a culture that places a high value on teaching however it is measured. One of our participants noted "that [the value of teaching improvement] comes from

us; it's nothing that's been imposed on us." While central administration also expresses a priority on teaching, faculty perceived the departmental culture in support of teaching improvement as independent of any centralized agenda.

Faculty we spoke with characterized the WFU English department in a nurturing context, especially with regard to faculty development and teaching and learning issues. Participants described informal mentoring relationships among the faculty, and a general attitude supportive of faculty learning while teaching. To a certain extent, participants drew an overt distinction between this supportive departmental environment and the more general (and ostensibly less supportive) tone set university-wide.

Teaching and learning activities currently pursued by the English faculty include: undergraduate involvement in faculty research (conferences, papers, journal production), field experiences in journalism courses (at county jail and city planning office), collaborative writing, the incorporation of technology into the classroom, and team teaching within the department.

### Assessment Practice

Student input and student work are most often used in the assessment of teaching. The department contacts alumni English majors for individual faculty reviews and recruits current students to meet regarding faculty members' tenure or promotion. Regarding students, the faculty hope to see midterm evaluations put in place in the near future; they distributed a survey to undergraduate students and was pleased with the results. Also, recently, the department has instituted placement exams for some entering students. Finally, the department uses first-year students' writing samples as a part of their evaluation of composition courses and of untenured faculty's teaching performance.

Departmental assessments of teaching center primarily on student evaluations, but also include peer review of teaching. This was historically done by the director of the department's lower division, but will now be performed by a lower division committee that is developing an observation sheet that aims to be constructive and separate out skills vs. personality issues.

Assessment of student learning is carried out mostly by individual faculty. Some WFU English faculty use portfolios and journaling strategies for classroom assessment. Honors Program students take oral exams in addition to writing and presenting a capstone-experience papers. The department doesn't require any specific activity in the assessment of student learning, however. While committees examine syllabi and exams, portfolios and other results are not included in these reviews.

First-year seminars in the English department and throughout the college are assessed by the dean's office, which focuses primarily on student evaluations of the courses and the instructors. The results of these reviews are returned to the departments.

### Academic Management

Participants report that some faculty perceive a level of strain between departments and the administration in terms of a good work environment. An implication is that there is a lack of

respect towards faculty on the part of the administration. Some participants perceive two levels of activity driving teaching/ learning improvement and assessment at WFU: the first is something coming from above, which is seen as less important than the second aspect, the culture within the department that emphasizes teaching.

### Chemistry

***Teaching/Learning Practice and Culture***

As we heard confirmed at several points throughout our visit, chemistry faculty participants in our study described department-wide culture that values teaching.

***Assessment Practice/ Assessment of Teaching***

The WFU program review process figures prominently in the chemistry department's assessment strategies. Individual assessment practices in place include an online student survey of satisfaction ratings and attitudes and interviews with majors to elicit students' concerns about credits, classroom assignments, etc. They also use the American Chemical Society's standardized exams in various content areas and beginning next year, will offer "pre-assessments" (i.e. placement exams). Individual instructors respond to deficiencies revealed by assessment data. The department has been mostly satisfied with the results.

When assessing faculty members, the department looks mostly for glaring problems with student evaluations and for patterns independent of grade distribution. They also tabulate scores for junior faculty to see if they are within the normal range. Results are reported to the dean and the dean meets with the provost. Otherwise, faculty point to additional opportunities for faculty to show that they are trying to innovate in the classroom, e.g. volunteering to teach a first-year seminar, incorporating technology into teaching. Also, there is no classroom observation by the chair.

***Academic Management***

One faculty member characterized the May, 1999 program review report as "a friendly review, but honest." The results suggested that the department's curriculum needed to be updated. Accordingly, the chemistry faculty redesigned the first three years of its major requirements. Courses are now self contained, more sequential, and exhibit less overlap. In the near future, they hope to finish the third-year revision, expand the biochemistry curriculum, and hire an additional biochemistry faculty member. Regarding SACS, the faculty we spoke with made no mention of specific action as a result of the accreditation review.


## VII.   USES AND IMPACTS OF STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### A.      *Uses in Academic Decisions*

Assessment results have not been used to modify the academic institution mission in any way, but have been extensively used in strategic planning and evaluation, academic planning,

departmental reviews, and in the refinement of instructional techniques and curricular patterns. The various types of assessment data (and subsequent reports) are involved at the institutional and departmental levels of planning and implementation, and by Student Life.

The institutional and Student Life planning efforts converged around the first year experience of students during the work of the Program Planning Committee and the development of PTC 2000. Among other things, the results of this were the First Year Seminars and the decision to reduce the undergraduate student/faculty ratio, as well as increased opportunities for students to work with faculty individually. These data streams are also being used in the next planning wave. Having now obtained more data about student time outside of class through the CSEQ and a series of other assessment measures, the administration can make better-informed decisions about the intellectual climate on campus and relations between students and faculty members.

There have also been widespread impacts at the departmental level. At this time, WFU has nearly completed a full round of departmental program reviews (the entire process was expected to take about seven years). At the end of the cycle there will be an evaluation of the entire program review process. Still, WFU has found the process useful thus far. The Health & Exercise program added three faculty members and made changes to its curricula. The Department of Anthropology underwent major changes, including the suspension of graduate admissions, an administrative restructuring, training for faculty on teaching effectiveness, and changes to the curriculum. Also, the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science was split into separate departments. WFU believes this process demonstrates its linkage of assessment data, program review, and evaluation.

Assessment information has had little direct impact on administrative decisions to allocate resources specifically to student assessment activities, and there is no evidence to suggest there has been any effect on faculty rewards and evaluation for tenure and promotion. There is also an increasing understanding that WFU is not yet able to assess or demonstrate how students are changing in regarding institutional goals like values, perceptions about service, and citizenship. Also, there is little or no effort to objectively measure specific learning outcomes of courses or programs. Most of what is known is based on anecdotal information, such as the stories students relate about their experiences. Some involved in assessment would like to see faculty adopt more systematic measures of these things, rather than using their subjective impressions when making decisions.

### B. *Internal Institutional Impacts*

Effects on educational discussions have occurred through the academic planning processes. Regarding curricular patterns, the recent Curriculum Review Committee considered student assessment reports from OIR and Student Life in its discussions. And the laptop computer initiative has been the focus of a major longitudinal study by the Department of Communication. This has provided insight into the types of training required, the effects computers have had on communications across campus, and how their use has impacted teaching practice.

Other significant impacts that affected the curriculum were the FYS program and the decision after the second planning wave in the mid-1990s to internationalize the curriculum. Campus-wide discussions on instructional patters are ongoing through such mechanisms as the Teaching and Learning Center, ICCEL, and the natural emphasis on teaching evident within the departments. Since these initiatives have been successful, as have other programs like STARS that also help faculty with teaching, it is possible to conclude that there is greater faculty interest in learning new teaching methods and engaging with the technology. Several departments also indicated that assessment and program review helped them modify or refocus their curriculum and develop new ways of teaching.

Assessment has also facilitated changes in administrative and service areas of the university. Offices like the Registrar and Career Services in the Business School, and services for students like orientation and academic advising have all made changes in their practices because of findings from student and alumni satisfaction surveys. The data on students has also let faculty see the difference between Greeks and non-Greeks on academic achievement as part of the intellectual climate study. Also, people in Information Systems know much more about students' comfort level with technology and if their training has been effective.

## C.      External Impacts

It is difficult to allocate credit for any external trends or changes specifically to student assessment efforts. This is, in part, because it is difficult to separate the institutional improvements due to strategic and departmental planning from those resulting from assessment of performance. The two processes are closely intertwined. So although the institution has seen positive trends in the areas of number of Rhodes Scholars, graduate school admissions, employment and placement, and student/alumni satisfaction with WFU, these gains cannot be linked solely to the student assessment initiatives.

## VIII.   ASSESSMENT CLIMATE AND CULTURE

Student assessment at WFU is embedded in the institution's larger academic management processes. It is extensive and widely used but is not a separate driving force. It is not done as an end in itself, but as a means to helping the institution become more effective and achieve its long-range goals. Because assessment has been incorporated into the academic planning, implementation, and evaluation processes of the administration and the departments, there exists an academic management culture that stresses use of a rational planning and review mode that is driven by data analysis.  There is a stress on the uniqueness of WFU and the need to structure academic planning and review around meeting goals and priorities rather than engaging in extensive peer comparison and benchmarking. Also, major academic decisions are made based on evaluation studies and assessment data, including some student assessment data.

Improvement in the campus climate regarding assessment is evident in the governance of the institution. Gaining administrative consensus early in the development process was key because leadership then showed the departments that it was possible to make things happen. And through that, proponents were able to convince the trustees. Now that time has passed since

implementation, there is a consensus that the recommendations and the promise of the administration have been met.

Despite the lack of any comprehensive master plan and the mostly decentralized implementation of assessment across campus, there are many ways in which assessment information comes together to produce institutional improvement. Continued emphasis by the academic leadership sends the message that this is an important part of everyone's work. The "teeth" of the assessment effort to enforce recommendations and make specific changes exist because the deans are committed and collectively, the university has a desire to make the effort succeed. Also, information sharing across campus can put pressure on units to change since no one wants to be seen as under-performing. The Provost and Senior VP show results to units that are found to be lackluster. Recent improvements in advising are an example, as are recent changes in the admissions process.

Without any one person or group directing the entire effort, the process is kept in motion by several forces, including the ongoing need to evaluate PTC 2000 and the feeling that the quality of the institution must be demonstrated. There is a sense that WFU must justify its tuition hike and the national publicity its strategic plan has generated. Also, the institution has gained notoriety from its national rankings in *U.S. News & World Report* and *Yahoo! Internet Life*.  And faculty are continually engaged in the planning and assessment efforts by the changes it makes in teaching. There is a sense within departments that whatever makes the classroom better is worth engaging in. Lastly, having recently completed a self-study, SACS is still fresh on people's minds. Departments are aware of institutional effectiveness and are developing their own internal methods for meeting its criteria.

In summary, assessment is now part of what WFU does in its drive towards increased institutional effectiveness. Planning and evaluation are integral components of its management philosophy, and assessment is an essential tool for helping the university achieve its strategic objectives. And there is a collective effort to meet this responsibility.