

**WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY  
FOCUSED INTERIM REPORT  
MARCH 30, 2007**

**Executive Summary**

Since receiving the two recommendations from the Northwest Commission in February 2005, Weber State University has taken significant steps to address both the recommendation regarding general education assessment and the recommendation regarding the evaluation and professional development of adjunct faculty.

Actions that have been implemented to improve general education assessment include:

- creating a standing committee with oversight over the general education program (The General Education Improvement and Assessment Committee);
- engaging the campus in a conversation regarding the purpose of WSU's general education program;
- more clearly articulating general education outcomes to the campus community;
- collecting data at entry and during the first-year (i.e., Accuplacer and CLA Exam);
- collecting data at different points in the undergraduate experience (e-portfolio);
- collecting data at the conclusion of the senior year (CLA Exam);
- creating a pilot to use senior capstone courses as an assessment mechanism;
- and articulating a process to use assessment data to improve general education.

There has been significant improvement in assessment at WSU since 2005. Presently, different assessment mechanisms are in place to measure student learning at various points during their undergraduate experience.

Since 2005, WSU has taken actions that have significantly improved the evaluation and professional development of adjunct faculty.

- University policy has been amended to clarify responsibility for the evaluation of adjunct faculty.
- The mentoring and professional development of adjunct faculty has been enhanced at the departmental level, with special attention devoted to those departments using a significant number of adjunct faculty.
- University-wide professional development opportunities have been created.
- A variety of online resources have been created for adjunct faculty.

Taken together, we believe these actions demonstrate meaningful progress toward addressing the recommendations of the Northwest Commission. Further, mechanisms are in place to insure continued improvement and compliance with the Northwest accreditation standards.

## INTRODUCTION

Weber State University is a comprehensive university located in Ogden, Utah. Its focus is on providing quality undergraduate programs and a small number of professionally-focused graduate programs. WSU offers more than 200 undergraduate degree programs – the largest and most comprehensive undergraduate program in the state of Utah. A student body of more than 18,000 is predominantly from Utah but also includes students from 50 states and 37 foreign countries.

Representatives of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) visited the Weber State University (WSU) campus October 20–22, 2004. Based on the findings of that visit, the Northwest Commission made two recommendations which were detailed in a February 1, 2005 letter to President Ann Millner.

The first recommendation concerned the regular assessment of WSU’s general education program. The Northwest Commission recommended that WSU “regularly and systematically assess the general education curriculum, and document that assessment activities lead to improvement.” The second formal recommendation of the report was that “improvement be made in the mentoring of part-time and adjunct faculty, as well as in expanding their professional development opportunities.”

From the time the recommendations were received in February 2005, WSU has sought to address them through a comprehensive approach. This summary report will outline progress that WSU has made. It is divided into two major sections, the first focusing on general education assessment and the second on evaluating, mentoring and professional development of adjunct faculty.

### SECTION I FIRST RECOMMENDATION OF THE NORTHWEST COMMISSION THE ASSESSMENT OF GENERAL EDUCATION ACTIONS TAKEN

The specific recommendation of the Northwest Commission relating to general education assessment was:

*The Commission recommends that the institution regularly and systematically assess the general education curriculum and document that assessment activities lead to improvement. Based on evidence from faculty, students, administration, and the provided documentation, the Evaluation Committee was unable to verify regular and systematic assessment of the general education curriculum and that assessment activities have led to improvement (Standard 2.B and Policy 2.2 - Educational Assessment).*

## **Background**

Before detailing the assessment of the WSU General Education program, it will be helpful to provide some background information as a context for WSU's assessment efforts.

First, it is important to note that WSU's general education assessment efforts preceded the October 2004 visit by the Northwest team. Recognizing that assessment was called for, the Faculty Senate created an Ad Hoc Committee for General Education Assessment and Improvement, which was convened and charged in February 2004. For this reason, some of WSU's efforts related to assessing general education predate the Northwest Commission's recommendations. Clearly, however, NWCCU's recommendations served both to intensify and focus WSU's ongoing work.

Second, as WSU enjoys a rich history of faculty involvement and shared governance through a strong Faculty Senate, it was important for its assessment efforts to be closely linked with this system. The discussion will therefore describe the role of the Faculty Senate.

Third, it will be useful to describe briefly WSU's general education curriculum. The program is a 38 to 41 semester-hour curriculum required of all baccalaureate students. It is composed of the four core areas: composition, American institutions, quantitative literacy, and computer and information literacy as well as the three breadth areas: humanities/creative arts, social science, and physical/life sciences. As WSU is an open enrollment institution, students may be required to complete additional development coursework to prepare them for the composition and quantitative literacy requirements. Assessment efforts, therefore, involve these development courses in addition to the core areas and the breadth areas.

In the general education core areas, student choice is very limited. In the composition area, all students are required to take the same two courses. In both the quantitative literacy and American institutions areas students select one of three courses. All students are required to take the same computer and information literacy course, although the course consists of different modules and students may demonstrate competency in any module through testing.

In contrast, student choice in the breadth areas is expansive. Students may choose from several dozen courses to satisfy the 8-course requirement. Surprisingly, an analysis of student course-taking patterns undertaken as part of the assessment efforts demonstrated that 80 percent of students select from only 12 courses. The remaining breadth courses meet the needs of a small number of students in special programs (e.g., Honors and Study Abroad). The significance of this finding is that even though WSU's breadth requirement appears to be a cafeteria requirement, the vast majority of WSU students share a general education experience clustered around a small number of common courses.

Fourth, WSU's assessment efforts have been influenced by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). WSU faculty have attended AAC&U workshops and conferences, and AAC&U consultants have come to the WSU campus to work with faculty on

general education assessment. In 2005 Andrea Leskes, Vice President for Education and Quality Initiatives at AAC&U, visited and provided WSU a pre-publication copy of the association's work *The Art & Science of Assessing General Education Outcomes*.

The AAC&U assessment model has provided a framework for WSU's own assessment efforts. The key elements of this model are:

- Defining the role of general education within the context of the institution's mission, values and traditions.
- Defining key learning outcomes for students.
- Determining methods of assessment and the points for gathering evidence.
- Interpreting and using the evidence collected.

This framework also provides a useful outline for organizing the actions WSU undertook in response to the Northwest Commission's recommendation regarding general education assessment. Therefore, the discussion of WSU's assessment efforts will be presented in the same four sub-sections: Defining the Role of General Education, Defining Key Learning Outcomes, Determining Methods of Assessment and Points for Gathering Evidence, and Interpreting and Using the Evidence Collected.

Finally, WSU's October 2004 Accreditation Self-Study Report stated the next step for general education assessment was the "...implementation of effective assessment strategies for general education and other required courses; and to engage in campus discussions on purposes and goals for general education and the courses which are part of the general education program." The next section will detail actions taken since October 2004.

### **Actions Taken: Defining the Role of General Education**

As mentioned earlier, a Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee for General Education Assessment and Improvement was convened and charged in February 2004. One charge was: "To create a clearly articulated, campus-wide collective conception of the qualities of a college-educated person through a series of campus-wide conversations."

The committee met numerous times and sponsored or conducted campus-wide discussions and surveys. The committee members also reviewed relevant literature and discussed alternative models for general education programs.

Campus-wide conversations solicited comments on the following questions.

- What does WSU want from the general education program?
- What is the purpose of general education?

- Should the general education program be unique and distinctive?
- What are the implications for articulation with other state institutions?

Committee members also collected data through a survey instrument titled the Ideal Baccalaureate Graduate. Once individual survey forms were completed, individuals formed discussion groups and completed a group survey that was discussed by group members. In total, 331 individual surveys were completed in the following venues: all academic colleges, Weber State University Student Association, Deans' Council, the Executive Committee of Faculty Senate, the entire Faculty Senate, the Board of Trustees, and the president's National Advisory Committee. Also, an interactive Web page of the survey form was posted on the committee Web site that permitted additional faculty, staff and students to submit comments. Both individual and group survey forms were collected and comments were summarized. The Ad Hoc Committee reviewed and analyzed the comments to develop consensus regarding statements that would reflect the expected learning outcomes for WSU graduates.

The Ad Hoc committee presented a report on the mission and goals for the general education program to the Faculty Senate on April 22, 2005. The report was accepted by the Faculty Senate.

Before turning to the next steps in the assessment process, it is important to outline some features of faculty governance and university policy at WSU. In accordance with University Policy, all ad hoc committees may exist for a maximum of two years, and the existence of an ad hoc committee must be approved by the Faculty Senate each year.

Consequently, at the conclusion of 2004-05, the Faculty Senate would need to approve the Ad Hoc Committee for General Education Assessment and Improvement for another year but could not do so again. Recognizing this deficiency in oversight, the Faculty Senate began the process of creating a permanent standing committee charged with responsibility for planning and assessment of the general education program. University policy requires modifying the Faculty Senate constitution to make this possible. This in turn requires two public readings of the proposed change and support by a 2/3 majority vote of the Faculty Senate.

At the March 23, 2006 meeting of the Faculty Senate, a motion to modify the constitution of the Faculty Senate by creating a permanent standing Committee on General Education Improvement and Assessment passed unanimously. The language of the amendment follows:

Motion to Amend PPM 1-13 (Faculty Senate Constitution), Article B-V, 4.10 Committee on General Education Improvement and Assessment.

#### 4.10 Committee on General Education Improvement and Assessment

The General Education Committee (GE) shall articulate the mission and goals for the General Education program and University core requirements, and review these on a regular basis. The General Education Committee shall define the standards for the General Education program and oversee the assessment of the General Education program and University core requirements.

Motion to approve the above changes to PPM 1-13, Article B-V, 4.5 Committee on Curriculum and proposed 4.10 Committee on General Education Improvement and Assessment.

Outcome: The motion passed unanimously.

Presently, the General Education Improvement and Assessment Committee is responsible for articulating the mission and goals for the General Education program and University core requirements, and reviewing these on a regular basis. In addition, the General Education Committee shall define the standards for the General Education program and oversee the assessment of the General Education program and University core requirements.

In other words, the General Education Improvement and Assessment Committee now articulates the mission and goals and defines the standards for the general education program and university core requirements. It is responsible for reviewing these on a regular basis and overseeing their assessment. While in the past a persistent obstacle to this assessment and its improvement has been a lack of formalized faculty oversight, the creation of this permanent Faculty Senate standing committee remedies the problem significantly. It is fully supported by WSU administration. The creation of the General Education Improvement and Assessment Committee was an important step toward improving the assessment of WSU's general education program.

#### **Actions Taken: Defining Key Learning Outcomes for Students**

Anticipating that its status as a permanent committee would be ratified by the Faculty Senate, the Ad Hoc Committee began the task during the 2005-06 year of defining learning outcomes. It re-examined its own 2004-05 report on the expected qualities of a WSU graduate and determined that the learning outcomes were neither clearly written nor effectively communicated to the campus community. Revision was necessary.

With the goal of clarifying WSU's general education learning outcomes, the provost formed a team to attend the 2006 Greater Expectations Institute. The team included the chair of the Faculty Senate's General Education Committee and two other committee members, a member of the Board of Trustees, the provost, and other faculty involved in general education assessment. The team redrafted both the general education mission and learning outcomes,

articulating the goals clearly and succinctly, and passed their recommendations on to the WSU General Education Committee. This committee approved the revision and sent it to the Faculty Senate, which also approved it. The revised general education mission and learning outcomes follow.

<p style="text-align: center;">Weber State University General Education Mission</p> <p>General education at Weber State University provides students with a foundation in the arts and sciences that transcends and complements their academic emphases. This exposure to diverse fields of study enables students to make intellectually honest, ethical decisions that reflect a knowledge of and respect for diverse people, ideas, and cultures. Such breadth of education also cultivates skills critical to student success in academic, personal, professional and community endeavors both within and beyond the university.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">General Education Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Students completing the general education program can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communicate, understand and interpret ideas and information using written, oral and visual media.</li><li>• Think critically and creatively to construct well-reasoned arguments supported by documented research.</li><li>• Use quantitative, mathematical relationships, operations and reasoning.</li><li>• Demonstrate an understanding of the history, foundational principles, economics, and politics of the United States.</li><li>• Demonstrate proficiency in computer and information literacy.</li><li>• Demonstrate an understanding of how the biological and physical sciences describe and explain the natural world.</li><li>• Demonstrate an understanding of humans, their behavior, and their interaction, with and within their physical, social, local and global environments.</li><li>• Demonstrate an understanding of diverse forms of aesthetic and intellectual expression.</li></ul>
---

**Actions Taken: Determining Methods of Assessment and Points for Gathering Evidence**

The learning objectives for the general education program have existed in some form for almost two decades, and they have provided guidance for WSU’s current program. As reported above, they have been enhanced by the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee for General Education and more recently by the General Education Improvement and Assessment Committee.

The planning and implementation of many of the assessment activities discussed below began during the 2004-05 year when the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee for General Education was doing its work. Some of the activities, for example assessment of the core and breadth areas, predate the work of the Ad Hoc Committee by several years. While the formation of a permanent standing committee for General Education Improvement and Assessment was an important milestone; it did not mark the beginning of WSU's general education assessment efforts.

The following section presents key assessment activities relevant to the 2005 recommendation of the Northwest Commission.

### **Point of Assessment: Mandatory Assessment and Placement for Incoming Students**

WSU created a new Assessment and Placement policy, approved by the Faculty Senate September 2005, to which all new students are subject. It specifies that incoming students as of Spring Semester 2006 (January 2006) are required to take the Accuplacer assessment test.

The reasons for the new policy are two-fold. The first is to gather base-line data which may be used for assessment purposes. The second is to help students succeed by placing them in math and composition courses that match their skill level.

This new policy applies to the following three groups of students enrolling at WSU for the first time beginning spring semester 2006 (January 2006):

- New freshman
- Transfer students with fewer than 30 semester hours of credit
- Some transfer students with more than 30 semester hours of credit depending on GPA, earned AA or AS degree, and completed math and/or English courses.

The results of the Assessment and Placement policy are discussed later in this report in the section titled "Interpreting and Using the Evidence Collected."

### **Point of Assessment: Collegiate Learning Assessment**

For the purpose of assessing students' skills in critical thinking, analytical reasoning and written communication, WSU adopted an instrument called the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). The CLA was developed by the Council for Aid to Education in conjunction with the Rand Corporation and is used by hundreds of colleges and universities. Its goals match those identified by WSU's General Education Task Force.

The CLA assesses students' skills with an open-ended examination rather than a multiple-choice test. Consequently, it evaluates students' ability to articulate complex ideas, examine claims and evidence, support ideas with relevant reasons and examples, sustain a coherent discussion, and use standard written English.

Beginning in September 2006, WSU began using the CLA to assess first-year students. Starting in January 2007, seniors were assessed with the CLA. We have tested both first-year students and seniors with the CLA exam, and we have received an interim report giving the results for our first-year students. A full report with results for our senior students will be received in the summer. At this point, the data attained through the CLA are limited. Nonetheless, the CLA data are interesting, and the results of the CLA are discussed later in this report in the section titled “Interpreting and Using the Evidence Collected.”

### **Point of Assessment: Assess Core and Breadth Areas**

Prior to receiving the Northwest Commission’s recommendations, WSU had established a task force to begin discussions on expected student outcomes and possible assessment strategies for each of the three breadth areas in general education; these are life science/physical science, humanities/creative arts, and social science. In 2005 four additional task forces were created to address the same issues in the core areas of American institutions, composition, computer and information literacy, and quantitative literacy. Each task force has now been charged with developing learning outcomes, a curriculum grid, and an assessment plan. These groups are currently working with the General Education Improvement and Assessment Committee to implement assessment plans.

### **Point of Assessment: The E-portfolio Pilot**

As part of Weber State’s ongoing effort to improve the assessment of general education, an electronic portfolio (e-portfolio) pilot was initiated in the summer of 2006. The purpose of the pilot was to determine whether e-portfolios can be used effectively at Weber State to assess and to provide information to improve the quality of the general education experience. Sakai/OSP (Open Source Portfolio) was chosen as the software platform for the project. The faculty members recruited to participate in the pilot were Kathleen Lukken, Kathryn MacKay, Stephen Francis, and Luke Fernandez, the project leader.

The e-portfolio was designed around the concept of having students upload a report, term paper, thesis or other artifact that they have produced for an assignment. After submitting the artifact, students are prompted to write short reflection pieces. The committee composed a set of prompts designed to encourage students to express how the experience of creating the artifact was related to one of WSU’s eight, university-wide, general education outcomes detailed on page 7 of this report.

Near the end of the fall 2006 semester, pilot faculty members had their students go through the e-portfolio exercise. In total, 62 student submissions were collected by the faculty.

The pilot project is still ongoing. At this point, preliminary results indicate:

- Students felt that their experiences were relevant to a broad array of the eight general education competencies that WSU has codified.

- Data gathered electronically indicates that a meaningful number of students composed a thoughtful reflection on the relationship between WSU's general education competencies and their sample work.
- Some submissions show students who appear to be complacent about their achievements. In other submissions the students are proud of their accomplishments but conscious of and sometimes even genuinely troubled by what they feel they still need to accomplish.

It remains to have review teams beyond the pilot faculty assess the students' artifacts and their reflective essays. As part of this review, assessment rubrics will be provided to reviewers. At present, faculty are engaged in calibration exercises to insure reliability across different reviewers.

To complete the pilot, faculty will provide feedback on their experience using the e-portfolio and their thoughts regarding more general use at WSU. The students will be surveyed about their experience with the e-portfolio.

### **Point of Assessment: Senior Capstone Courses**

One of the key goals of the action plan drafted by the team attending the 2006 Greater Expectations Institute, described on page 6, was to use senior capstone courses as one means to assess students' learning in the general education program. Although more than 80 percent of WSU graduates currently complete such a project, it has not heretofore been used for this particular purpose. Based upon conversations with other institutions' faculty and administrators who found the tool effective, WSU initiated a pilot project in fall 2006. Deans helped identify seven faculty from six different disciplines to participate. The group is presently working to develop a capstone assessment process.

### **Actions Taken: Using the Evidence Collected**

Although WSU is still in the process of fully implementing its assessment model, at this time several points of data have been collected. We have received CLA scores for our first-year students who were tested in the fall of 2006. In addition to providing unadjusted CLA scores, the CLA compares a school's actual CLA score with its predicted CLA score derived from the statistical relationship between SAT/ACT scores and CLA scores. WSU's scores for first-year students taking the exam during the fall 2006 follow.

Weber State University	First-Year Students
Mean SAT Score	921
Expected CLA Score	981
Actual CLA Score	988
Difference	8.0
Difference in Standard Errors	0.2
Performance Level	At Expected Level

The CLA combines two different types of assessment measures. The first is the Performance Tasks, which requires students to complete a simulated “real-life” activity. Students are asked to review and evaluate data and documents. They must then write letters, memorandums or reports using the information from the documents. The intent of the Performance Task is to assess students’ ability to interpret, analyze and synthesize information.

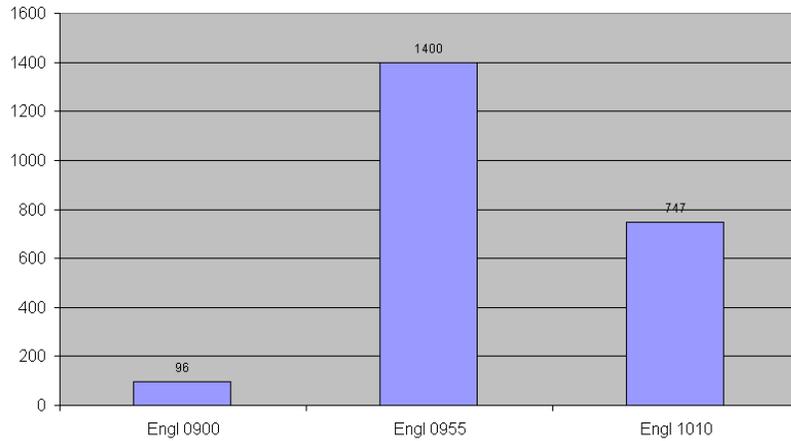
The second CLA assessment instrument is the Writing Prompt. The Writing Prompt provides students with a brief statement. Students are asked to write an essay either supporting or critiquing the statement. The first type of essay is called the “Make-an-Argument” essay, and the second is called the “Critique-an-Argument” essay. The Writing Prompt assesses students’ ability to articulate complex ideas, examine claims and evidence, support ideas with relevant reasons and examples, sustain a coherent discussion, and use standard written English. The General Education Improvement and Assessment Committee is presently reviewing these results.

As previously noted, we will receive CLA scores for our senior students in the summer. These scores are important because the CLA is intended to provide a value-added measure. As WSU plans to continue to use the CLA exam, this continued use will provide longitudinal data for long-term assessment purposes.

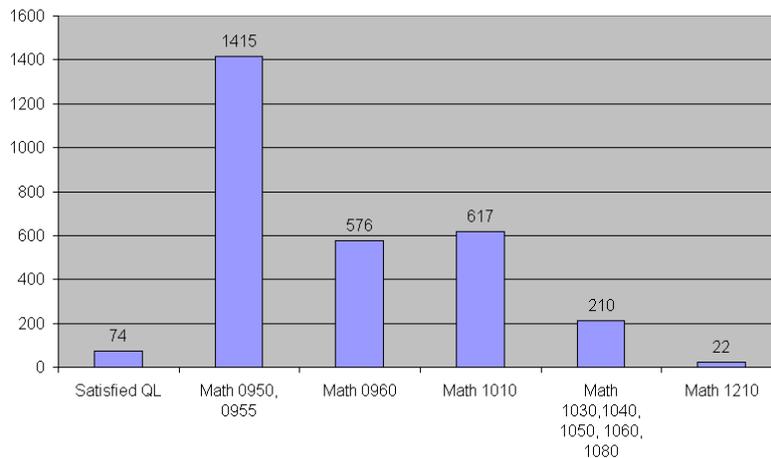
In addition to CLA scores for first-year students, WSU has gathered several semesters of base-line data for other incoming students tested under the mandatory assessment and placement policy enacted in September 2005. Evidence indicates that mandatory assessment has improved students’ success in satisfying WSU’s composition and quantitative literacy requirements. Specifically, a significant fraction of WSU students are placing into and successfully completing higher-level math and composition courses.

The tables that follow contain data on the placement levels for students who took the Accuplacer exam between November 2005 and March 2007. Many students who would have previously been required to complete developmental courses (i.e., math and English courses numbered below the 1000 level) are now being placed in college-level courses (i.e., Math 1010 or higher, and English 1000 or higher).

**English Course Placement for Students Taking English Accuplacer Exam November 2005 to March 2007**

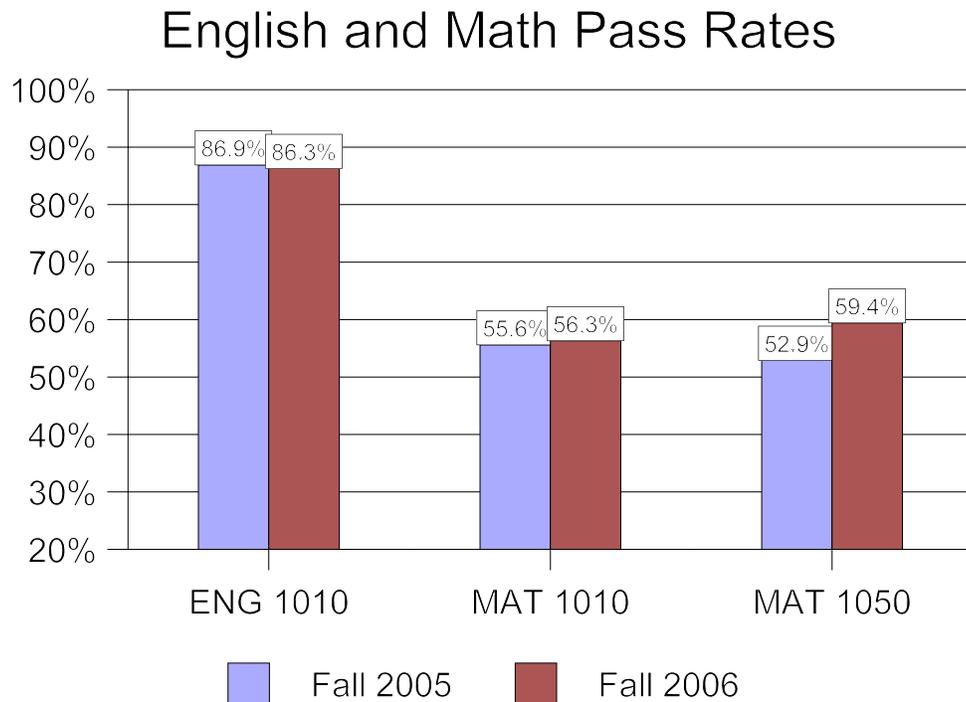


**Math Course Placement for Students Taking Accuplacer Math Exam November 2005 to March 2007**



As a result of students placing into higher-level math and composition courses, the enrollment in WSU's developmental courses is falling. In the fall 2005 term, the number of students in developmental math and composition courses was 2,001. For the fall 2006 term, the first fall term in which the mandatory assessment policy was in place for entering students, the number of students enrolled in developmental courses declined to 1,780.

Testing in the college-level math and composition courses has not changed, and pass rates in these courses have not declined. This indicates that the Accuplacer Exam has successfully placed students into courses where they are capable of succeeding.



### Summary and Next Steps

In January 2005, NWCCU recommended that WSU “regularly and systematically assess the general education curriculum and document that assessment activities lead to improvement.” Weber State University has taken significant steps to address this recommendation. Actions that have been implemented include:

- creating a standing committee with oversight over the general education program (The General Education Improvement and Assessment Committee);
- engaging the campus in a conversation regarding the purpose of WSU’s general education program;
- more clearly articulating general education outcomes to the campus community;
- collecting data at entry and during the first-year (i.e., Accuplacer and CLA Exam);
- collecting data at different points in the undergraduate experience (e-portfolio);
- collecting data at the conclusion of the senior year (CLA Exam);

- creating a pilot to use senior capstone courses as an assessment mechanism;
- and articulating a process to use assessment data to improve general education.

There has been significant improvement in assessment at WSU since 2005. Presently, different assessment mechanisms are in place to measure student learning at various points during their undergraduate experience. During the coming year, there will be concerted effort to use the assessment data being collected to formulate specific actions to improve the general education program.

As a conclusion to this section, a chronology of actions taken since January 2005 follows.

---

### **Chronology of General Education Assessment Activities**

February 1, 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WSU receives letter outlining recommendations of Northwest Commission.</li> <li>• WSU Team attends AACSU General Education Assessment Conference in Atlanta (Feb 17-19).</li> </ul>
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee delivers report which is accepted by Faculty Senate.</li> </ul>
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Andrea Leskes consults with WSU faculty on General Education Assessment.</li> </ul>
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty Senate approves mandatory assessment policy for incoming students.</li> <li>• Ad Hoc Committee on General Education Assessment and Improvement approved by Faculty Senate.</li> </ul>
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students admitted for Spring 2006 term are subject to mandatory assessment policy. Exams are administered.</li> </ul>
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RFP for targeted assessment projects is distributed.</li> </ul>
February 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty submit proposals for targeted assessment projects.</li> </ul>

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| March        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Faculty team drafts proposal for AACSU Greater Expectations Institute.</li><li>• Faculty Senate amends constitution to create standing committee for General Education Assessment.</li></ul>                                     |
| April        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• E-portfolio pilot project is approved for funding.</li><li>• Faculty Senate approves learning outcomes for social science breadth area.</li></ul>  |
| June         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• WSU team attends Greater Expectations Institute. The team drafts an action plan that more clearly articulates the learning goals for the general education program and initiates a senior capstone assessment project.</li></ul> |
| August       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plans are made to administer Collegiate Learning Assessment.</li></ul>   |
| September    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deans nominate faculty to take part in Capstone Assessment Project.</li></ul>  |
| October      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collegiate Learning Assessment is administered to WSU freshmen.</li></ul>  |
| December     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Faculty outline process to use capstone assessment to measure general education learning outcomes.</li></ul>   |
| January 2007 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collegiate Learning Assessment administered to WSU seniors.</li></ul>  |
| February     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Results of CLA for first-year students are received and analyzed by the General Education Improvement and Assessment Committee.</li></ul>  |
-

**SECTION II**  
**SECOND RECOMMENDATION OF THE NORTHWEST COMMISSION**  
**ADJUNCT FACULTY EVALUATING, MENTORING AND DEVELOPMENT**  
**ACTIONS TAKEN**

The second major recommendation of the Northwest Commission concerns part-time and adjunct faculty. The specific recommendation of the NWCCU was:

*The Commission recommends that clearly articulated policies and procedures for evaluating part-time and adjunct faculty be developed, distributed, implemented, and assessed university-wide. The Commission additionally recommends that improvement be made in the mentoring of part-time faculty, as well as in expanding their professional development opportunities. The Evaluation Committee was unable to find sufficient evidence to verify that the institution systematically, regularly, and across all units fulfills its “obligation...to evaluate the performance” of part-time and adjunct faculty members; and was also unable to find evidence that the University provides for their development on a regular basis (Standard 4.A and Policy 4.1 - Faculty Evaluation).*

This recommendation has two parts. The first is formalizing and implementing a policy for evaluating adjunct faculty. The second is enhancing the mentoring and professional development of adjunct faculty. WSU’s response will address both aspects of the recommendation. It is important to note that while WSU utilizes approximately 439 adjunct faculty, only 4 part-time faculty are presently employed. For the remainder of this report, the term “adjunct faculty” will be used to describe both adjunct and part-time faculty, and all the actions taken are relevant for both adjunct and part-time faculty.

**Background**

After the Northwest visit, WSU formed an Adjunct Faculty Task Force that met throughout the 2004-05 academic year. The Task Force solicited input from department chairs and college deans as well as making recommendations themselves. The recommendations that have been implemented are discussed below.

**Actions Taken: Formalizing an Evaluation Policy for Adjunct Faculty**

The October 2004 Accreditation Self-Study Report stated: “Evaluation of part-time faculty is not governed by university-wide policy.” The 2005 recommendation of the NWCCU was to develop “clearly articulated policies” for this evaluation.

WSU policy 1-18 clearly articulates that department chairs are responsible for carrying out the evaluation of full-time faculty as well as playing a critical role in the tenure and promotion process. In response to the NWCCU’s recommendations, the policy was amended to expand department chairs’ duties to include both the evaluation of adjunct faculty and the professional

development of adjunct faculty. Specifically, Section VII and Section XII were amended as follows.

The department chair, in conjunction with program coordinators where appropriate, shall...

...VII. Oversee the recruitment, hiring, ongoing professional development and regular evaluation of staff and adjunct faculty, contract faculty, and tenure-track faculty.

...XII. Foster good teaching within the department, encourage faculty to be involved in scholarly activities, promote faculty involvement in service to the institution and/or profession, and assist regular and adjunct faculty in their professional development.

Our next step is to monitor the effectiveness of this policy change. In preparation for the 2004 Self-Study Report, a survey was administered to full-time and part-time faculty. The results of this survey indicate that 58 percent of WSU's adjunct faculty felt they were evaluated on an ongoing basis. A similar question was posed to adjunct faculty in January 2007. Responses to the 2007 survey indicate that 70.4 percent of the adjunct faculty felt they are evaluated on a regular basis.

Given the recentness of the change in policy 1-18, this significant increase is likely due to campus-wide conversations preceding the policy change. These conversations served to sensitize chairs and departments to the importance of evaluating adjunct faculty. WSU will continue to monitor the evaluations to verify that they are being conducted and used to improve instruction.

### **Actions Taken: The Mentoring and Professional Development of Adjunct Faculty**

In response to NWCCU's recommendation, WSU has significantly expanded professional development opportunities for adjunct faculty. Now we aim to increase consistently the number of participants taking advantage of these opportunities. For those who cannot physically attend retreats and workshops, we have created an online resource.

### **Departmental Mentoring and Professional Development**

After formalizing a policy for the evaluation of adjunct faculty at the department level, the next action taken was to enhance the mentoring and professional development opportunities for adjunct faculty. An inventory of all adjunct faculty was undertaken. One interesting result was the discovery that the use of adjunct faculty is highly concentrated in a few departments. Two-thirds of all adjunct faculty are employed in 12 departments. Given this, it was logical to concentrate departmental efforts in those areas making the most intensive use of adjunct faculty.

The English Department uses the largest number of adjunct faculty and the support the English Department provides for adjunct faculty is being used as a model for other programs. A summary of actions taken by the English Department is provided below.

- In August of every year, all English adjuncts are required to attend a day-long orientation session. The orientation is conducted like a mini-conference. There is an informational session at the beginning followed by a series of breakout groups on a variety of topics, all of which discussions are facilitated by adjuncts and for adjuncts.
- Each semester, the English Department offers three adjunct “workshops.” Topics vary.
- Handbook materials, textbook lists, program information, syllabus archives (going back 3 years), and contact information are online at <http://www.weber.edu/composition/instructor>.

The Communication Department also uses a large number of adjunct faculty and has put a similar program of support in place.

- A full-time faculty member is designated as coordinator of the adjunct faculty. In that capacity, the coordinator makes an effort to visit each instructor's classroom once during the semester, just to see that things are going well and to offer any assistance if necessary.
- All adjuncts are given a copy of the Communication Department’s minimum requirements for each of the courses in addition to sample course syllabi, handouts, packet materials, and sample test questions.
- Most Communication adjunct faculty are utilized in Communication 2110. These adjunct faculty must train for one semester prior to being hired. The training consists of attending the 2110 course with an approved instructor for the purpose of becoming aware of content information and observing teaching and instructional strategies. They also assist in teaching and assessment in the course and their teaching abilities are observed by the approved faculty member. These adjunct faculty are also required to attend a day-long fall meeting just prior to fall semester.

These examples represent the support provided by two departments. Efforts are underway to implement similar support in all departments using a significant number of adjunct faculty. For those departments using a smaller number of adjunct faculty, a smaller range of professional development opportunities will be provided at the departmental level, but additional support will be provided at the university level.

### **University-Wide Adjunct Faculty Professional Development**

Efforts to enhance mentoring and professional development opportunities for adjunct faculty are not limited to departmental activities. Several important, university-wide efforts were implemented. These university-wide initiatives expand opportunities for all adjunct faculty, but the creation of university-wide development opportunities are especially important for those small

departments with few senior, full-time faculty who can support adjunct faculty and those departments using adjuncts in remote locations.

One of the most important university-wide efforts is a series of day-long, professional development retreats for adjunct faculty. Assisted by the Teaching and Learning Forum, WSU has instituted ongoing retreats that focus on enhancing teaching skills and successfully using campus resources.

At the first retreat, held January 27, 2007, adjunct faculty engaged in a seminar on teaching with the case method, a workshop on course planning, a discussion of team teaching, and an exercise on dealing with student disciplinary problems. In order to communicate the high institutional priority of the retreat, senior administrators and faculty led and also participated in the activities. Among these were the president, the provost, the vice president for student affairs, the chair of the Faculty Senate, and the current holder of a prestigious faculty award, the Hinckley fellowship.

Out of 439 adjunct faculty teaching during the spring 2007 term, 247 attended the day-long retreat. This represents 56.3 percent of WSU's adjunct faculty. The strong attendance at the Adjunct Faculty Retreat provided a professional development experience for the more than half of WSU's adjunct faculty.

Adjunct faculty evaluations of the retreat were overwhelmingly positive. Comments taken from the evaluations indicate that:

- The vast majority found the workshops and seminars provided to be very useful.
- They thought the retreat demonstrated that WSU values adjunct faculty.
- The retreat served to motivate them and increase their excitement about teaching.
- The retreat helped to foster a sense of community among adjunct faculty, full-time faculty and administrators.

The Teaching and Learning Forum plans to continue the adjunct faculty retreats and to use feedback from adjuncts to enhance the retreats. The next day-long retreat for adjunct faculty is scheduled for August 2007. It is anticipated that the retreats will be held twice a year.

### **Online Resources for Adjunct Faculty**

Because adjunct faculty spend a limited amount of time on campus, the Adjunct Faculty Task Force recommended providing focused and specific information for them via the Internet. Two sites have been completed. The first is the Adjunct Faculty Web site, which directs them on negotiating the physical campuses and locating useful resources. The homepage for this site, (<http://weber.edu/adjunctfaculty/>) is reproduced below.

## Adjunct Faculty



- Adjunct Employment Opportunities
- Quick Facts About WSU
- Adjunct Faculty Frequently Asked Questions
- Academic Calendar
- Athletics Calendar
- Campus Events Calendar
- Performing Arts Calendar
- Catalog
- Course Schedule
- Instructional Responsibilities and Services
- Online Newsletter

WSU Campuses

- [Ogden Campus Map](#)
- [Ogden Directions](#)
- [Ogden Parking](#)
- [Davis Campus Map](#)
- [Davis Directions](#)
- [WSU Online](#)

WSU Centers

- [West Center in Roy](#)
- [Davis High Center in Kayville](#)
- [Morgan Center in Morgan](#)
- [Independent Study](#)

**Quick Information for Adjunct Faculty:**

- [The Basics](#) (adjunct role, pay, parking, office keys, ID Card, etc.)
- [Online Adjunct Faculty Newsletter](#) (\*\*New\* for Fall 2006)
- [Teaching](#)
- [Technology](#)

**University Resources Available to Adjunct Faculty:**

- [WSU Bookstore](#)
- [Stewart Library](#)
- [Testing Facilities and Support](#)

**Training and Professional Development for Adjunct Faculty:**

- [Teaching and Learning Forum](#)
- [Training Tracker](#)

**Resources Available for Students at WSU:**

In fall 2006, the Web site was supplemented with an online video newsletter that delivers informational content via streaming video. Two issues of the video newsletter have been developed and distributed to all adjunct faculty via email.

The fall issue of the video newsletter may be found at <http://wiki.weber.edu/news/fall/06/>, and the spring issue of the newsletter is available at <http://wiki.weber.edu/news/spring/07/>. The cover page for the Fall 2006 online newsletter is reproduced below.


WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY
Adjunct News

FALL '06 ADJUNCT NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Fall '06 Adjunct Newsletter. Please click to the right.

-  Provost Office
-  Registrar's Office
-  Technology Services
-  T&L Forum
-  English Department
-  Credits

Links

You will find links talked about in each video below.

## **Summary and Next Steps**

In January 2005 NWCCU recommended that

*...clearly articulated policies and procedures for evaluating part-time and adjunct faculty be developed, distributed, implemented, and assessed... [and] improvement be made in the mentoring of part-time faculty, as well as in expanding their professional development opportunities.*

WSU has significantly improved the evaluation and professional development of adjunct faculty since 2005. University policy has been amended to clarify responsibility for the evaluation of adjunct faculty. The mentoring and professional development of adjunct faculty has been enhanced at the departmental level, with special attention devoted to those departments using a significant number of adjunct faculty. University-wide professional development opportunities have been created. A variety of online resources have also been created for adjunct faculty. During the coming months, WSU will continue monitoring progress to ensure increased excellence.

## **Conclusion**

Taken together, we believe the actions detailed in this report demonstrate meaningful progress toward addressing the recommendations of the Northwest Commission. Further, mechanisms are in place to insure continued improvement and compliance with the Northwest accreditation standards.

Based on progress made, Weber State University will be ready for its regular, interim fifth-year review in 2009 and intends to meet the standards and expectations of NWCCU regarding general education assessment and the evaluation and development of adjunct faculty.