



WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

System Accountability Report for the Year Ending June 30, 2011

Summary Observations

West Chester University has earned a national reputation for excellence, value, and student success. For the fourth year in a row, *Kiplinger's Personal Finance* has rated WCU among the 100 best values in American public higher education. The University's quality programs have drawn the attention of such notable people as T. Boone Pickens, who visited WCU to see the campus's compressed-natural-gas filling station and conduct a question-and-answer session about national energy policy with United States Congressmen Patrick Meehan and Jim Gerlach. In June, in another measure of success, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education formally acted to reaffirm West Chester University's institutional accreditation. The evaluation report praises WCU highly in several areas and confirms the University's excellence.

Also a reflection of excellence are the more than 22,000 undergraduate and graduate applicants the University has attracted over the past year. Enrollment has reached 15,100, and the high quality of the first-year class continues. The regularly admitted students who entered WCU this fall brought a grade-point average of 3.56, were in or near the top quarter of their high-school class, and have combined SAT scores that exceed the 2011 national average by 103 points and the Pennsylvania average by 120 points.

Service learning and volunteerism are among the areas for which West Chester University is recognized nationally. For the 2010-11 academic year, the University's student volunteer hours reached nearly 300,000—well above the total for most larger universities. For the fifth year in a row, WCU has been named to the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. In addition, WCU is among the 115 universities and colleges—out of about 4,000—to earn the Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement Classification this past year.

During the current academic year, 2011-12, West Chester University is developing its new strategic plan, *Building on Excellence*, to succeed the *Plan for Excellence*. Decisions outlining the next 10 years at WCU will be informed by such resources as the 2011 self-study for the Middle States Commission and a completed in-depth scan of the University's external environment. Since 2001, the *Plan for Excellence* and its five central goals—the *transformations*—have guided every area of university operation, from budgets to program assessment. Progress on the transformations—Student Success, Responsiveness, Resourcefulness, Diversity, and Human Capital—have directly supported progress on the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education accountability measures and the areas of accomplishment they represent. As the new strategic plan is developed, the current plan will continue to guide the University's effectiveness in student achievement, operational efficiency, and overall university quality.

Plan for Excellence Transformations: Student Success, Responsiveness, Diversity **Related Accountability Measures: Degrees Awarded, Second-Year Persistence,** **Graduation Rates, Employee Diversity**

The Student Success Transformation affirms that student success is West Chester University's defining characteristic. The WCU faculty, administrators, and staff are dedicated to the success of all of the University's students. As a result, WCU's four-year graduation rate of 42.59% and six-year graduation rate of 65.35% surpass the national average for similar institutions by 17.60 and 13.02 points respectively.

Similarly, the Responsiveness Transformation affirms the University's commitment to meeting the educational and cultural needs of the region, including the ongoing educational requirements for professionals. While the number of master's degrees awarded annually by West Chester University has grown by 33 since last year, the University has also continued to expand its graduate-level certificate offerings. In the last 10 years, the non-degree, teaching-certificate, and certificate programs at the graduate level have seen a 60.6% increase in the number of credits generated. Although students in these certificate programs are counted in the University's graduate enrollment, they are not pursuing a master's degree and therefore lower the institution's degree-to-enrollment ratio. In total, the University offers more than three-dozen post-baccalaureate, graduate, and post-graduate certificates to meet the needs of professionals. WCU is also accredited to offer continuing medical education credits to physicians and nationwide is one of only six institutions without a medical school to have this status.

As also expressed in the *Plan for Excellence* and in campus-wide policies and practices, West Chester University is committed to attracting, enrolling, and graduating students from a wide variety of educational, cultural, and economic backgrounds. The members of the University believe that a diverse community, among its many important attributes, promotes a stimulating intellectual environment, increases its members' understanding of different cultures and perspectives, and prepares students to live and work in a multicultural, global society. Effective programs designed to eliminate gaps in the success rates for any segments of the student population are a central part of the University's strong commitment to diversity.

Showing notable progress, the second-year persistence rate for African American students at West Chester University has increased to 85.39 for a cohort of 178, compared to last year's rate of 83.58 for a cohort of 201. In fact, the University's current retention rate for African American students is more than 10 percentage points above the benchmark average and even exceeds WCU's university-wide second-year persistence rate of 85.19—the highest in the System. The apparent drop in the measure “Number of Students Persisting – Black” is a function of lower total enrollment in the cohort, not of lower performance. Even given that drop in enrollment, in the number of Black first-year-cohort students persisting, West Chester University ranks third in the System.

The University's 75.29% second-year retention rate for Hispanic students is the second highest in PASSHE and compares to a 71.36% national average. Rather than reflecting unsatisfactory performance in this area, the “Not Met” designation points to the exceptional record of 85.56% on this measure last year. The University is committed to returning to that high achievement.

The percentage of WCU African American students graduating in four years, 24.28%, is almost 10 points ahead of the national average of 14.59% for this demographic and is the third highest in PASSHE. The University is committed to regaining and surpassing the exceptionally high four-year-graduation rate for last year's cohort, 30.18%. WCU's current four-year-graduation rate of 27.27% for Hispanic students is also the third highest in PASSHE and compares to a national average of 18.70%. Again the University is committed to regaining and surpassing the excellent rate for last year's cohort, 39.39%.

One of several initiatives leading to success for disadvantaged students at West Chester University is the Academic Development Program (ADP), a special-admissions initiative for selected students who do not meet current admissions requirements but who show the potential to succeed in higher education. ADP includes a high percentage of African American and Hispanic

students. Institutions from Pennsylvania and beyond have observed the Academic Development Program as part of research into best-practice summer programs. For the 2010-11 academic year, ADP second-year retention rates were exceptionally strong: 96.3% for the non-Act 100 cohort and 90.7% for the Act 101 cohort. For spring 2011, 97% of all enrolled ADP students were in good academic standing with a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher.

To foster multicultural-student success, the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) offers the OMA Mentoring Program. All first-year and transfer students who enroll in the program are paired with faculty and peer mentors. The mentors assist the students with their initial adjustment and transition during their first year at WCU. In partnership with the Learning Assistance and Resource Center, the OMA coordinates tutoring and skill-building workshops on topics such as time management, test taking, and study skills. The office also offers related programs and activities to foster positive social and cultural adjustment to the University and college life. This past year, 156 multicultural students took part in the OMA Mentoring Program. Analysis of the retention and graduation data since 1999 for program participants indicates that their second-year persistence rate averages approximately 88%.

Developing and sustaining a diverse and qualified administrative staff are also a priority for WCU. The relative lack of turnover in administrative positions limits the impact the University's extensive recruitment resources and strong policies, programs, and procedures can have in that area. Among the resources, the *Staff Hiring Manual*, created by the Office of Human Resources and the Office of Social Equity, provides consistent and thorough information on WCU's investment in diversity, as well as job criteria, applicant screening systems, and interview techniques. The Office of Social Equity works collaboratively with each search committee so that the recruitment process is understood and executed effectively and fairly. In its role of ensuring fairness in hiring, Social Equity has created outreach initiatives to increase the diversity of applicant pools. Recruitment resources such as diversity recruitment plans, diversity recruitment consultants, and recruitment teams have helped to increase the full utilization of women and of persons of color. Since last year, the number of female faculty has risen by 11, and the number of faculty of color has risen by two so that currently 51.12% of faculty members are women and 15.21% are persons of color. The percentage of persons of color and of women in the professional staff has also grown over the year.

International initiatives are another way in which the University is reaching out, fostering diversity, and expanding the outlook of the entire campus community. Through coordinated efforts, particularly those of the WCU Center for International Programs, the campus is already seeing an increase in enrollments from countries such as Norway and China.

Institutional priorities for the current year that are related to the above areas include the following:

1. The University will continue to advance the international environment of its campus and international experiences for its students, faculty, and staff. As part of this initiative, WCU will host the Knowledge Crossing Borders international conference in May 2012. The biannual conference and the concurrent Global Presidential Conclave on the Future of Higher Education will bring together educational leaders and other talented people from around the world to share cutting-edge research and best practices.
2. Faculty-engaged academic planning will be linked to the University's strategic-planning process. This academic planning will consider new and creative curricula that are aligned with

emerging occupations in the region, important developments in such areas as sustainability, and advances within the disciplines.

3. Building on the successful work that has already been done in the area of WCU graduate studies, the University will enhance and expand its graduate offerings, increase its graduate enrollments, and provide additional support to graduate faculty and students. The University will seek State System approval for the already-developed online Doctor of Nursing Practice curriculum, which has received local approval, and will continue to explore the possibility of offering a Doctor of Science in Biostatistics.
4. The University will continue its strong, mutually beneficial partnership with the Borough of West Chester, similarly engage other area municipalities, and encourage even greater attendance at WCU events by neighbors throughout southeastern Pennsylvania.

Plan for Excellence Transformations: Resourcefulness, Human Capital

Related Accountability Measures: Instructional Productivity, Private Support, Faculty Terminal Degree

West Chester University is an effective steward of its resources of all types, from funding to human capital. In spite of reduced state support, including the 18% reduction for the current fiscal year, the outlook is strong. The University will make some minor adjustments in its spending for fiscal year 2012, but the institution is financially sound. WCU's planning and ability to control institutional enrollments put the institution in an enviable position and provide a solid margin of control over the University's destiny. Among the reasons for the optimistic picture is the tremendous enrollment demand, but the University has not become complacent about its future and reputation.

To help the region know more about the quality and excellence of West Chester University, the University has launched its *Learn More* marketing campaign, which was designed with the help of WCU Council of Trustees member Eli Silberman, one of the country's foremost marketing experts. *Learn More* focuses on the University's impressive quality. The campaign includes five television commercials and several ads that are appearing throughout the region on billboards, on public transportation, and in other venues. With *Learn More*, WCU has achieved professional-quality advertising on a barebones budget. The *Learn More* commercials and ads can be viewed at <http://www.wcupa.edu/learnmore/>.

Already the notable growth in West Chester University's reputation has led to increased pride in the University and to a desire to invest in its strong future. While economic uncertainty continues to affect fundraising outcomes, the number of donors to the WCU Foundation jumped by 20% this past year, including an impressive 10% increase in alumni donors. The Annual Fund campaign also enjoyed a 15% increase over the year before, raising \$1.5 million for current operations and scholarships, compared to a goal of \$1.3 million.

Efficiency is one key to West Chester University's success. This approach is not contradicted by the current student-faculty ratio of 20/1 because this ratio represents a balance between efficiency and such considerations as program-accreditation and space constraints and discipline-related requirements for optimal student success. The key university goal of resourcefulness is being met through a wide range of innovative initiatives and practices, strong fundraising, efficient and sustainable operations, and expanding sponsored programs.

Along with other resources, the University's facilities assets provide vital support for programs and student success. Master-planning efforts that began last year identified critical

space and space-utilization needs and will be aligned with the strategic plan now under development. Currently, construction of the Student Recreation Center is well underway; the newly renovated and expanded E. O. Bull Center has opened, providing enhanced space for art and for theatre and dance, and groundbreaking for the Business and Public Affairs Center is anticipated for 2012. In the near future, the University will also move ahead with the next phase of student housing on both north and south campus. Immediate facilities plans include a high-tech visitors' center, partially supported by Aruba Networks, and "classrooms of the future" supported through a groundbreaking agreement between WCU and Microsoft. West Chester University is also partnering with Microsoft in a Demonstration and Application Center that will bring pre-market hardware and current software to the University for testing and training. This center, which will create unique opportunities for faculty, staff, and students, is the only such center in the Mid-Atlantic Region.

Sustainability is a key WCU value for economic reasons but also because of the University's strong commitment to the environment. This commitment is evident in President Weisenstein's signing of the Presidents' Climate Commitment and in the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) analysis of WCU's work to protect the environment. Other efforts include the contributions of the Sustainability Committee on campus and projects in partnership with the Borough of West Chester. Since 2005 the University has had a 36% overall reduction in the air-pollutant emissions from its heating plant (the institution's largest environmental impact), and overall energy consumption has dropped 21%. This reduction was achieved despite increases in the number of students and employees and in university facilities. An important reason for the progress is that WCU is already heating and cooling 15 academic and residence-life facilities using geothermal technology. The University is using an innovative "district" geo-exchange system that only a few schools worldwide have developed, especially on the scale found at WCU. A \$4.7 million U.S. Department of Energy grant is supporting the geothermal project.

Institutional priorities for the current year that are related to the above areas include the following:

1. The use of off-site locations, co-located programs, and especially distance education will be developed. Among the important results will be increased access and opportunities for more of the thousands of students who want the benefits of a West Chester University education. The University will become recognized as a strong distance-education provider.
2. WCU will continue to exercise leadership in environmental responsibility and build its commitment to the environment into its coursework and strategic planning.
3. The University has set a future annual goal of \$10 million in sponsored programs and will continue to enhance its support for WCU faculty and staff to compete successfully in the highly competitive sponsored-programs enterprise.

In summary, West Chester University is actively moving to achieve its strategic vision and identify new ways to build on its excellence. The steps already taken and in progress demonstrate the campus community's determination to thrive in a challenging atmosphere that requires an innovative, entrepreneurial outlook and unwavering commitment to all aspects of the university mission. WCU is enhancing the quality of life for its students and region, returning significant value to its investors, and providing leadership within the State System. There is strong reason to be confident about the future for West Chester University.