

3. Challenges and Opportunities

376 One of the institution's chief accomplishments, reflected in the section above, has been ensuring that
377 assessment procedures are in place for both student learning and institutional effectiveness. This was
378 both a challenge and an opportunity to significantly overhaul the way in which the University engages
379 in assessment. In addition, as noted in the decennial self-study, declining state support, coupled with
380 increased personnel costs mandated by collective bargaining agreements, continues to be a challenge
381 for the institution. Furthermore, an aging infrastructure with limited opportunity to expand the
382 institution's physical footprint through new buildings poses significant challenges to using enrollment
383 growth as a way to replace decreasing state funding. Responding to these challenges, the University
384 has continued to be successful in increasing enrollments strategically (within a constrained physical
385 space) via off-site and distance education programs as well as selected main campus expansion.
386 Despite significant geographic competition, and through the development of new academic
387 programs, WCU has used its innovative planning and resource allocation strategies to sustain
388 manageable growth and fiscal stability. This section describes these challenges and opportunities,
389 consistent with Middle States' *Characteristics of Excellence*.

390

391

I. Ensuring Assessment Procedures Are In Place (Standards 4, 7, 11,14)

392 The institution has significantly increased its focus and commitment to assessment since the last
393 decennial visit. Both human and financial resources have been added, and results of progress and
394 success have been shared with the entire campus community. In addition, the ways in which
395 programs have used assessment outcomes to inform programmatic and course-level changes have
396 also been collected and shared. One reason for this improvement has been the ability to standardize
397 reporting structures as well as the addition of technological resources.

398 *Excellence in Action (Closing the Loop): Assessment Processes*

399 The University has had access to the *TracDat* software system for several years, although until
400 recently, it has been underused. Since then, and following the decennial self-study, additional
401 financial resources were committed for training for administrators and faculty to better understand
402 and leverage the system. Initially, the system was only used for student learning outcomes
403 assessment. However, the institution is now using it for the reporting, monitoring, and evaluation of
404 the institutional strategic plan as well. Using the system for the assessment of strategic plan
405 objectives allows for a single interface and reporting structure as well as the ability to generate reports
406 as needed for each area of the strategic plan to demonstrate accomplishments and areas of concern
407 related to particular objectives. In addition to the strategic plan, all academic program majors and
408 student support service areas now have assessment plans housed within the software platform to
409 measure learning outcomes.

410 Since the last decennial report, the institution has strengthened its reporting of student learning
411 assessment through the use of an institution-wide rubric.⁹ The rubric is not used to evaluate program
412 results related to outcomes but to ensure core elements of student learning assessment are included in
413 each program's assessment plan. For the last three years, all program assessment plans were
414 evaluated annually using the rubric. This has allowed for consistent communication across campus as

415 to the institutional expectations for student learning assessment. Programs are provided
416 independent feedback to document strengths or suggest ways they can improve their ability to
417 demonstrate student learning outcomes. Scores representing the quality of the plan's components are
418 reported annually in the form of heat map charts for all constituents to see and are posted on the
419 TLAC website.⁸ Additionally the TLAC website contains more explicit information regarding the
420 institutional expectation for student learning assessment and shares exemplary practices from across
421 the institution following their annual reviews.¹⁰

422 The University has also strengthened its ability to measure and track progress towards institutional
423 goals specified in the strategic plan. For the first time, in spring 2015, "Big Plan Days"¹⁰ were held on
424 campus for constituents to receive information about the accomplishments and future directions of
425 the strategic plan. Using Theme Team tables to reflect each of the substantive areas of the strategic
426 plan, *TracDat* reports were shared with attendees and documented the progress made in pursuit of
427 strategic objectives. Attendees were able to comment on the documents, make suggestions for edits,
428 as well as provide recommendations for ways to refine objectives for the following academic year
429 based upon their interpretation of the results presented in the reports.

430 Each of these strategies has contributed to more organized and systematic assessment processes. As
431 a result, the institution is better able to engage in campus-wide discussions and evaluation of
432 assessment outcomes in ways that were not possible before the implementation of this
433 comprehensive software-based approach. More information related to each of these areas will be
434 discussed in section five below.

435 436 **II. Declining State Support And Financial Implications of the State System (Standards 2, 3, 4, 437 6)**

438 Reduced public investment in higher education, including decreases in state funding, rising salary and
439 benefit costs, and the PASSHE Board of Governors longstanding practice of holding tuition
440 increases at or below inflation are major factors challenging resource planning at WCU. In addition,
441 WCU's external governance structure is complex and impacts institutional flexibility. Even with
442 those challenges, however, the university has developed and maintained a very strong financial
443 position and has creatively addressed these challenges.

444 *Governance Structure*

445 WCU's governance structure includes the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE)
446 and its Board of Governors (BOG), and the WCU Council of Trustees (COT). Internally, WCU is
447 comprised of six divisions: Academic Affairs, Administration and Finance, Advancement, External
448 Operations, Information Technology, and Student Affairs. The six divisional vice presidents report to
449 the president and, along with the director of social equity and the chief of staff/executive deputy to
450 the president, form the President's Cabinet.

451
452 *Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education:* In 1982, the Pennsylvania State System of Higher
453 Education was established with the passage of Act 188 which prescribes the association between the
454 system office and the 14 member universities, as well as the responsibilities and operations of such
455 campus leadership as the COT and president. The University's state budget allocation (including base
456 and performance funding), tuition, and technology fees are all developed by the system office with

457 some campus input and presented to the BOG for approval. State funds are distributed to the
458 System universities according to a BOG-approved formula. In addition to its budget authority, the
459 State System creates and monitors operational policies and procedures and reviews and approves all
460 academic programs prior to presentation to the BOG.

461
462 Being part of a State System also impacts the ability of the institution to ensure building projects are
463 approved and/or completed in an efficient timeframe. It also limits the institution's ability to select
464 vendors, contractors, and/or products for construction on campus because of requirements State
465 statutes and regulations placed upon the Department of General Services (DGS), which must be used
466 for all construction projects that involve any amount of state funding. DGS requires the institution
467 to select the lowest bid for contractors, and selection of architects often is made without regard for
468 the university's needs or preferences. Currently, the first architect for the construction of the
469 Business and Public Affairs Center was dismissed, as was the first general contractor, both of which
470 have resulted in significant delays and increased costs for this project over which the institution has
471 little control.

472
473 *Board of Governors:* A 20-member Board of Governors (BOG) is responsible for planning and
474 coordinating development and operation of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education. The
475 BOG establishes broad educational, fiscal, and personnel policies and oversees the efficient
476 management of PASSHE. Among other tasks, the BOG appoints the chancellor and university
477 presidents, approves new academic programs, sets tuition, and coordinates and approves the annual
478 PASSHE operating budget. The BOG meetings occur quarterly and are attended by President
479 Weisenstein and his Chief of Staff and Executive Deputy, as well as others. WCU's Council of
480 Trustees (COT) must present decisions on property purchases and new academic programs to
481 PASSHE for final approval.

482
483 Recently the BOG adopted a revised funding formula to allocate base appropriation funding from
484 the State to the universities. The new funding formula redistributed approximately \$3.5 million
485 (phased-in over a three-year period) from West Chester to other institutions. In the year prior to the
486 revised funding formula, an ad hoc adjustment to the formula redeployed \$1.6 million from WCU to
487 other System schools. These resource transfers affect the University's ability to serve students and
488 the community, de-incentivize entrepreneurial behavior and do not address the real problems
489 outlined in the 2012 Governor's Advisory Commission on Postsecondary Education Report (falling
490 public investment and demographic changes that suggest Pennsylvania has too many universities.)¹²
491 In response to the declining state support and constraints of the State System including the revised
492 funding formula, two state legislators introduced the Transfer Institution Act into the Pennsylvania
493 Senate in 2014. The legislation was to provide a mechanism for State System universities meeting
494 certain qualifications to leave the System and become state-related. While the legislation was not
495 approved, it did open a conversation between the State System, its member institutions, and the
496 public regarding the challenges of declining state support, State System constraints, and over-
497 regulation. Among the specific outcomes resulting from that dialogue were:

- 498 • Modification of the approval process for new academic programs to create more efficiency at
499 the State System level. Specifically, the Chancellor of the State System has directed the

500 central office to complete its review and recommendation of new academic programs within
501 60 days.

- 502 • Legislation has been reintroduced to allow state-owned universities and employees of state-
503 owned universities to enter into certain economic development agreements to commercialize
504 intellectual property and general economic development opportunities. Currently system
505 faculty and staff are subject to the limitations imposed by state regulations. The Senate
506 unanimously approved the bill in October 2015 and the House is expected to do so shortly.
- 507 • The Board of Governors has approved greater flexibility for universities to use institutional
508 funds to support scholarships and to pilot alternative tuition rates to attract special populations
509 (e.g. out-of-state students) and encourage enrollment in high-need academic programs.

511 *Addressing the Challenges*

512 Over the past five years there has been a consistent decline in the amount of state support provided
513 to the University for both capital projects and operations. Presently only 21.5% of WCU's annual
514 operating budget for Educational and General programs comes from the Commonwealth of
515 Pennsylvania; including federal stimulus funds, over 31% came from the Commonwealth in 2011.
516 The West Chester University Foundation has been a critical partner in helping the University bridge
517 the fiscal gap caused by decreasing state funds. The West Chester University Foundation is an
518 independent, nonprofit entity (501(c)3) that is affiliated with the University through a memorandum
519 of understanding and related service contracts. The Foundation's primary purpose is to raise money
520 to meet the needs identified by the University including operations, scholarships, endowment,
521 equipment, and construction. The Foundation is also responsible for developing student housing on
522 campus through its subsidiary, University Student Housing (USH). The Vice President for
523 Advancement and Sponsored Research serves as the liaison between the University and the
524 Foundation to assure the Foundation's fundraising and support activities remain focused on
525 institutional priorities.

526 Gift income has grown markedly under the Foundation's leadership. The annual fund and capital
527 campaigns provide the University and its colleges with external financial resources to build and
528 renovate facilities as needed, purchase or invest in new equipment and technology, develop special
529 programs and services to enrich student learning, sponsor art or cultural performances to benefit
530 communities, provide scholarships and engage in other similar activities. Upon the release of West
531 Chester's strategic plan three years ago, the University and Foundation launched the *Becoming More*
532 campaign to raise \$50 million by June 30, 2017. As of May 2016, 85% of the \$50 million goal (\$42
533 million) has been raised and the campaign is on target to reach its goal by December 31, 2017.
534 Campaign projects reflect the most important institutional needs as defined in the strategic plan
535 including: the Business and Public Affairs Center, the move of several Health Sciences programs to a
536 new building The Commons, facilities improvements and renovations, academic and administrative
537 equipment, and endowments that support scholarship and campus operations.

538 In addition to fundraising, the Foundation serves the University through a variety of entrepreneurial
539 activities to help achieve institutional and student success. In 2015 the Faculty and Student Research
540 (FaStR) grant programs began making awards. Up to \$75,000 is committed annually by this program
541 to support the research and scholarly activities conducted by WCU faculty working with
542 undergraduate and graduate students. The Foundation works closely with the Office of Research and

543 Sponsored Programs on this initiative. In addition, the Foundation provides a mechanism for faculty
544 to pursue research and outreach activities that the University finds difficult to implement given state
545 regulation. Examples include the Amazon Center for Education and Environmental Research in
546 Peru, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Autism Resource Center, and the proposed field station in
547 Rwanda to support WCU faculty and student research on primates. The Foundation also hosts the
548 Troops to Teachers program, an initiative of the U.S. Defense Department, which prepares and
549 places retired military in teaching positions in schools. And revenues generated by USH provide
550 WCU with more than \$1 million annually in new unrestricted funds that support initiatives and help
551 overcome reductions resulting from changes in the funding formulas. USH also provides funding
552 for the annual Presidential Lecture Series which brings noted speakers to campus such as Bob
553 Woodward, Dan Rather, Cokie Roberts, and Jane Pauley.

554 West Chester University's Alumni Association is a 501(c)3 organization affiliated with the University.
555 Its mission is to increase alumni engagement with the University leading to financial support and
556 advocacy. Serving more than 90,000 graduates, the Alumni Association and the Office of Alumni
557 Relations sponsor an array of activities and events ranging from active social media communications
558 to more than 100 annual events held both on campus and across the nation. The Association also
559 offers alumni discount programs for goods and services and awards scholarships from the revenues
560 generated by those programs. Since the adoption of the *Becoming More* fundraising campaign, the
561 Alumni Relations Office has more than doubled its program offerings, established nearly a dozen
562 new alumni chapters, and has increased web-based memberships (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and
563 Pinterest) by nearly 150 percent. These efforts have played a significant role in connecting alumni to
564 their alma mater and encouraging philanthropy. To that end, the Alumni Association and WCU
565 Foundation have developed a close working relationship to identify, cultivate, solicit and steward
566 alumni donors. This includes the joint purchase of a new facility in 2014 to house both organizations
567 and expand the space available for cultivating alumni involvement and support.

568

569 **III. Limited Space for Growth and An Aging Infrastructure (Standards 1, 2, 5, 11, 13):**

570 One of the most significant challenges for the institution is space and an aging infrastructure.
571 Implementation of the ten-year facilities plan continues on target by improving current facilities with
572 minimal debt to the institution. However, there is little room for physical expansion of new facilities
573 on the main campus to help meet the demands of increasing student enrollment. The University has
574 been innovative in addressing these challenges through the creation of a new Cabinet-level position;
575 Vice President of External Operations. This type of leadership position – which focuses on
576 expanding the University's off-campus and distance programs – is the first within the State System
577 and speaks to the institution's commitment to responding to challenges strategically. The External
578 Operations Division has enabled the University to look for ways to turn potential growth into real
579 growth while offering alternative paths to student access. Expanding educational delivery options,
580 establishing strong connections with community partners, and creating ways to increase the diversity
581 of WCU's student population all help to accomplish the goal of increased enrollments. External
582 Operations has oversight for the following areas: Distance Education, the Graduate Center (including
583 off-site educational programming), WCU in Philadelphia, the Center for Community Solutions, and
584 Dual Enrollment Programs. Each of these areas has been instrumental over the last five years in
585 allowing the institution to address this challenge and meet the mission and vision of the institution as

586 it pertains to providing access, offering high quality education, and partnering with other schools,
587 government agencies, businesses, and non-profits

588 *Distance Education*

589 Over the last four years, the University has seen tremendous growth in the area of distance education.
590 In FY 2014-2015 there were 602 distinct students who were new to WCU and enrolled in online
591 courses (defined as those with online content between 80% to 100%) and there were a total of 8412
592 total distance education student seats in classes. When compared to FY 2013-2014, distance
593 education has increased by nearly 69% in total seats. While significant growth via distance education
594 has been achieved, the institution has been conscious of ensuring resources are allocated to support
595 this burgeoning area. Specific examples within the last several years include the increase in the
596 number of instructional designers from one full-time individual to three and adding two online
597 support specialists and one E-learning technology and training specialist. Online support specialists
598 provide technical assistance during non-traditional times throughout the day because most online
599 students and faculty engage in their courses outside of conventional business hours. An e-learning
600 technology and training specialist provides additional assistance in direct support of continued
601 growth within the online education marketplace. Such support includes assisting faculty in the
602 integration of effective and attractive technology tools for courses as well as the development of a
603 student training program to ensure learner readiness in an online environment.

604

605 *Graduate Center and Off-site Education Programming*

606 The Graduate Center (GC, formerly the Graduate Business Center), which opened in 2002, was the
607 University's first institutionally-owned "additional location." The GC is located three miles north of
608 campus and is a 47,000-square-foot building that provides a professional and convenient off-campus
609 learning environment. The MBA, MPA, DPA, and Counseling programs, as well as the Southeastern
610 Pennsylvania Autism Resource Center (SPARC) are all housed there. It also hosts an array of
611 executive education and outreach activities.

612

613 The institution's Center City location offers quality, affordable educational opportunities that WCU is
614 known for, along with accessibility and convenience that come with being in the heart of a major city.
615 WCU in Philadelphia is located at the PASSHE Center City building. In 2013, WCU offered its first
616 program, a graduate degree in special education and post baccalaureate certification. Today we offer
617 six programs at the Center City location. These programs include both undergraduate (criminal
618 justice, social work, and a degree completion for nursing) and graduate programs (communication
619 studies, criminal justice, and social work). There are currently over 300 students at the Center City
620 location, which has steadily increased from the initial cohort of 35 three years ago. This location has
621 provided access to students who otherwise may have not had the opportunity for a WCU education.
622 This location serves the needs of degree completers and/or adult learners who are balancing work
623 and family obligations. Additionally, it is proving to be an important way to attract students from a
624 variety of cultural backgrounds, as about 85% of WCU students at the Center City campus are
625 underrepresented minorities. The institution is committed to providing resources to ensure success
626 in this area. Specific examples of this include the hiring of a program counselor in Philadelphia to
627 serve as a link between main campus departments and services. Other examples of support include
628 ensuring students have access to a WCU psychologist, the creation of student advisory boards, onsite

629 writing tutors, and the offering of student success workshops within the areas of time management,
630 study skills, and test taking.

631

632 *Dual Enrollment Programming*

633 Beginning in 2015-2016 West Chester University began a targeted effort in offering dual enrollment
634 to a cohort of junior and senior students from regional high schools. Students who participate in the
635 dual enrollment program simultaneously earn college credits through WCU and high school credits
636 through their respective high schools. Courses are taught by WCU faculty and are held at the
637 Graduate Center in West Chester. This opportunity allows students to have earlier access to WCU
638 and helps alleviate space constraints at the West Chester campus.

639

640 **IV. Enhancing student recruitment, admission, and retention (Standards 1, 2, 8, 9)**

641 WCU's strategic plan states:

642 *As a public University which promotes academic excellence and emphasizes global education,*
643 *West Chester University is committed to providing educational and employment opportunities to*
644 *previously excluded, disadvantaged, challenged, and marginalized populations. Therefore we will*
645 *recruit, retain, and graduate diverse cohorts of students.*

646 The University is located in a crowded marketplace competing for students with over 100 higher
647 education institutions within a 50-mile radius. While this may be a difficult obstacle for some
648 institutions, the University has embraced this challenge by strategically enhancing its student
649 recruitment, admission, and retention efforts over the past five years. This has been critical to the
650 University's financial stability in the face of steadily declining state appropriations. In response to the
651 enrollment goals outlined in the strategic plan, WCU has increased its investment in marketing from
652 \$350,000 to \$1.7 million annually. Based on the enrollment goals established through the University's
653 enrollment management process and approved by Cabinet— to increase out-of-state, graduate and
654 off-campus enrollments – the Office of Communications creates targeted marketing plans that
655 address those objectives. In addition, the Communications team has been charged with increasing
656 general awareness (branding) of the University beyond WCU's traditional market (Greater
657 Philadelphia) to other areas of the Mid-Atlantic region. Examples of tactics for each of the targeted
658 populations as well as the general brand awareness effort include a station-domination marketing
659 tactic in which there is a high concentration of WCU advertisements at several train stations
660 throughout the Interstate 95 corridor including the Long Island Railroad, as well as the Baltimore
661 Metro and Washington D.C. Union Station terminals. In addition to enlarging the institution's
662 geographical focus, the University has deliberately expanded its reach using digital media outlets
663 (Google Adwords, Facebook, Pandora, LinkedIn, and Spotify). Each of these tactics has also assisted
664 in another key goal of the institution, which is the admission of underrepresented minority students
665 (URMs).

666 In 2008 the University set a goal of increasing new degree-seeking URM enrollment 23% by the end
667 of 2014. Figure 3.1 demonstrates the multicultural undergraduate and graduate headcounts for the
668 last several years. In addition, undergraduate goals for URM students have been achieved on an
669 annual basis. Specific funds and plans that have been undertaken in the last five years include Check

670 Us Out Day (which encourages multicultural students to attend information sessions on campus),
 671 targeting community colleges, and phone-a-thons for accepted URM students.

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Figure 3.1: Multicultural Undergraduate and Graduate Headcount

Race/Ethnicity	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015
Undergraduate Headcount					
African American/Black	1,140	1,145	1,247	1,350	1,490
Native American/Alaskan Native	26	19	15	14	14
Asian	239	253	290	294	306
Latino	549	614	636	690	762
White	10,628	10,914	11,138	11,032	11,072
Non-Resident Alien	48	48	44	41	68
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3	7	8	14	17
Two or More Races	164	226	322	363	409
Unknown Race or Ethnicity	37	75	13	51	88
NRA or Unknown	85	123	57	92	156
Underrepresented Minorities ¹	1,859	1,973	2,179	2,377	2,618
Non-URM (White/Asian)	10,890	11,205	11,477	11,380	11,452
Percent URM [URM/(URM+Non-URM)]	14.6%	15.0%	16.0%	17.3%	18.6%

Race/Ethnicity	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015
Graduate Headcount					
African American/Black	231	236	250	295	319
Native American/Alaskan Native	3	4	5	4	2
Asian	58	57	53	62	62
Latino	53	57	63	67	76
White	1,840	1,634	1,642	1,681	1,796
Non-Resident Alien	47	53	75	85	84
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	1	1	3	-
Two or More Races	21	20	27	32	37
Unknown Race or Ethnicity	12	52	18	13	9
NRA or Unknown	59	105	93	98	93
Underrepresented Minorities ¹	306	314	339	394	428
Non-URM (White/Asian)	1,901	1,695	1,702	1,750	1,864
Percent URM [URM/(URM+Non-URM)]	13.9%	15.6%	16.6%	18.4%	18.7%

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¹The Education Trust 'Access to Success' definition of URM includes any student who self-identifies as Black, Hispanic, Native American, Hawaiian, or Multiracial when at least one of those race/ethnic categories is identified.

Non-URM includes any student who self-identifies as White, Asian, or Multiracial (White & Asian).

Students with no race or ethnicity specified and international non-resident alien students are excluded from both the numerator and denominator in the Percent URM calculation.

<https://edtrust.org/issue/access/>

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677 While the admission and recruitment of diverse and qualified students is very important, equally
 678 important is the retention and graduation of students. The institution's retention and graduation
 679 rates regularly exceeded the national norm over the last four years. Table 3 displays the four- and six-

680 year graduation rates of the institution using the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
 681 (IPEDS) report for 2014.

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Figure 3.2: Comparison of IPEDS Four and Six Year Graduation Rates

Category	4 Yr. Grad. Rate F08 Cohort	6 Yr. Graduation Rate F14 Cohort	% Graduated within 6 Yrs. Black	% Graduated within 6 Yrs. Hispanic
All US Degree Granting Institutions with Bachelor's or Higher (n=3069)	33	47	38	45
All M1's (n=390)	33	51	39	45
All Public, M1's (n=168)	23	47	37	42
All Public, M1's, Mid East DE DC MD NJ NY PA (n=39)	32	55	45	49
PASSHE (n=14)	34	54	41	54
West Chester University	44	67	54	69

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688 The University's ability to successfully retain students is the outcome of a suite of student support
 689 services. Upon admission to the institution, students are placed into one of four admission categories.
 690 Regularly admitted students have a combined SAT score of 1070 or greater. Students admitted under
 691 the Academic Development Program (ADP) include ACT 101 participants (students whose family
 692 incomes are below 150% of the national poverty level) and non-ACT 101 participants who are
 693 educationally disadvantaged, having both SAT scores and grade point averages below those of regular
 694 admission criteria. Students offered admission to the institution in a category other than regular
 695 admission are automatically connected with support services to ensure academic success.

696 ADP is housed within the Undergraduate Student Support Services (USSSS) unit, which includes the
 697 Learning Assistance and Resource Center, Pre-Major Advising, as well as the Office of Services for
 698 Students with Disabilities. ADP admits approximately 180 academically high-risk students (many of
 699 which are low income, first generation, and/or URM) each summer for a bridge program prior to
 700 their full matriculation in the fall. Throughout their first year these students are provided academic
 701 support through academic advising, tutoring, mentoring, academic monitoring, and counseling.
 702 When compared to students who do not participate in the program, ADP students persist at higher-
 703 than-expected retention rates.

704 Students admitted in the special admission category have either SAT scores or grade point averages
 705 below those of the regular admission criteria and take a reduced (12-credit) course load during their
 706 first semester at WCU. Figures 3.3 and 3.4 display the five-year average rates for second semester fall
 707 retention and for fourth- and sixth-year graduation rates by admittance and transfer type.

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Figure 3.3: First time, Full Time, First Year Degree Seeking Students Retention and Graduation

Category		2nd Fall Retention		4 Yr Graduation Rate		6 Yr Graduation Rate	
		N in F14 Cohort	% Retained to 2nd Fall	N in F11 Cohort	% Graduated Within 4 Yrs	N in F09 Cohort	% Graduated Within 6 Yrs
University	ALL	2344	87.9	2283	47.7	2241	70.7
Admissions Type	Regular	1968	88.7	1893	51.8	1847	73.1
	ADP - ACT101	68	80.9	55	21.8	54	48.1
	ADP - Non-Act101	112	83.9	104	17.3	109	66.1
	Special	196	84.2	231	34.3	231	59.3

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Figure 3.4: Transfer Students Retention and Graduation

Category		2nd Fall Retention		2 Yr Graduation Rate		4 Yr Graduation Rate		6 Yr Graduation	
		N in F14 Cohort	% Retained to 2nd Fall	N in F13 Cohort	% Graduated Within 2 Yrs	N in F11 Cohort	% Graduated Within 4 Yrs	N in F09 Cohort	% Graduated Within 6 Yrs
University	ALL	1331	83.5	1350	17.5	1275	66.7	1179	70.6
Load	Full-time in 1st Fall	1171	85.5	1174	17.2	1138	67.8	1051	72.2
	Part-time in 1st Fall	160	68.8	176	19.3	137	57.7	128	57.0

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719 Additionally, the University engages in continuous improvement efforts designed to ensure there is
 720 currency in student success and retention activities. In 2012 the University was one of 13 institutions
 721 in the State System to participate in the Center for Urban Education Equity Scorecard (ES) project.
 722 ES is a data-driven, organizational learning process designed to foster institutional change by
 723 identifying and eliminating racial disparities among college students. Consistent with the institutional
 724 mission of providing access and high-quality undergraduate education, the aim of this project was to
 725 identify structurally hidden and unintended inequalities leading to racial disproportions in the
 726 following: access to the University, retention, degree completion, and involvement in high impact
 727 activities, such as internship, honors, and undergraduate research. At the conclusion of this project, a
 728 total of 45 recommendations were made to administration. The recommendations are designed to
 729 close the racial equity gap in the areas of access, retention/completion, and excellence. To date 60%
 730 of the recommendations have been acted upon.¹¹ Over the last four years, the University has
 731 increased the number of URM students enrolled and increased and exceeded national retention rates
 732 for URM students. The University will continue to build upon excellence in this area by following
 733 through on remaining ES recommendations that have yet to be implemented.

734 Student success is at the core of every decision made at the University. *Building on Excellence* states,
 735 “West Chester University is dedicated to excellent academic programs while supporting an academic environment that
 736 ensures student success.” Over the last five years, the development of several programs has assisted in the
 737 retention and graduation rates for both URM and the overall student population. Beginning in
 738 2012-2013, the Office of Multicultural Affairs launched a mentoring program for first-year and
 739 transfer multicultural students. During its inaugural year, the program had 171 participants and
 740 currently serves nearly 249. The program’s purpose is to assist multicultural students in their
 741 transition to WCU by assigning them to both a peer mentor (an upper-class student) and a
 742 faculty/staff mentor who will provide guidance, information, and support during the initial year of
 743 enrollment. When comparing the retention rate of the mentoring group to all other multicultural
 744 students who do not participate, the program boasts a 4% greater retention rate for the last three

745 cohorts of participants. Because of early success with first year students, the program was expanded
746 in 2015 to also include transfer multicultural students.

747 In 2013 the African American and Latino Male Student Retention Task Force was developed to help
748 URM students overcome historically low graduation rates. The Brother to Brother program is the
749 outcome of a task force recommendation. Launched in 2014, Brother to Brother, which is organized
750 within the Learning Assistance and Resource Center (LARC), has created a council of ambassadors
751 from campus organizations, holds special events, and reaches out to teen minority males in
752 Philadelphia and nearby towns. Lastly, the Early Alert program within LARC is a proactive system of
753 communication and collaboration of professors, program staff, academic advisors, and University
754 students. The goals of this program are to promote academic success by identifying students having
755 trouble with course material, provide students with timely support and direction in the use of campus
756 resources, enhance communication with faculty, and help make the college transition more gratifying
757 by providing a framework for academic success. Early Alert was expanded to all 100 and 200 level
758 general education courses as a result of a strategic plan objective. Annually there are 1,100 early alerts
759 that are sent to students, which serves as an initial outreach for them to meet with their advisor
760 and/or sign up for tutoring at the LARC. Most recently institutional resources were dedicated for
761 the initial hiring of a full time staff line to assist with diversity retention. In the Fall of 2015 an
762 assistant director of Social Equity and Coordinator of Diversity Initiatives was hired. This individual
763 is responsible for identifying diversity and inclusion opportunities for students and staff; engaging
764 students in educational outreach opportunities; serving as the student liaison/contact representative
765 for the Office of Social Equity; conducting and collaborating on educational and training programs
766 on diverse issues for the campus community, and working with several campus constituencies that
767 are linked to academic and student success such as University Forum, the Council for Diversity,
768 Inclusion and Academic Excellence and the Diversity 411 Program.

769 *Conclusion*

770 Ensuring meaningful responses to the challenges and opportunities developing since the decennial
771 site visit has strengthened WCU. The University has pursued significant improvements to
772 assessment processes, both at the level of student learning outcomes as well as institutional
773 effectiveness. The University has also implemented specific strategies to combat the financial effects
774 of declining state appropriations exacerbated by the BOG's practice of constraining tuition increases
775 at or below the CPI. These strategies include strengthening the role of the Foundation and the
776 Alumni Association as well as meeting strategic enrollment management targets. In response to
777 limitations on physical space, the institution has developed alternate sites for program delivery as well
778 as alternative modalities for delivering instruction (distance education) to support increased
779 enrollments. Finally, the University has successfully achieved enrollment growth despite being
780 located in a very competitive market by providing not only access to high quality public higher
781 education, but also ensuring the success of students as measured by retention and timely graduation
782 rates.

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