

Report to the  
Faculty, Administration, Trustees and Students

of

WESTFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY  
Westfield Massachusetts

by

an Evaluation Team representing the  
Commission on

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Observer: Dr. Clantha McCurdy, Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, Boston, MA

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This report represents the views of the evaluations committee as interpreted by the chairperson. Its content is based on the evaluation of the institution with respect to the Commission's criteria for accreditation. It is a confidential document in which all comments are made in good faith. The report is prepared both as an educational service to the institution and as a report to the Commission in making a decision about the institution's accreditation status.



## Introduction

The Evaluation Team appreciated and enjoyed the reception it received during its visit to Westfield State University. All members of the community with whom we met were candid in their comments, and all requests for additional data and dialogue were handled with efficiency and openness. Westfield provided ample working space and appropriate technology for our deliberations and writing. Maps and directions aided the team in navigating the campus.

The team met, both in groups and individually, with members of the university's leadership team and with middle level administrators responsible for areas such as residence life, intercollegiate athletics and development. The visit's first day began with a lengthy dialogue with Westfield's Dean of Institutional Research to establish collective understanding of data elements in the Self Study and to identify areas where clarification was required. Members of the team met with three members of the university's Board of Trustees as well as a representative sample of student leaders. Open forums were held with faculty (25 attended), staff (30 attended) and students (10 attended). Informative meetings were conducted with the major university committees to understand Westfield's strategic planning, governance, assessment and curricular change processes.

As the pages that follow will indicate, the team was impressed by the energy and the uniformity of purpose that characterized Westfield's university community. No matter the question at hand, a focus on the centrality of students and their educational experience came through. This focus was reinforced through administrative practices, facilities development and vocabulary employed in describing the university.

This pervasive organizational culture enabled Westfield to deal with broader issues such as aging academic facilities and the implications of directives reaching the university from the state's Board of Higher Education. While both matters were of concern to Westfield colleagues, they approached neither with a sense of crisis or resignation. This impression suggests that the university has confidence in its ability to adapt to challenges and continue to evolve to meet its strategic goals.

The insights gathered during this most productive visit, Westfield's Self Study, and a panoply of published and electronic public information form the basis for the

## 1. Mission and Purpose

Westfield State University's current mission statement reflects its progress over a 174-year journey from the nation's first coeducational teacher training institution to the comprehensive public regional university that it is today. Founded in 1838 as Westfield Normal School by educational reformer Horace Mann, the institution offered Bachelor of Arts degrees for the first time in the late 1960s, expanded its academic programs significantly in the 1970s, and was, along with its sister state college, granted university status by the Massachusetts Legislature in 2010.

With this historical legacy, Westfield has been consistent in maintaining explicit attention to the development of students both as citizens and as workforce participants in an increasing variety of occupations and professions. The current mission statement's emphasis on "teaching, student advising and student involvement in the life of the university and its community" is a value widely held across the campus. The centrality of students was emphatically apparent in the Evaluation Team's conversations with faculty, students, administrators and employees at all levels. Institutional and organizational features of Westfield also reflect this centrality. These include small classes, internships and study abroad, centers for academic support, and the creation of active learning communities in student affairs venues such as residence life, student government and intercollegiate athletics. Faculty were unusually direct in asserting the primacy of teaching and advising in their work. Westfield's strong retention and six-year graduation rates demonstrate congruity with this element of the mission statement.

Westfield's ties and commitment to its broader community are another verifiable element of its mission statement. As one of the city's four largest employers, the university has significant economic and cultural impact.

The new draft statement, which continues many of Westfield State's historical values in the more complex context of the diverse, global environment of the 21st century, will be the foundation for the development of the university's next 5-year strategic plan. The five draft goals of the plan are consistent with both WSU's institutional capacities and mission.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** The Strategic Planning Committee intends to bring the new mission statement and plan to the university's All College Committee for approval by the end of the 2012 Spring Semester. Approval by that body will lead to presentation to the president and, with his approval, to the trustees sometime in the fall. If this calendar is followed, it will bring closure to an important process that reflects not only Westfield's values and goals, but also the continuing maturation of its governance effectiveness.

## 2. Planning and Evaluation

In response to the receipt of its five-year interim report, the Commission asked Westfield State University to prepare a self-study in 2012 that focused on its success in three areas of emphasis. Two of those areas are directly related to Standard Two:

Ò1) implementing the goals, priorities, action plans, evaluations of progress, and suggested improvements that emanate from the 2005-10 Strategic Plan; Ó

Ò2) implementing comprehensive and systematic assessment of student learning and program review. Ó

**Strategic Plans 2005-10 and 2012-17:** The process of developing the 2005 plan included input from key stakeholders (faculty, staff, students and alumni as well as members of the Westfield community). Progress on the plan goals was monitored and reported each year at an annual strategic planning retreat. The supporting materials supplied with the self-study suggest that the

Division of Academic Affairs recently developed a rotating Assessment Coordinator program which allows three faculty members some alternate professional responsibility (release time) each semester to advance assessment programs within their respective departments. Currently, one faculty member is working on the development of learning outcomes, another is developing measures for outcomes, and a third is working on the aggregation of evidence to be used in curricular modification. The IAC has been instrumental in moving the culture of assessment forward. An understanding of the value of assessment is more widespread now as a byproduct of the faculty's work to complete the Series forms associated with the Study. The process

Review of Common Core Committee (ROCCO) have all been involved in moving the campus assessment efforts forward, but it does not appear that much progress has been made in developing a formal plan. The changes that ROCCO recommended to the Curriculum Committee appear to be stalled as the committee wades through a large set of recommended changes to the core curriculum. The university is considering reforming the IAC again, this time with the intention of increasing faculty participation from departments with successful assessment efforts. Westfield will also have to address faculty attitudes that create a barrier to developing a culture of assessment. The university intends to continue to improve their assessment plans and to further develop a culture of assessment on campus. According to the Self Study, "All academic departments will have assessment and evaluation plans in place by Fall 2012." While this is an admirable goal, it may be difficult to achieve, and the Self Study does not elaborate on how this goal will be accomplished.

The Committee on Academic Strategic Planning (CASP) was formed in 2011 to examine the university's current academic offerings, their sustainability potential for growth of new programs, and candidates for elimination. This group began developing guiding principles and processes in Fall 2011, and is moving forward slowly and carefully to ensure that stakeholders have a voice in the process.

Student Affairs has a strategic plan which includes metrics and goals of "closing the loop." Westfield has several other plans in place to help direct its operations such as a Campus Master Plan (which supports the work of the Long Range Planning Committee), a Technology Plan and a Library Annual Report. However, the campus does not appear to have a multi-year financial plan, nor does it have an enrollment management plan.

Institutional Effectiveness Westfield's faculty and administration are collecting data and using them for assessment and planning purposes. They recognize many of the weaknesses in current practices and understand the areas needing improvement. However, they have started many of their new committees and processes too late for substantial inclusion in their Self Study. They are in the early stages of their current strategic planning processes.

### 3. Organization and Governance

The Massachusetts Board of Higher Education is the statutorily created agency responsible for defining the mission of and coordinating the Commonwealth's public institutions of higher education. Westfield State University is one of nine state universities under the aegis of the Board of Higher Education. Each has its own Board of Trustees, with reporting responsibilities to the Board of Higher Education. There are eleven members of Westfield Board of Trustees; nine are appointed by the Governor; one is elected by and represents the Alumni Association; one is a student trustee elected by the student body. Trustees serve five-year terms, with the exception of the student trustee, who is elected annually. The trustees meet five times per year. Although several trustees' terms have expired recently, they have been asked to stay on until the current budget development cycle is concluded. Minutes of Board meetings are not currently available online, although they are available on request.

The Board's roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and described in its bylaws. As well as an Executive Committee, the Board has three standing committees: Finance and Capital Assets; Academic and Student Affairs; and Governance and Nominations. In addition, there are trustee liaisons to the Foundation and to the Alumni Association Executive Council. The Board Chair and President are ex officio members of all committees. Standing committees regularly communicate and work with the appropriate vice president(s). The president and vice presidents attend all Board meetings.

Members of the Board represent a variety of backgrounds; eight of the current trustees are Westfield alumni. A new process for selecting trustees will be implemented this year. The Governance and Nominations Committee will identify potential candidates who will be interviewed by the Board to ascertain their understanding of trustees' roles and responsibilities. The Board will then make a recommendation to the Governor. New trustees are provided with a handbook and invited to interact with campus leaders. Although there is no specific training or professional development program, trustees take their role seriously and make to educate themselves on pertinent campus issues. The Board does not currently have a defined process for evaluating its own effectiveness. The President provides the Board with annual reports, and the Board evaluates the effectiveness of the President in the areas of leadership, strategic planning, and fundraising.

The President meets weekly with members of the senior staff (president, chief development officer, executive assistant for multicultural affairs, and associate vice president for governmental relations). Also invited to attend are the leadership of the three unions on campus. Meetings are described as informational with each member sharing information and providing updates regarding his/her area.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs (currently interim) is the chief academic officer of the institution and has four deans, the library director and the chief information officer as direct reports in addition to the 23 academic ( ) ] TJ rptciinti excahweoo anfeaimaom coasnrt n.



VPAA meets weekly with deans, library director and CIO. Department chairs meet monthly, both as a group and with the VPAA. The deans represent functional areas rather than academic schools. Recently, a special committee studied whether reorganization by academic schools was feasible and desirable. The committee recommended against reorganization citing cost and creation of another level of management.

The faculty and librarians are represented by the Massachusetts State College Association (MSCA/MTA/NEA). A separate collective bargaining agreement is in effect for faculty (all part-time) who teach for the Division of Graduate and Continuing Education (DGCE). Confidential administrators are represented by the Association of Professional Administrators (APA). Non-confidential classified staff, maintainers, and campus police are represented by the Association of Federal, State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

Westfield has had four presidents since the previous NEASC comprehensive review in 2002, each presidency accompanied by varying levels of reorganization. Following Dr. Evan Dobelle's appointment in 2008, organizational changes included the creation of new deanships to strengthen and clarify lines of authority and accountability as well as significant increases in the number of faculty lines. Currently, a number of senior staff (including three vice-presidents) are interim. National searches are underway for the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Student Affairs.

The current administration was almost universally described by faculty, staff, and students as open, inclusive, and accessible. While a number of comments by faculty and staff indicated that there continues to be a need for improving communication within and among divisions, consensus held that significant strides have been made in this area. Periodically scheduled campus update forums, hosted by the All College Committee (ACC), were noted to be a positive move toward increased communication and transparency.

The campus is clearly strongly committed to the principles of shared governance. As per the MSCA contract, the All College Committee is the primary governance vehicle. By contract, ACC membership is comprised of eight faculty (elected by the faculty), three administrative representatives (appointed by the President), and three students (selected by the President). President Dobelle has used his appointments to the ACC to include representatives of the APA and AFSCME bargaining units. This has been very positively received by staff. Prior to President Dobelle's tenure, AFSCME members had no official voice on ACC or budget matters.

The ACC has standing committees (Academic Policies, Curriculum, Student Affairs, and Graduate Education Council) which conduct most of the business related to academic and student life. Special committees are constituted to address significant areas. Currently there are nine special committees, including strategic planning, long range planning, academic strategic planning, institutional assessment, and online instruction. These committees

turn, makes recommendations to the President. If the President does not accept the recommendations of the ACC, a written response is required.

enrollment baccalaureate majors FY12 are Business Management (758) and Criminal Justice (738). Other programs of high enrollment are Psychology (367), Elementary Education (341), and Communication (290). There are 655 (11%) students classified as undeclared.

**Undergraduate Degree Programs** A successful completion of baccalaureate degree at Westfield State University requires a student to complete 120 credits of course work with CGPA of 2.0 and a minimum of 2.0 in the major. The Common Core requirements consist of 452 credits and a major requires 360 credits hours

All undergraduate degree programs have requirements including introductory courses leading to upper division required courses and electives. As a result, programs such as Special Education, Early Childhood and Elementary Education programs have room for only one elective, thereby limiting students' freedom to explore areas outside of their major or concentration. Westfield allows students to combine programs to actualize its liberal arts mission and goals. Examples of such combinations include integrated studies with Economics, Ethnic Gender Studies, Political Science, Regional Planning and Spanish. Westfield has offered online classes since 2002 through the DGC and through the Day Division since 2005. Online courses are offered in most disciplines and the university offers only degree completion programs (through DGC) Business, Sociology, History and Liberal Studies.

The university's Honors Program has been expanded and reorganized, with resulting participation increasing to nearly 5% of the total student population. This has been accomplished with minimal administrative investment. An Honors Director and Assistant Director, both members of the faculty, work with the Honors Advisory Council and a Student Honors Advisory Council to manage the program. Westfield has also laudably expanded its commitment to academic and social opportunities for Honors students, offering short-term travel courses, community service activities and honors housing.

The university is now working on plans to establish First Year Program with summer reading assignments for new entrants coupled with enrolling cohorts of new students in two core courses for the first year.

**General Education (Common Core)** The Common Core of Studies Westfield requires students to complete 452 credits from five major sections consisting of Humanities (18 credits); Social Science (12 credits); Mathematics/Applied Analytical Reasoning (6 credits); Science (78 credits) and Diversity (6 credits). The Review of the Common Core Committee (ROCCC) issued its final report in 2009 and proposed recommendations now under review by the Curriculum Committee.

**The Academic Majors or Concentrations** Academic majors require between 36 credits depending on the program and department. All major requirements lead students through introductory, intermediate and advanced level coursework. All academic programs assign a faculty advisor to each student as soon as they declare a major. Faculty are required to hold office hours throughout the week, and student advising is required each term in order to secure a



against assessment is publicly acknowledged and a concern, but Westfield's academic leadership is stressing the need and importance of assessment as an academic program enhancement tool to improve the quality of pedagogy and students' learning outcomes.

Governance issues and varying opinions about the Massachusetts State Vision Project have distracted campus conversations about assessment. Concern about centrally imposed assessment metrics is real among Westfield faculty. Delay in approving a new, revised mission statement and accompanying institutional strategic plan and academic program strategic plans



assessment activities within departments. Scholarship is supported through a number of competitively offered internal grant opportunities and a new office of sponsored funds.

Teaching and Advising Faculty at

## 6. Students

Admissions: Admission policies and corresponding support for all students, especially special populations, are consistent with Westfield's mission to "assist its students to develop intellectually and to use their knowledge and skills to improve the social and economic conditions of their communities" and "emphasizing teaching, student advising and student development in the life of the university." Full-time "day" students are admitted through the Undergraduate Office of Admissions and part-time and graduate students are admitted by the Division of Graduate and Continuing Education (DGCE). DGCE also admits online degree completion students and full-time evening students.

The university is bound by state Department of Higher Education admission standards. Students meeting the minimum standards will be considered for admission based on their academic records, standardized admission test scores (SAT or ACT) and other supporting materials. Specialized majors (both undergraduate and graduate) have additional criteria for admission and have input into the admission process. All policies with regard to both undergraduate and graduate admissions and retention are clearly stated in university publications such as the 2011-2012 Bulletin, relevant admissions publications, and the Westfield website. Both the undergraduate admissions and DGCE websites contain clear information about policies and processes.

The undergraduate admission goals for Fall 2012 of 1,140 (1st year) and 365 (transfer) are realistic and consistent with the capacity and current strategic planning of the institution. This goal is reflective both of the admission trends over time and a stated desire on the part of the institution to remain at a total undergraduate enrollment of approximately 5,200 (4,800 full-time; approximately 300 of these residential). Although there is a well-conceived recruitment plan, it is of concern that no corresponding enrollment management plan exists.



Disabilities program are exempted. Based on this testing, additional support in college level reading and mathematics may be provided through the tutoring center or through the addition of one-hour workshops to elementary mathematics and English courses.

Retention and Graduation: All students at Westfield have access to a broad range of academic

In the summer of 2011, the Academic Achievement Department, under which all of the above mentioned services and special programs reside, launched Westfield 360, a web based case



contracted with ASA to deliver a web-based program which helps students (and alumni) manage their money and loans more effectively and promotes greater financial literacy.

Westfield participates in Division III of the NCAA and offers 21 varsity sports programs, an intramurals program and an extensive club sports program. It operates in full compliance with all NCAA rules and regulations. It participates in the NCAA's Champs Life Skills Program which promotes athletics, academics, personal and career development. It recently completed the NCAA Self Study which resulted in two recommendations: the need for priority academic scheduling for athletes (a proposal has been submitted to administration about this) and the need for more full time coaches (which will be dependent on funding). Athletics also participates in the NCAA Division III Academic Reporting Pilot. Westfield athletes have the highest graduation rates in the Massachusetts system, and have higher retention and graduation rates than the Westfield population as a whole. The university leads its conference in placing student athletes on the academic honor roll.

All Student Affairs staff are qualified, caring and committed to student success. Training is provided to staff on a yearly basis. While facilities, technology and funding are adequate to support the needs of students and to implement all services and programs, student affairs staff and budgets have been cut in recent years. Hence, some offices operate with very thin staffing for the numbers of students and range of services. While difficult, this has resulted in more collaborative offerings between departments. However, some departments feel particularly constrained. Admissions, for example, is challenged today in a competitive environment due to the lack of adequate funding for expanded recruitment activity and a low level of institutional financial aid.

Westfield

customer service but these are limited and need improvement. Residential and Campus Life uses the EBI survey to collect data about the residential experience including food service this has resulted in changes and improvements in the dining program. As previously mentioned, Athletics participated in the NCAA Self Study which resulted in recommendations connected to course scheduling and staffing. TRIO and UE conduct ongoing assessment, as does Academic Advising. Career Services, Health Services and Counseling track contacts and survey students about services and access; these results have aided in expanding staffing, hours adding support for these programs. All departments within Student Affairs are on a one year cycle for assessment and appear to be on target for completion this year. A program review of the Banacos Center, which provides disabilities services, occurred the second week of April 2012 this will include an assessment of space, services and data collection/assessment.

## 7. Library and Other Information Resources

Under the leadership of a new library director, Ely Library is at the beginning of what should prove to be a significant transition. Thanks to early intervention after his arrival, the director with employee input



of the institution. Often with departments and staff working well beyond reasonable workloads due to open positions and growing expectations. Social media can be used more effectively to reach and educate students.

The team found a VERY high level of IT support for students and faculty. As noted by one faculty member, "They make it all work with their limited staff and resources." The network is robust, secure and rarely ever down. A new redundant internet link will become available in the coming year. A four-year life cycle for computer replacement is functional and reasonable. In addition, technical help desk services are operational and functions well despite being down one position.

There is a perception expressed by some students that there are not enough computers on campus, especially around the time of midterms and finals. During our visit to the instruction lab in the library, we had no fewer than ten students appear at the door seeking to use the lab only to be turned away by our presence.

The Center for Instructional Technology (CIT) is well positioned as an academic ally of faculty and departments seeking more opportunities to move on. While there is concern about how well the CIT is integrated with the academic enterprise, it has built a functional relationship with academic departments and the Division of Graduate and Continuing Education on delivery and marketing. There has been an astronomical growth in online courses, in faculty training, in course development and in praise for the Center. Academic faculty lead, guide and approve the transition of "day" courses and programs to their online status.

Institutional Effectiveness: The library's new director is beginning to bring together internal and external resources, and a vision of the academic library of the future is beginning to form. Library colleagues are sorting out their strengths as well as the direction the library needs to take for the future; needed technological and staff changes are being identified and will be implemented as time and resources allow. Information technology is student-focused and managed well, and CIT is a "powerhouse" of support for faculty for the development of online courses and programs.

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the site for central administration, admissions, financial aid, the Criminal Justice Program, and the athletic facilities. The 105 acre South Campus is used primarily for parking and the 45 acre north campus, which is owned by the Foundation, includes land along the Westfield River. This campus has limited development potential due to wetlands and the Wetlands Protection Act as well as the Rivers Protection Act.

During the last ten years five new buildings have been added to the campus. These include the Woodward Center, which serves as an athletic facility and specialized academic programming space; an Athletic Storage Building; New Hall Residence Hall; Lansdowne Place, a leased apartment building located downtown for additional student housing; and Mod Hall, which houses faculty offices and classrooms. The campus continues to evolve with the start of the



Westfield results were also benchmarked to peers. This study found that 69% of the campus buildings are over 25 years old and underscored the need for additional investment to manage deferred maintenance. The estimate of deferred maintenance is approximately \$100 million.

A current DCAM study presented tentative space use of the new academic building on April 4, 2012. The presentation revealed the amount of assignable square feet and suggested how the space could be used to support academic programming needs. Input for the final plan is expected to be broad based and will include the Long Range Planning Committee, Academic Strategic Planning Committee and campus-wide feedback. This project, as well as backspace refill possibilities, is expected to remedy some classroom teaching space concerns as well as suggest faculty department adjacency possibilities.

More detailed follow-up planning will address the backfill of space vacated when some instruction and faculty offices are moved to the new building and will develop a plan for the renovation and use of the Juniper Park Elementary. This school is currently leased

Sustainability is also a focus of the institution. In order to reduce carbon footprint, LED lighting has been installed to reduce electricity consumption; solar panels have been added to reduce electricity consumption; and the steam plant has been converted to gas from oil. The recycling program received recognition from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental



Westfield has an independent annual audit using the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with the accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, as prescribed by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB). The audit report indicated that the financial statements were presented fairly in all material respects and accurately portrayed the financial position of the university. One of the key elements of the audit was that for FY11 unrestricted net assets have increased \$7.2 million to \$19.34 million compared with FY10. Total net assets increased to \$61.5 million compared to \$55.12 million in FY10.

The financial management of the institution is effective and knowledgeable. The division is led by a Vice President of Administration and Finance, an Assistant Vice President for Financial Officer, and a Director of Budget and Internal Audit. Budget managers can view their budget status through Banner in real time and weekly institutional spending reports are reviewed by the finance staff. The Board of Trustees is updated quarterly on the budget.

Resources are expended consistent with the university's current mission, and the fiscal environment is stable due to sound fiscal management. Fiscal policies are in place. Examples of these policies include coverage for Fund Raising, Investment, Audit, Audit Findings, Administering Petty Cash Funds, Emergency Purchasing Refunds. The university has sufficient reserves to weather unexpected fiscal issues and has manageable debt service.

Current strategies of tightening expenditures while maintaining academic quality and student service delivery capping day student enrollments; program development caution; and presenting Westfield among the state's lowest cost universities will all put increasing financial pressure on the institution's maintenance of current services. The revival of the Westfield State University Foundation to generate additional funding to support the Capital Plan will help take some of this pressure off the operating fund. The development of a financial plan with different revenue/expense scenarios over multiple fiscal years will assist with the identification of alternatives to cope with projected revenue and expense growth. Maximizing alumni giving as

In recent years, there has been a significant improvement in Òtown

including supervisor development, university policies and systems, plagiarism and academic



content with relevant university materials. Westfield demonstrates compliance with the federal definition of credit hour in its Bulletin and on its website. Its credit transfer policies are also stated in these venues and in other admissions publications. Appropriate information regarding student complaints and grievance procedures is available from various sources, and adequate processes with regard to password and login protection and faculty training exist to monitor verification of student identity in distance learning education programs. There are no extra charges associated with the verification of student identity. Westfield made the public of its comprehensive NEASC evaluation through its website and press releases. Daily, the Hampshire Gazette, The Republican, the Berkshire Eagle, the Westfield News and the Pennysaver. The team's discussion of Westfield's credit hour policy is found in the Integrity of the Award of Academic Credit in Standard 4: The Academic Program

## Summary

Overall, the evaluation team judged that Westfield State University is providing academic programs and services that clearly meet its mission as a public university serving its region and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. On some dimensions, these programs and services are delivered with distinction. Its faculty and staff are dedicated and, with striking uniformity, share a commitment to enabling student success. Morale appears to be high despite financial and governance issues that are common to public institutions in many states. The Board of Trustees and broader community support the university and its mission, and students are highly enthusiastic about their experiences. Westfield's president has, during his tenure, created an environment of energy, transparency and commitment to shared governance; he is respected by all campus constituents.

In the years since its last NEASC visit, Westfield has taken significant strides in implementing an environment of shared governance. Faculty are widely engaged in committee and governance work, and open discussion of important academic issues is encouraged, occasionally to the point of diminishing returns. While laudable, this environment has produced a very slow pace of collective attention to matters such as strategic planning, curricular change and assessment. Constraints inherent in the university's collective bargaining agreement slow the pace of change. Faculty morale has also been bolstered by a conscious program of hiring that has added more than twenty new positions over the past four years, and new populations are being served by degree completion distance learning initiatives. This commitment to teaching faculty has produced strains on administrative and support services, where lines have been held vacant. This produces pressures on performance and efficiency, as does the current presence of a number of interim appointments in significant leadership roles.

Westfield is financially sound. Its budgets are managed with transparency, efficiency and



and these metrics demonstrate the effectiveness of Westfield's student-centered organizational culture and the commitment of faculty and staff.

Since the last NEASC visit and interim report, Westfield has taken steps toward fortifying its assessment infrastructure and practices. The commitment to this endeavor is real among leaders of governance, but work remains to expand this attitude throughout the organization and create a true culture of assessment. More attention, perhaps additional resources, need to be directed to institutional research and integration of the various planning processes now underway is essential. The new draft university mission statement and strategic plan are an encouraging foundation upon which to base such a transition.

Colleagues at Westfield were generous with their time, sincere in their responses, and genuine in their commitment to students. These positive and widely shared attitudes are far more difficult to develop than organizational or governance structures. They are the firm foundation upon which Westfield has grown, and they constitute the university's most notable comparative advantage.

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- Westfield has developed a consistent and positive identity that is effectively communicated to all stakeholder groups; its brand is strong.
- The university has successfully worked to develop a positive relationship with the City of Westfield. This productive (and continually improving) town relationship is

- Westfield's senior administration is viewed as inclusive, open and accessible by all constituents. This perception, which the team believes is based upon reality, enhances institutional effectiveness.

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