WASC Proposal

Institutional Context

The Founding and Growth of the University

In 1974, the California Supreme Court concluded that a 1962 Referendum prohibiting the granting of new licenses to doctors of osteopathic medicine (D.O.) in the state was unconstitutional. This victory for osteopathic medicine was achieved through the efforts of dedicated osteopathic physicians and surgeons and strong supporters of the preservation of the osteopathic profession in California. Soon after, these physicians approached Philip Pumerantz, Ph.D., then Director of Education for the American Osteopathic Association (AOA), and encouraged him to establish a new osteopathic medical school in California. Ultimately, Dr. Pumerantz founded the College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific in downtown Pomona, where he remains as the school’s founding president. Dr. Pumerantz’ vision for the College was based on one of the staples of the osteopathic approach to health care delivery; to cultivate a school for humanistic doctors that, in the tradition of family practice, emphasizes humanistic concerns for the whole person. It was an enormous task; however, with his leadership, he made the seemingly impossible a reality.

The College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific, or COMP, would become the only osteopathic college in the western United States and the 14th osteopathic medical college in the United States accredited by the AOA. The College began very modestly on the day after Labor Day in 1977 in a rented room in an old store, with borrowed furniture and a telephone. In January of 1978, COMP received pre-accreditation status from the American Osteopathic Association. Provisional accreditation status was achieved in July of 1978 and full accreditation in February of 1982. On October 2, 1978, the charter class of 36 students began attending the College in a single building. In 1986, the COMP initiated a Master of Science in Health Professions Education (MSHPE) program, now part of the College of Allied Health Professions, as a response to a national demand for qualified clinical instructors.

In 1990, the first class of Physician Assistant (PA) students enrolled. The two PA and MSHPE programs became the Division, then the College, of Allied Health Professions (CAHP). In 1992, a new Physical Therapy program was added to CAHP. For the first time, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges granted institutional accreditation to COMP effective February, 1996, when COMP included medical, health professions education, physician assistant and physical therapy programs. With WASC affirmation, the institution was renamed the Western University of Health Sciences in August, 1996, a name that reflected the institution’s goal to become established as a leading health science university. A new College of Pharmacy program, the fourth college of pharmacy in the state of California, was opened in 1996. In March 1998, a College of Graduate Nursing was created to enhance the University’s educational offerings in advanced practiced nursing. To fulfill the university’s mission to educate compassionate and competent health professionals in a rapidly changing world, the university expanded to other health-related degrees. A shortage of nurses, pharmacists, and primary care physicians, especially in underserved communities, helped spawn the growth of multiple programs.

The university continues to grow, adding yet another college, the College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM), on August 8, 1998. This most recent addition to the WesternU family has successfully implemented its third of four years of veterinary medical education. CVM is the only one of two veterinary colleges in the United States to utilize a Problem Based Learning curriculum. In addition, the college is unique in its pledge to adhere to a reverence to life policy, meaning no
harm comes to animals for the purposes of veterinary education, a reflection of the humanistic and compassionate approach to health care that is part of our institution’s founding principles.

With five colleges and eight degree programs currently established, the next goal is the development of Western University of Health Sciences as an institution that promotes and actively engages in biomedical research. We hope to accomplish this by developing a proposed College of Graduate Studies. Given the institution’s current standing as a teaching institution, this development will add a new layer to the university, which we believe will enhance the university and its mission in several ways. A research emphasis will allow Western University to recruit medical practitioners interested in advancing health research in the clinical and basic medical sciences. In addition, the university will be able to recruit students who are interested in a research track, a clinical track, or both. We believe this blend of clinical and research activities can diversify the university’s capacity to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration between practitioners and researchers.

One of the challenges that our graduates face as practitioners is the rapidly changing health care environment. This requires our graduates to be life long learners who keep abreast of emerging treatments and diagnostic tools on a continual basis. Our graduates need to be able to critically evaluate new knowledge and research before applying it to patient and animal care. To assist with this goal, all of the Western University of Health Sciences’ professional programs promote evidence and research based practice in their curricula, an approach that allows students and faculty to evaluate clinical and basic science research for their relevance in the decision making process in patient and animal care.

“Evidence-based medicine is the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients. The practice of evidence-based medicine means integrating individual clinical expertise with the best available external clinical evidence from systematic research...By best available external clinical evidence we mean clinically relevant research, often from the basic sciences of medicine, but especially from patient centred clinical research...External clinical evidence both invalidates previously accepted diagnostic tests and treatments and replaces them with new ones that are more powerful, more accurate, more efficacious, and safer.”

Moreover, as well as being committed to humanism, biomedical research, and evidence-based practice, the university is also committed to the Core Commitments and Standards of Accreditation as outlined in the 2001 WASC handbook, and seeks to continuously improve the quality of its educational offerings. The successful attainment of student learning is an essential prerequisite to achieve our primary objective of producing top notch health care practitioners. In addition, the institution is committed to a continuous improvement process that is based upon current WASC standards and the recommendations highlighted in the last WASC re-accreditation process completed in 2001.

Response to WASC’s Letter

It is important to note that all of our professional programs are currently accredited by national professional organizations, or, in the case of the College of Veterinary Medicine, provisionally

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accredited. We are proud to have dual measures of quality from both WASC and professional groups. Until now, Western University has undergone two complete cycles of accreditation by WASC in 1995 and 2001, and is now preparing for its third cycle. In addition, the institution has undergone several substantive change processes with WASC. In 1996, WASC approved an Off Campus site in Chico, California, that the university proposed to house a Master of Science in Nursing/Family Nurse Practitioner degree program and a branch of our Physician Assistant program. After implementing these programs in Chico, the institution eventually relocated them back to the Pomona campus in 2000. In 2001, our institution submitted a substantive change proposal to transition our Master of Physical Therapy Program into a doctoral program. WASC approved this application in November, 2002. In 2001, WesternU completed a WASC Self Study and a response to the site visit team’s report. The Commission decided to affirm re-accreditation in a letter dated July 3, 2001. Western University takes WASC’s accreditation process, visits, and recommendations to heart and has made progress towards becoming a diversified and leading health science university. This section details how the University has responded to the Commission’s recommendations of the second accreditation visit in 2001.

The WASC letter of re-accreditation expressed caution that for programs with more than 50% of its curriculum delivered by distance learning, the university must go through a Substantive Change Process. In a letter dated December 3, 2001, the WASC Substantive Change Committee approved Western University’s proposal to offer a Master of Science in Health Science with a Licensed Physician’s Assistant track via distance learning. In 2003, the MSHS-LPA track was eliminated for lack of enrollment.

In addition, the Commission described concerns regarding systematic program reviews to evaluate the integration of preclinical and clinical components of the curriculum. Integration at COMP has begun to some extent, and will continue with curricular changes currently underway. A new grant-funded clinical skills lab has allowed for earlier introduction of clinical skills into the curriculum. Changes include a new two year didactic curriculum focused more on current medical and societal issues. The COMP Curriculum Committee examined the clinical competencies expected of students on rotations and addressed these in the didactic portions of the curriculum. Courses have increased the use of model and standardized patients, physician-led clinical discussions, and history and physical taking practice evaluated with standardized patients. Integrating clinical aspects in the curriculum is also handled as part of the professional accreditation process with the AOA. For academic programs not accredited by an outside professional accrediting body, the university plans to implement a system of periodic reviews as part of the WASC re-accreditation process. Two programs, Master of Science in Health Sciences (MSHS) and Master of Science in Pharmaceutical Sciences (MSPS), do not have structured program review system yet in place, but it is to be addressed as part of the formation of a graduate school.

The Commission also communicated concern about faculty workload and financial and space planning. The Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs has initiated an improved and more structured strategic planning process that attempts to better incorporate faculty member numbers, facilities, and finances into planning. The final plan is set to go to the Board of Trustees in December 2005. The focus on research is a strategy to increase faculty numbers and improve current research expertise in critical scientific areas, and was intended to solve some of the WASC concerns. Later in our Proposal, we outline how this new focus on research has in turn raised additional concerns by faculty regarding workload, facilities and fiscal planning. In a recent survey, some faculty respondents felt that expanding a research capacity would reduce the capacity for teaching space and negatively impact teaching faculty workload and fiscal resources for teaching. Currently, our chief quality officer has collected, developed and compiled
institutional policies that will resolve some of the ambiguity surrounding the institutional framework for faculty workload. In spring 2005, the faculty received a standardized survey from the Higher Education Research Institute, which was partly intended to evaluate faculty workload issues. We also propose to research and improve the alignment of fiscal and physical resources for the Preparatory Review.

**Description of Outcomes**

**Capacity and Preparatory Review:**

**Outcome #1: Centralize sources of educational effectiveness indicators and other data utilized in decision making**
By documenting a data library of assessment data and educational effectiveness indicators, and centralizing an easily accessible source, the university can better incorporate data-driven decision making with trend data. Each program may include additional data elements on top of the proposed university wide common dataset.

**Outcome #2: Build capacity for faculty leadership by defining organizational roles for institutional planning and decision making, offering faculty development and increasing responsibility**
To build capacity for faculty to lead in new areas, the university needs to develop a road map after evaluating their roles and responsibilities. Effective faculty leadership would necessitate timely and strategic decision making that uses evidence in an evaluative way. Faculty development workshops in assessment and leadership skills should help build capacity for faculty to play an increasing leadership role. A panel will evaluate how Faculty Senate and other units fit into governance structures.

**Outcome #3: Develop a dialogue, shared vision and plan by faculty and the administration for the proposed College of Graduate Studies**
We intend to achieve greater clarity regarding the institution’s educational objective to develop health care practitioners who are also researchers, and develop criteria to evaluate new educational objectives. Fiscal and physical planning must include new research space and classrooms needed for a proposed College of Graduate Studies. By expanding dialogue on planning for the new College, we will enhance constituency engagement in the process of change and planning.

**Educational Effectiveness Review:**

**Outcome #1: Develop a plan to improve how effectively we educate health care practitioners who utilize evidence and research based approaches in clinical decision making**
We seek to better understand how effectively our students utilize evidence and research based approaches in the curriculum and practice, and how we can improve this student outcome.

**Outcome #2: Develop a plan to improve how effectively our students become humanistic, caring and compassionate health care practitioners**
We want to know how effectively we produce graduates who are compassionate and humanistic, and how we may improve student outcomes related to our core mission.
Outcome #3: Building a culture of evidence by utilizing currently available data for improving quality of programs, utilizing both program review and outcome assessment

The university collects available information and does not consistently and widely use it for decision making to its full potential. After a central source for student learning outcomes and assessment data is developed in the Preparatory Review, we can then work towards improving its utilization on campus in decision making at all levels - for the individual colleges, the Faculty Senate, the administration and the non-academic departments, and develop processes that outline the flow of information and evidentiary requirements in decision making. To achieve a deeper understanding of student learning, we must develop effective methods of assessing learning and engaging faculty with improvement efforts. We want to know if students are learning in our programs, if students accomplish learning objectives, whether we measure learning objectives, and whether objectives linked to outcomes, in part by improving the institution’s capacity for self review and quality assurance.

Statement of Constituency Involvement for Proposal

To engage colleges, faculty, administration, and university wide departments, the university created a University Assessment Advisory Committee (UAAC) in charge of Proposal development whose members represent both faculty and administrators from each of the five colleges, and, in addition, the Senior Vice President of Executive Affairs and the Director of Institutional Research (see Appendix 2 for list of members). The Committee evaluated the WASC criteria for review it deemed important and needing improvement at the university. Subsequently, these criteria were evaluated by faculty campus wide in the form of an online survey. After compiling faculty responses, the Committee met multiple times to discuss how to integrate criteria needing improvement into the Proposal. After reviewing both comments and numeric results, the Committee inferred holistic themes that cut across multiple criteria needing improvement that were also compelling and relevant to our programs. After completing the Proposal, the Committee distributed the document to faculty, the President, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Deans for their feedback. The UAAC Committee approved the final version to send to WASC after integrating feedback.

Work Plan and Milestones

Timeline

- December 2007: Completion of Self Study for Preparatory Review.
- Spring 2008: Preparatory site visit.
- December 2009: Completion of Self Study for Educational Effectiveness Review.
- Spring 2010: Educational Effectiveness site visit.

Distribution of Tasks

Six panels will be charged with conducting studies of six themes in the review process. Panel members will be appointed, and will be expected to investigate evidence of best practice into their methodology as outlined below. Our intention is for individual panel members not to become overburdened with activities, so we propose to give appropriate release time for their efforts. In addition, we will ask Deans and the administration to consider faculty participation on a panel as scholarship for tenure and promotion activities. It is our hope that panels may publish results of their findings in appropriate venues.

The three panels for the Capacity and Preparatory Review are:

1. Centralized Assessment Database
2. Organizational Roles and Responsibilities in Institutional Planning and Decision Making
3. Dialogue for the Development of the Proposed College of Graduate Studies

For the Educational and Effectiveness Review, the three panels are:
1. Evidence/Research Based Practice in the Professional Curriculum
2. Humanism, Professionalism and Caring
3. Academic Quality Assurance Using Program Review and Outcomes Assessment

The University Assessment Advisory Committee will likely transition into the Central Assessment Database panel, and include professionals from the Information Technology department. Other members from each of the six panels will be appointed based upon their availability, interests, expertise, roles, background and responsibilities.

Panel Methodology and Process
For each of the six themes, a similar methodology and process is recommended by the Advisory Committee for the sake of rigor and consistency of desired outcomes.

Phase One: Panel members conduct an exhaustive literature search on recent approaches to the theme, particularly as related to health professions institutions. In addition, they may consult with leading content experts. The panel submits the bibliography to the WASC Advisory Panel.

Phase Two: Panel members read and review key articles and books, identifying the best practices related to the theme. Members write an integrative summary of these findings, identifying what should be the model approach for Western University of Health Sciences.

Phase Three: Panel members conduct a thorough investigation of Western University of Health Sciences current implementation of the theme, comparing it to the model approach in conjunction with the WASC standards. The panel outlines findings and recommendations for improving our current practice in this area.

Phase Four: Panel members write steps meant to close the gap from the idealized model to what Western University currently has in place. In determining these steps, members can assess benefits as compared to costs to guide recommended course of action. For example, highly beneficial changes with low costs create effective changes that are also practical.

Phase Five: Compile Phases Two, Three and Four into a reflective essay for presentation to the WASC site team. A more detailed report and findings will also be available to WASC team members.

Phase Six: Panel members evaluate the effectiveness their process improvement efforts have had on quality improvement. Specifically, they will evaluate whether the relevant and desired outcomes of the review process were attained. In addition, where appropriate, they will publish their findings to enhance scholarly activity and promote instructional innovation.

The Senior Vice President of Executive Affairs and the Office of Institutional Research will provide administrative support and assistance to the panels in its tasks, and seek ways to follow through on the implementation of panel recommendations. In addition, expert consultants may be invited to participate in panel activities. Panel members will engage in open meetings to disseminate and discuss the progress of the WASC reviews and educate stakeholders at the university about the WASC review process, Core Commitments, and Standards of Accreditation.
Effectiveness of Data Gathering and Analysis Systems

Western University of Health Sciences has an exceptional capacity to evaluate student outcomes. With five colleges educating students to become health care practitioners, all but two degree programs offered at the university have a specific verifiable outcome – whether the graduating students successfully completed standardized licensing examinations required to become veterinarians, pharmacists, physical therapists, osteopathic physicians, physician assistants, or nurses. An area of strength at the university has been the degree to which our graduates successfully pass these examinations to pursue careers in their chosen profession. However, one area that needs improvement is the utilization and dissemination of this information for decision making, planning, and effectiveness efforts.

Another area of strength has been the development of standardized student surveys. The university collects a myriad of data that can be used for evaluation of the effectiveness of our degree programs and quality of campus services. Examples include First Year surveys, Graduating surveys, Orientation surveys, Alumni surveys, Faculty Workload surveys, and Special themed ad hoc surveys. Other data sources include student evaluations of courses and instructors, student evaluations of preceptors and clinical sites, grades of capstone courses, national and state Board exam scores, IPEDS data, admissions and enrollment data, and so on. One challenge is to have these multiple sources of data, some available within colleges, within departments, and at different locations, available in a central repository, easily accessible to all, widely disseminated, and used to track effectiveness of educational programs. Ideally, we can use the information to assess whether measured learning outcomes are linked to learning objectives, and measure whether students effectively achieve them. The individual professional colleges currently collect and compile assessment data for their respective professional accrediting bodies, yet this data is not centralized. Reports are currently available for the community on the Institutional Research (OIR) intranet site, and OIR has instituted a new process to disseminate survey findings to stakeholders in person. The next step will be to evaluate how well the information affected improvement or change.

Capacity and Preparatory Review

Building capacity and fulfilling WASC’s Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity are central to our selected themes for the Preparatory Review. To achieve this goal, we have outlined a theme based model for the report. Exhibits are organized around special themes, all of which reflect specific criteria for review in the WASC Standards for Accreditation. These themes include a central source of assessment data for conducting educational effectiveness studies, organizational roles and responsibilities in institutional planning and decision making, and dialogue about capacity for the development of a proposed College of Graduate Studies. Information in the Portfolio will be based upon these three themes, and include:

1. Central source of assessment data for conducting educational effectiveness studies
   - Longitudinal information regarding survey results and findings; state and national board examination results; summative measures of student evaluations of faculty and courses; professional accreditation statistics summarized.

2. Organizational roles and responsibilities in institutional planning and decision making
   - Description about the roles, responsibilities and engagement by faculty and other stakeholders in leadership and planning at the university.
   - Benchmark data based upon research of other institutions’ organizations.
• Building capacity, measured by attendance and number of faculty development workshops related to faculty leadership skills.

3. Capacity for the development of a proposed College of Graduate Studies
• Number of faculty by college; student to faculty ratio by program over time; similar benchmark data with peer institutions; amount of space available for research and teaching functions; needs for space by function; systematic measures for the evaluation of faculty for recruitment, tenure and promotion, especially as it relates to teaching, research and scholarly activity; numbers of successful faculty recruitments, by research or teaching track; time and costs involved to recruit; dollars of extramural funding by faculty; successful recruitment of student scholars; information about faculty workload by activity (teaching, research, etc); incentives for faculty to engage in research and scholarly activity.

• Process of program reviews for both MSPS and MSHS programs.

**Statement of Approach**
The following themes outline how Western University intends to address the Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity. The approaches we intend to use to conduct self review under Standards of Accreditation also identify special areas of emphasis for Capacity.

**Theme #1: Capacity for Centralized Assessment Data to Evaluate Educational Effectiveness**

The university collects a myriad of data to evaluate the effectiveness of our degree programs and quality of services (previously outlined in section titled, Effectiveness of Data Gathering and Analysis Systems). Once an easily accessible data repository is set in place, our goal is to evaluate the procedures that determine how this data is applied to decision making. Specifically, we wish to improve the university’s ability to use the measurement of learning objectives and widely disseminate these results to enhance our continual quality improvement efforts. To begin this process, we must first assess whether programs are outlining explicit terminal objectives, if these objectives are measured, and whether course content is linked to these learning objectives. If these conditions can be met, we believe the panel can identify the optimum way to evaluate outcome attainment (i.e., are terminal objectives being met) for all programs more efficiently than currently. The proposed system should allow the university to better build a culture of evidence. Ultimately, our objective is to develop readily available data and processes that will show whether students are learning effectively, whether the curriculum is achieving specific learning outcomes, and whether programs are meeting basic standards.

From a practical standpoint, we must first determine whether the university has the capacity to measure learning objectives in a comprehensive way. The panel can begin to answer this question by recommending how to develop our data library. CoursEval, currently being used for student evaluations of courses and instructors, is a web-based evaluation tool which also has the capacity to measure the effectiveness of changes in the curriculum as well as whether students are attaining learning outcomes. Data gathered through CoursEval are anonymous and collected university-wide. When combined with student-faculty peer evaluations and faculty evaluations of students, this system permits a multilayered assessment strategy. Finally, CoursEval also can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of new teaching methods by offering students a pretest and posttest survey. All told, we believe tools such as CoursEval can help track student learning outcomes and build our capacity to assemble databases.

Many programs already assess student learning outcome attainment in their professional accreditation process. For example, the College of Graduate Nursing plans its curriculum around
domains of professional behaviors such as a nursing research goal. Outcome competencies of students are measured continuously, and the program shows how these are met in the curriculum. The Committee proposes that each college share its assessment best practices with each other, possibly in a learning community, and incorporate assessment innovations that would improve educational effectiveness of our programs.

Additionally, the Office of Institutional Research, in cooperation with Information Technology and the individual colleges, intends to hire a data technician whose primary purpose will be to compile information into a central database that can be updated annually. Once this capacity is available, programs effectiveness, information dissemination and follow-up should be improved in time for the Educational Effectiveness Review.

The Committee identified concerns that without an adequate communication flow and delivery, the university is handicapped in its efforts to build a culture of evidence. Currently, the university does not have a means to communicate to faculty beyond email, mail, newsletters and magazines largely due to the fact that there is no protected time to assemble faculty and administration. There also needs to be a dissemination plan for communicating results for indicators that measure effectiveness, such as results of state and national Board exams. An example of improvements in disseminating results is, starting in July 2005, the Office of Institutional Research began meeting with individual programs to relay survey findings. The next step will be to develop processes to follow through on findings, so that quality improvement increments can be monitored.

**Theme #2: Organizational Roles and Responsibilities in Institutional Planning and Decision Making**

We propose the institution clarify organizational roles and responsibilities in institutional planning and decision making appropriate for an institution of our size and type for the Preparatory review. A panel will review how our university is organized, and identify an ideal organizational model based upon comparison research. In 2001, the Commission recommended the institution create a culture of inclusiveness and effective governance structures and processes. This issue remains relevant today. The panel will review currently existing faculty committees, evaluate the quality of their functioning, and identify ones the institution lacks. In addition, they will evaluate the role of staff and student government at the institution. An expected outcome of the panel’s work will be to develop ways to make planning a more inclusive process. We want to know how well the university is currently organized, and what types of organizational structures best fit our institution.

Another goal of the review is to assess the role part time and auxiliary faculty play in decision making, governance and voting. When our institution was one college, there was a college-level faculty handbook outlining roles and responsibilities. When we added new colleges, college level committees became promoted to university wide committees. As the institution grew, decision making roles for colleges and the university became increasingly unclear. Two possible models of governance would be a consortium of colleges whose faculty is largely involved in running their individual college, or, an organization where faculty are heavily involved in making university wide decisions. Currently, the university has little articulation of what types of decisions go to faculty, to staff, to a college or the university. Consistency and clear information instructing staff, faculty and students on how to proceed in any given scenario would help minimize confusion and create effective organizational structures. Currently, the university has employed a chief quality improvement officer whose initial task is to compile a central source of university wide policies and procedures into a standardized format.
Additional issues that require further study include delegation of authority from the Board of Trustees, the organization of the administration, the role of staff in planning, and the model of an administrative staff council. Faculty, staff, and student issues need clarification as to their organizational or individual scope. Additionally, if groups increase their role in planning and decision making, they need continuous involvement and development of specific expertise, such as facilities planning. The panel could consider ways to build capacity for faculty to lead planning and decision making efforts, possibly with recommending faculty and professional development activities.

Another area of improvement identified by the Committee is the need to develop a plan for disseminating information, such as changes in university policy as they occur, allowing faculty and stakeholders access to essential information necessary for conducting university business, planning or decision making.

In our efforts to make re-accreditation efforts inclusive, university stakeholders will engage in the WASC review process in multiple ways. For example, faculty identified criteria to review that became embedded in the proposed themes. Survey responses indicate that developing consultative processes for both faculty and administration requires attention, and that faculty members believe that the proposed change towards an institutional research focus was made without their input.

Theme #3: Dialogue about the Development for the Proposed College of Graduate Studies

To build a new proposed College of Graduate Studies, the university’s capacity will be challenged. Developing the means to support new infrastructure for research and a new academic graduate program will be a demanding task for both the university and individual colleges. Additional resources are needed for space, hiring staff and recruiting faculty, and planning, and implementation will ideally be structured in incremental steps. The panel will help develop a strategic plan towards this goal. In the last review the Commission cautioned the university to clearly link academic planning to institutional priorities, infrastructure, personnel requirements, budgetary analysis and projections, in a broader based consultative process. We seek to accomplish this in the Preparatory Review, with a panel that will investigate how other institutions have successfully accomplished this goal, and, how our institution should plan for a proposed College of Graduate Studies. The following section details concerns faculty have related to the change in capacity and role. Despite these challenges, it is the university’s belief that expanding our role beyond a teaching institution will benefit the community as a whole.

What has already been accomplished?
A stronger focus on research and graduate studies is being written into the University Strategic Planning document currently under development and scheduled for completion in December 2005. The university has undergone several activities to expand a research role. For example, the university hired an Interim Dean for Graduate Studies and Vice President for Research and Biotechnology, Dr. Steven Henriksen, who comes to WesternU by way of the Scripps Research Institute, the largest, private, non-profit research organization in the United States. As Interim Dean, Dr. Henriksen seeks to establish the proposed College of Graduate Studies. He will oversee future directions of research programs and interdisciplinary collaborations for grants sought using a bench to bedside medical research ethos. Secondly, Dr. Henriksen will seek opportunities to initiate a research based graduate program. An academic program is essential to support medical practitioners and basic researchers whose primary goal is solving existing human and animal medical challenges.
In some fashion, the planning for the new college will likely utilize the university’s currently existing academic programs for interdisciplinary approaches to research. How these programs will ultimately be incorporated into the graduate studies research mission is yet unknown. The university offers two Master’s level, traditional graduate programs in (a) Health Sciences and (b) Pharmaceutical Sciences. The College of Pharmacy wishes to expand the Master’s degree in Pharmaceutical Sciences into a PhD program. Their current Master’s degree seeks to give students a strong research focus, education and skills as pharmaceutical scientists in academia, research institutions, or industry. The Master of Health Science program seeks to develop competent clinical practitioners, educators, and educational researchers. The concentration of Health Professions Education is designed for professionals planning to teach in the health sciences and educating patients in areas of health care.

In addition, to expand capacity, the university has hired new faculty with research track records to serve in the graduate program. For example, Dr. Nissar Darmani, recently hired as Chair of Basic Medical Sciences at COMP, is a researcher who discovered the molecular link between marijuana and its anti-vomiting effect.

**What the panel should consider evaluating**

This change in focus has generated concern among some faculty and administrators who worry that an emphasis on research will conflict with the teaching mission of the professional level programs. The panel may consider measuring the following elements to adequately review whether these perceptions are valid. With adequate support, a dual mission should not be mutually exclusive but complementary. Integrating the two roles for interdisciplinary research may have beneficial spillover effects for our teaching mission. Faculty, in their survey responses, had concerns about issues of space, perceptions of increased teaching workloads, and perceptions of a lack of recruitment of teaching faculty. Part of the task for the Preparatory Review will be to evaluate the current capacity to offer an expanded research role, and to measure whether it would take away from teaching. For example, does faculty get release time from teaching to engage in research, and have these workload policies been developed? Is there a faculty member to replace a researcher’s teaching role in the same discipline? Are resources allocated for hiring enough teaching faculty to compensate, or, does this occur in a stagnant budget? If research provides extra income for the university, does it also create a need to replace teaching? Recruitment policies and dollars also must address the increased need for more teachers in an environment of increased enrollments while pursuing a research agenda. The Committee would like to know if the university has increasingly used the teaching professor appointment to meet that need. In addition, there may be special attention paid to the College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific, whose faculty, on top of an expanded research agenda, is also experiencing curricular change.

The panel should discern what areas the university can improve upon to adequately provide excellent teaching capacity as well as a quality research function. Proposed data to evaluate include space needs and space availability by research and teaching function, faculty to student ratios over time by program compared to similar programs nation wide, teaching workload benchmarks, tenure and promotion policies, faculty policies that would enable faculty to do research by reducing their teaching load, faculty productivity in research (number of publications, amount of extramural funding, etc), quantifying resources aligned with the research and teaching mission, especially for the recruitment of new faculty, and faculty hours devoted to teaching students.
Part 2: Educational Effectiveness

The university has developed a theme based model for its educational effectiveness review. Our overarching goal is to assess how effectively the university performs its mission to provide quality health care practitioners that enhance quality health care for humans and animals, and, at the same time, expand biomedical knowledge. All three themes in the Educational Effectiveness Review are aligned with the university’s mission. In accordance with an institutional Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness, all three themes address outcomes of student learning and the educational effectiveness of programs.

Theme #1: Evidence/Research Based Practice in the Professional Curriculum

How effectively are we educating students to use evidence/research based approaches to practice?

As part of the university’s central mission to expand biomedical knowledge and enhance quality of life in our communities, we want to produce health care practitioners who can provide the best possible quality of health care. To accomplish this, student practitioners must critically evaluate new emerging treatments and diagnostic tools found in both basic science and clinical science research literature, and apply new knowledge appropriately to patient and animal care. In short, we seek to produce health care practitioners who can effectively and rapidly apply new knowledge into practice using their critical reasoning skills. To do this, our students must become lifelong learners and actively engage in ‘bench to bedside’ approaches to health care. The university is aware of how well students attain outcomes related to professional cognitive knowledge using data from professional licensing exams. What still needs further development is knowing how effectively our programs integrate health care research and how effectively our curriculum promotes the application of evidence and research into health care practice as a student learning outcome.

Theme #2: Humanism, Professionalism and Caring

How effectively are we creating humanistic, compassionate and caring health care practitioners?

A central tenet of the university which remains unchanged since our beginnings in 1978 is a humanistic, caring and compassionate approach to health care. In patient centered care, clinicians should show compassion towards patient needs. Our institution seeks to educate graduates who become humanistic and caring practitioners in addition to being clinically competent and up to date in their field. We want to know how effectively we produce this student outcome in our professional curriculum, essential to enhance the quality of health care in our communities. One example of a compassionate approach to practice is the mobile vehicle operated by the College of Veterinarian Medicine that provides veterinary outreach and services to low income communities and homeless animals, while integrating student service learning in their curriculum. We want to document how the various programs’ curriculum incorporate humanism and how successfully the university produces humanistic health care practitioners who are patient centered in philosophy and practice.
Theme #3: Academic Quality Assurance Using Program Review and Outcomes Assessment

How effectively are Western University of Health Sciences programs measuring how well their students are achieving learning outcomes, and how effectively are they using this information to improve program effectiveness?

In the Capacity Review, we attempt to build a culture of evidence and develop processes to utilize currently available data for evidence based decision making. After a central source of information for student learning outcomes is developed, we can then work towards improving utilization for decision making at all levels.

The next step in the review process will be to see how effectively the university is measuring student learning outcomes. In addition, we want to know if analysis of student learning outcomes leads to a quality improvement process. When program educational effectiveness is evaluated, we want to know how effectively this information leads to improvement. Conducting in-depth dialogue about student outcomes will promote faculty’s ability to take charge of learning, and promote leadership that is committed to improvement based on the results of inquiry. A likely way to expand faculty leadership is to partner with faculty development professionals who can educate faculty on topics related to assessment, student outcomes, and quality improvement.

In addition, two programs do not have external accreditation review to evaluate effectiveness of programs. We are proposing introducing a new process of program review to achieve this goal. The two programs in question are the Master of Science in Health Sciences and the Master of Science of Pharmaceutical Sciences. In future, the process may include degrees offered by a proposed College of Graduate Studies. An important element of the new program review process will be the evaluation of effectiveness – whether student learning outcomes were achieved and to what extent, as well as coming up with a plan to improve educational effectiveness for future students. Part of the education effectiveness review for WASC will include the actual program reviews accomplished for these two programs.

Off Campus and Distance Education Degree Programs
Degree programs where 50% or more of the program is offered off site or by distance learning:

The College of Graduate Nursing is accredited by external nursing accrediting organizations, and has also successfully undergone a WASC Substantive Change process.
Appendix 1

Model of Constituency Engagement for WASC Proposal

1. University Assessment Advisory Committee (UAAC) identifies Criteria for Review (CFR) to include in faculty survey that it considers both important and needing some level of improvement.

2. UAAC asks Deans to invite faculty and college administration to complete survey. Respondents rank CFR for importance and competency, at both college and university level.

3. After receiving survey responses, Committee synthesizes results into holistic themes for the first draft of the WASC Proposal. UAAC distributes Proposal.

4. Faculty and upper administration give feedback to WASC Proposal. After revisions are made, it is sent back to UAAC for final review.

5. The University submits Proposal to WASC. After incorporating WASC’s recommendations, we distribute it widely on campus.

Six panels prepare and conduct Preparatory and Capacity Review and Educational Effectiveness Review, under the supervision of the WASC Advisory Panel.
Appendix 2

University Assessment Advisory Committee (UAAC) Members, Western University of Health Sciences

Members representing university appointments:

Regan Elliott, JD  
Chief Strategy and Quality Officer  
Center for Performance Excellence

Gary Gugelchuk, PhD  
Sr. Vice President for Executive Affairs  
Academic Liaison Officer

Paula Harmer, MPP  
Director  
Office of Institutional Research

Members representing five colleges:

Karen Hanford, MSN, FNP, PA-C  
Founding Dean  
College of Graduate Nursing

Kay Kalousek, DO  
Acting Director, Office of Medical Education  
College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific

Phil Nelson, DVM, PhD  
Executive Associate Dean, Pre-Clinical Programs  
College of Veterinary Medicine

Nancy Nielsen-Brown, MSHPE, PA-C  
Assistant Professor, Physician Assistant Education  
College of Allied Health Professions

Mark Okamoto, PharmD  
Associate Dean for Assessment  
Division Chair of Social & Administrative Sciences  
College of Pharmacy