



**Commission on Colleges  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools**

**REPORT OF THE REAFFIRMATION COMMITTEE**

**Statement Regarding the Report**

*The Commission on Colleges is responsible for making the final determination on reaffirmation of accreditation based on the findings contained in this committee report, the institution's response to issues contained in the report, other assessments relevant to the review, and application of the Commission's policies and procedures. Final interpretation of the Principles of Accreditation and on the accreditation status of the institution rest with the Commission on Colleges.*

**Name of the Institution: Western Carolina University**

**Date of the Review: November 9, 2006**

**COC Staff Member: Dr. Ann Chard**

**Chair of the Committee (*name, title, institution, city and state*):**

## Part I. Overview and Introduction to the Institution

*To be completed by the On-site Review Committee.*

## Part II. Assessment of Compliance

*Sections A thru E to be completed by the Off-Site Review Committee and the On-Site Review Committee.*

### A. Assessment of Compliance with Section 1

#### Institutional Integrity

The Committee finds no evidence of non-compliance.

The Committee finds evidence of non-compliance.

Comment:

#### Adherence to Commission Policy

The Committee finds no evidence of non-compliance.

The Committee finds evidence of non-compliance.

Comment:

#### Substantive Change

The Committee finds no evidence of non-compliance.

The Committee finds evidence of non-compliance.

Comment:

#### Representation of Accredited Status

The Committee finds no evidence of non-compliance.

The Committee finds evidence of non-compliance.

Comment:

## B. Assessment of Compliance with the Core Requirements

- 2.1 The institution has degree-granting authority from the appropriate government agency or agencies. **(Degree-granting Authority)**

### Compliance

Through its review of the *General Statutes of North Carolina* and the *Constitution of North Carolina*, the Committee determined that the appropriate government agency has given degree-granting authority to Western Carolina University (WCU). WCU is part of the University of North Carolina (UNC) system and authority to plan and develop a coordinated system of higher education has been vested in the UNC Board of Governors. The UNC Board of Governors has specific authority for the granting of degrees as outlined in the *Code of the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina* (The Code).

- 2.2 The institution has a governing board of at least five members that is the legal body with specific authority over the institution. The board is an active policy-making body for the institution and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are adequate to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from it. Neither the presiding officer of the board nor the majority of other voting members of the board have contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution.

A military institution authorized and operated by the federal government to award degrees has a public board in which neither the presiding officer nor a majority of the other members are civilian employees of the military or active/retired military. The board has broad and significant influence upon the institution's programs and operations, plays an active role in policy-making, and ensures that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from the board except as specified by the authorizing legislation. Neither the presiding officer of the board nor the majority of other voting board members have contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution. **(Governing Board)**

### Compliance

The Committee's review of the *General Statutes of North Carolina* confirms that Western Carolina University has an appropriately constituted governing board of at least five members. The UNC Board of Governors is legally authorized as the system level policy-making body and charged with the general determination, control, supervision, management, and governance of constituent institutions. The Board of Governors is also specifically charged by state statute with ensuring that adequate financial resources are devoted to higher education and it has the power to set tuition and fees and prepares a unified budget request for all constituent institutions for the approval of the Governor and General Assembly. The Committee's further review of the UNC Board of Governors *Code* confirmed that the UNC Board of Governors delegates specific authority and responsibility to the Western Carolina University Board of Trustees. Both the UNC Board of Governors *Code* and the WCU Board of Trustees *Bylaws* contain appropriate conflict of interest policies and procedures for ensuring that the boards are not controlled by a minority of board members.

- 2.3 The institution has a chief executive officer whose primary responsibility is to the institution and who is not the presiding officer of the board. **(Chief Executive Officer)**

#### **Compliance**

The Committee's review of the *General Statutes of North Carolina* confirmed that the role of the CEO (chancellor) is to implement the policies and directives of the UNC Board of Governors and the Western Carolina University Board of Trustees. The Committee also reviewed a specific statute that prohibits the chancellor from serving on either the UNC Board of Governors or the WCU Board of Trustees.

- 2.4 The institution has a clearly defined and published mission statement specific to the institution and appropriate to an institution of higher education, addressing teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service. **(Institutional Mission)**

#### **Compliance**

The Committee finds that Western Carolina University has a clearly defined and appropriate mission statement that focuses on engaged learning opportunities that incorporate research and service. The mission statement delineates the University's commitment to prepare students for a global community and to enhance and assist its region. This mission is widely communicated through the University's web site, in the catalogs, and in the Faculty Handbook. As the result of a two-year process, this mission statement was recently reviewed and revised. The proposed new mission statement was approved by the WCU Board of Trustees in June 2006 and was on the September 2006 agenda for consideration by the UNC Board of Governors. By the time the on-site visit occurs, the UNC Board of Governors will have acted on the adoption of this new mission statement, and documentation of the Board's final approval (such as the September 2006 Board minutes) should be provided for the On-Site Committee's review.

- 2.5 The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services that (a) results in continuing improvement, and (b) demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. **(Institutional Effectiveness)**

#### **Compliance**

The Committee review finds that the University engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation. UNC strategic planning guidelines require a clear integration of budget, academic mission, enrollment, and facilities. The Strategic Planning Committee participates in the development and prioritization of strategic directions (set every five to six years) and goals. The charge of this Committee includes environmental scanning, recommending priorities and/or revisions of the strategic plan, developing metrics, monitoring progress of projects, developing and monitoring an institutional scorecard, and disseminating planning information. Strategic planning at Western Carolina University is a participatory process that is informed through the work of advisory groups representing faculty, staff, and students. The University's strategic plan guides the development of unit and division plans and annual action plans for academic as well as administrative

units. Assessment reports prepared at the close of each academic year outline accomplishments and assessment findings for each program's goals/objectives. Additionally, each academic unit regularly assesses its mission, curriculum, operations, and resources relative to the same core effectiveness standards through the academic program review process. These reports offer evidence of assessment, some improvement, and accomplishment of Western Carolina University's mission.

- 2.6** The institution is in operation and has students enrolled in degree programs. **(Continuous Operation)**

#### **Compliance**

The Committee's review of enrollment and degree data in the *WCU 2005 Fact Book* and undergraduate and graduate catalogues confirmed that the institution is in operation, with students enrolled in degree programs.

- 2.7.1** The institution offers one or more degree programs based on at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level; or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level. The institution provides a written justification and rationale for program equivalency. **(Program Length)**

#### **Compliance**

WCU's *Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs* indicate that the institution offers one or more degree programs with the appropriate program length for the 82 bachelor's degree programs (minimum 120 semester hours); the 79 master's degree programs (minimum 30 semester hours); the specialist degree program (minimum 36 semester hours beyond the master's degree); and the doctoral degree program (a minimum 60 semester hours beyond the master's degree). These requirements are consistent with the UNC system program requirements.

- 2.7.2** The institution offers degree programs that embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with its stated purpose and is based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. **(Program Content)**

#### **Compliance**

WCU offers degree programs compatible with its stated purpose and in fields of study appropriate to higher education that are approved by the UNC system degree program definitions and the various disciplinary accrediting agencies. WCU also has an appropriate process for reviewing and approving courses and degree programs involving the departments, deans, Liberal Studies Curriculum Committee, University Curriculum Committee, the Professional Education Council, the Graduate Council, and the Provost.

- 2.7.3** The institution requires in each undergraduate degree program the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that is (1) a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least

one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts; social/behavioral sciences; and natural science/mathematics. The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. The institution provides a written justification and rationale for course equivalency. **(General Education)**

### **Compliance**

WCU requires an appropriate number of general education credits in what it identifies as its “liberal studies program.” This program is broad in scope and founded on the principle that college students should have acquired fundamental knowledge, skills, and values in order to be regarded as educated citizens. This rationale is clearly spelled out in a document entitled “Liberal Studies Program.” The university registrar maintains a record of acceptable course equivalencies.

- 2.7.4** The institution provides instruction for all course work required for at least one degree program at each level at which it awards degrees. If the institution makes arrangements for some instruction to be provided by other accredited institutions or entities through contracts or consortia, or uses some other alternative approach to meeting this requirement, the alternative approach must be approved by the Commission on Colleges. In all cases, the institution demonstrates that it controls all aspects of its educational program. **(Contractual Agreements for Instruction)**

### **Compliance**

The University provides instruction for all coursework in at least one degree program at each level at which it awards degrees as apparent on the website and in the catalog. A dual BS in Electrical Engineering is offered through a contractual agreement with the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. The program was approved by the Board of Governors and is currently seeking ABET accreditation. The institution controls its educational programs through its curriculum development and revision policies (see section 13.03 in the Faculty Handbook).

- 2.8** The number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the mission of the institution. The institution has adequate faculty resources to ensure the quality and integrity of its academic programs. In addition, upon application for candidacy, an applicant institution demonstrates that it meets the comprehensive standard for faculty qualifications. **(Faculty)**

### **Compliance**

The number of full time faculty is adequate to support the institution’s mission. The institution has 663 total faculty with 433 full time faculty and 230 part-time faculty. In Fall 2005, the institution added 59 instructional faculty positions. The academic programs hold a number of specialized accreditations which support the claim of the quality of the faculty. Also, 71% of the full-time faculty hold a terminal degree.

Teaching workloads range from 3-4 courses per semester. The Faculty Handbook and the Fact Book describe definitions of workload, rank, promotion and tenure status, and distribution of faculty.

- 2.9** The institution, through ownership or formal arrangements or agreements, provides and supports student and faculty access and user privileges to adequate library collections as well as to other learning/information resources consistent with the degrees offered. These collections and resources are sufficient to support all its educational, research, and public service programs. **(Learning Resources and Services)**

### **Compliance**

The Hunter Library provides resources and services to users on the Western Carolina campus and at the University of North Carolina, Asheville off-campus site. The library provides access to 702,000 books and bound periodical volumes, 1.5 million units of microforms, 3,300 current periodical subscriptions, 100 online database subscriptions and 180,000 government publications. The materials budget was increased to \$1.7 million for the 2005/06 in accordance with the institution's growth in enrollment. The library also houses the Curriculum Materials Center, an extensive map collection and Special Collections.

Selection and acquisition of library materials, preservation and de-selection processes are guided by the library's Collection Development Policy. The library liaisons in cooperation with the departmental faculty evaluate the current collections and select relevant resources that support teaching, learning and research. In addition, the liaisons and the Collection Development Librarian have the opportunity to review new course and program proposals to ensure library support.

The library provides access to additional resources via the Western North Carolina Library Network (WNCLN). In addition, shared resource agreements with ABC (Asheville, Boone, Cullowhee) Express enables students, faculty and staff to request materials that are not available. Traditional interlibrary loan and document delivery service support the library's resources.

Research and instruction services are provided to all students, faculty and staff via the reference desk assistance, e-mail or telephone. Library instruction is available for English 101 and 102 classes, course-related instructional sessions customized for specific assignments, information literacy or an overview of specific topics.

The Distance Learning Librarian coordinates access to the library's resources and services for students at the off-campus site. Information and instruction are available via the library's web page for students at the remote site.

The Hunter Library's collections and services undergo annual quantitative survey as well as specialized qualitative research of services and a four year collection review cycle for each college. In 2005 the quality of and access to the library's collection of materials were assessed by LibQUAL+Survey. The assessment resulted in the increase of number of subscriptions to online databases in several subject areas and the website was redesigned to improve access to all information resources. Graduate Senior Surveys are also used to evaluate the library resources and services.

The Coulter Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning supports the institution's educational, research and public service programs. The faculty receives support in pedagogy, scholarship, technology and information. The Center facilitates faculty development activities, services, events and resources.

A unit within this area houses the Educational Technologies which provides assistance for efficient and effective use of technologies that support instruction.

The Division of Information Technology provides support via help desk, consultation and program solving services. In addition, the Division provides repair services for student owned computers in support of the University student computer requirement.

- 2.10** The institution provides student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission that promote student learning and enhance the development of its students. **(Student Support Services)**

#### **Non-Compliance**

The University provides a comprehensive list of student support programs, services, and activities and includes the mission of the division of student affairs. The listing of websites is informative but it assumes that the user (current or prospective student) understands the University's processes and programs. In addition, the mission statement mentions key documents in student affairs but it does not show how these documents are used at WCU.

The University does not adequately explain how the programs, services or activities promote or enhance student learning.

The Divisional Strategic Plan website is comprehensive and established the overall goals and focus for student affairs at WCU. The plan contains a detailed SWOT analysis around specific program areas and issues; shows how the divisional goals support institutional goals; describes the strategic emphases for the division; and notes a desired state in 5 and 10 years.

- 2.11** The institution has a sound financial base and demonstrated financial stability, and adequate physical resources to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services.

The member institution provides the following financial statements: (a) an institutional audit (or Standard Review Report issued in accordance with Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services issued by the AICPA for those institutions audited as part of a systemwide or statewide audit) and written institutional management letter for the most recent fiscal year prepared by an independent certified public accountant and/or an appropriate governmental auditing agency employing the appropriate audit (or Standard Review Report) guide; (b) a statement of financial position of unrestricted net assets, exclusive of plant assets and plant-related debt, which represents the change in unrestricted net assets attributable to operations for the most recent year; and, (c) an annual budget that is preceded by sound planning, is subject to sound fiscal procedures, and is approved by the governing board.

Audit requirements for applicant institutions may be found in the Commission policy entitled "Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions. **(Resources)**

#### **Non-Compliance**

The institution conducts a participatory planning process that includes individual units and divisions. Budget guidelines are based on sound financial practices as evidenced by institutional policies and budget guidelines and are approved by the

Board of Governors. The institution also provided audited financial statements, management letters, and enrollment reports to support compliance with this requirement; however, final determination of compliance requires audited information from the most recent fiscal year (fiscal year 2006) which was not yet available at the time of this review.

- 2.12** The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan and demonstrates that the plan is part of an ongoing planning and evaluation process.

\_\_\_ Compliance  
\_\_\_ Non-Compliance

**Note:** *If a recommendation(s) is warranted, include only the number and the recommendation under 2.12. Narrative, rationale, and evidence supporting the recommendation, as well as any other comments regarding the committee's assessment of this Core Requirement, should be included in Part III of this report. Delete this note prior to printing the final report.)*

### **C. Assessment of Compliance with the Comprehensive Standards**

- 3.1.1** The institution has a clear and comprehensive mission statement that guides it; is approved by the governing board; is periodically reviewed by the board; and is communicated to the institution's constituencies.

#### **Compliance**

The Committee finds that Western Carolina University's mission statement is clear and comprehensive, addressing teaching, learning, research, service, and economic development of the region. This mission statement was approved by both the WCU Board of Trustees in June 1997 and by the UNC Board of Governors in January 1998. The statement was recently reviewed as an integral part of the strategic planning process with input from the institution's constituents. The proposed new mission statement resulting from that review was approved by the WCU Board of Trustees in June 2006 and was on the September 2006 agenda for consideration by the UNC Board of Governors. The UNC Board of Governors will have acted on the adoption of this new mission statement by the time the on-site visit occurs, and documentation of the Board's final approval (such as the September 2006 Board minutes) should be provided for the On-Site Committee's review.

- 3.2.1** The governing board of the institution is responsible for the selection and the evaluation of the chief executive officer.

#### **Compliance**

The Committee determined that the *General Statutes of North Carolina* and the UNC Board of Governors *Code* specify appropriate responsibility for the selection and evaluation of the WCU Chancellor. The UNC President reviews the performance of the Chancellor each year based on an assessment of goals and accomplishment. The WCU Board of Trustees reviews the performance of the Chancellor every other year, and these reviews are shared with the UNC

President. A joint review involving significant constituent input is conducted every four years.

- 3.2.2** The legal authority and operating control of the institution are clearly defined for the following areas within the institution's governance structure:

3.2.2.1 the institution's mission;

3.2.2.2 the fiscal stability of the institution;

3.2.2.3 institutional policy, including policies concerning related and affiliated corporate entities and all auxiliary services;

3.2.2.4 related foundations (athletic, research, etc.) and other corporate entities whose primary purpose is to support the institution and/or its programs.

### **Compliance**

The Committee's review of the UNC Board of Governors *Code* confirmed that the Board of Governors is responsible for the definition and mission and assignment of functions of each UNC constituent institution. Its review of this *Code* and relevant sections of the *General Statutes of North Carolina* also confirmed that the fiscal stability of WCU is the joint responsibility of the UNC Board of Governors and the chief executive officer (chancellor) of WCU and that a clear definition of these responsibilities exists. In addition, it found that the WCU *Bylaws* include relevant fiscal operating controls. Through its review of the UNC *Policy Manual* and *Code* and the articles of incorporation of affiliated corporate entities, the Committee determined the existence of appropriate institutional policies concerning affiliated corporate entities and auxiliary services. A review of these same documents and several executed agreements between WCU and affiliated corporate entities confirmed that the governing bodies of WCU have clearly defined legal authority and operating control.

- 3.2.3** The board has a policy addressing conflict of interest for its members.

### **Compliance**

The Committee's review of the UNC Board of Governors *Code*, *Policy Manual* and trustee orientation documents confirmed that the board has a policy addressing conflict of interest.

- 3.2.4** The governing board is free from undue influence from political, religious, or other external bodies, and protects the institution from such influence.

### **Compliance**

The Committee's review of the UNC *Policy Manual* and *Code* as well as meeting minutes and other documents of the UNC Board of Governors and the WCU Board of Trustees confirmed that the institution and governing board are adequately protected from undue influence. There was nothing to indicate that undue influence had been exerted.

- 3.2.5** Members of the governing board can be dismissed only for cause and by due process.

### **Compliance**

The *General Statutes of North Carolina* contain provisions for the removal of a member of the UNC Board of Governors or a member of the WCU Board of Trustees. The Committee's review of these provisions confirmed that a member can be removed only for missing four successive board meetings for reasons other than ill health or service to state or nation. Violations of dual membership and conflict of interest policies are dealt with through reprimand, censure, and removal of the member from Board office or committee assignment, and reporting the violation to the appropriate entity.

- 3.2.6** There is a clear and appropriate distinction, in writing and practice, between the policy-making functions of the governing board and the responsibility of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy.

#### **Compliance**

The *General Statutes of North Carolina* and the UNC Board of Governor's *Code* clearly articulate appropriate roles and responsibilities for the governing board and campus administration. The *WCS Faculty Handbook* also contains a clear statement of the role of faculty in policy development and implementation. The Committee's review of meeting minutes confirms that these roles and responsibilities are respected in actual practices.

- 3.2.7** The institution has a clearly defined and published organizational structure that delineates responsibility for the administration of policies.

#### **Compliance**

The committee's review of published organizational charts confirms that the organizational structure of WCU is clearly defined and delineates appropriate administrative positions, functions, procedures and governance functions. This information is published both in print and on-line.

- 3.2.8** The institution has qualified administrative and academic officers with the experience, competence, and capacity to lead the institution.

#### **Compliance**

The Committee's review of resumes linked to the WCU organizational chart confirms that WCU's administrative and academic officers have qualifications consistent with their administrative and leadership roles. The Committee also reviewed policies and procedures for recruiting qualified administrators.

- 3.2.9** The institution defines and publishes policies regarding appointment and employment of faculty and staff.

#### **Compliance**

The Committee's review of the *WCU Faculty Handbook* and the UNC Board of Governor's *Code* and *Policy Manual* confirmed that policies and procedures for the appointment of faculty are clearly defined and published. Through its review of the *WCU Hiring Guide for Classified Staff* and other related documents, the Committee further determined that this is true also for staff. The Committee confirmed that policies regarding continued employment are appropriately defined and published in the *UNC Policy Manual* and *Code*, which contain

provisions regarding tenure and academic freedom, and the *North Carolina State Employee Handbook*.

- 3.2.10** The institution evaluates the effectiveness of its administrators, including the chief executive officer, on a periodic basis.

#### **Compliance**

The Committee reviewed a number of documents that show that the institution evaluates the effectiveness of its administrators. The *UNC Policy Manual* contains procedures for evaluating the WCU Chancellor and the committee reviewed an actual evaluation document. WCU exempt non-faculty employees are evaluated according to clear guidelines and a standard instrument. In addition, the Committee's review of sample evaluations for academic deans confirmed that the performance of these administrators is additionally assessed through an annual process of setting performance targets and outcomes and semi-annual progress reports.

- 3.2.11** The institution's chief executive officer has ultimate responsibility for, and exercises appropriate administrative and fiscal control over, the institution's intercollegiate athletics program.

#### **Compliance**

Through its review of the UNC Board of Governor's *Code*, the Committee determined that the board grants authority and responsibility for intercollegiate athletics to the WCU Chancellor. The *UNC Policy Manual* articulates policy requirements that the Chancellors must adhere to, including requirements pertaining to academic standards, compliance with NCAA rules, and financial oversight. The Committee's further review of the WCU organizational chart and policies confirmed that the Director of Athletics reports directly to the Chancellor and that the WCU Athletics Committee provides additional oversight. The Committee notes that WCU's Department of Athletics successfully completed the second cycle of the NCAA certification process in 2005 and that this process (documentation and outcome) provides confirmation that the institution's chief executive officer exercises appropriate administrative and fiscal control.

- 3.2.12** The institution's chief executive officer has ultimate control of the institution's fund-raising activities.

#### **Compliance**

The Committee's review of WCU policy, the *Faculty Handbook*, and organizational chart confirmed that the Chancellor delegates oversight of fundraising to the Vice Chancellor for Advancement and External Affairs. Additional oversight is provided through a standing committee of the WCU Board of Trustees. Through its review documents related to the WCU Foundation, the Committee confirmed that this entity is audited on an annual basis and that the Board of Trustees on the recommendation of the Chancellor appoints members of the Foundation. The Committee also determined that the management and control of the Foundation is vested in a board of directors and that the Chancellor of WCU serves as a voting member of this board and also as its president.

- 3.2.13** Any institution-related foundation not controlled by the institution has a contractual or other formal agreement that (a) accurately describes the

relationship between the institution and the foundation, and (b) describes any liability associated with that relationship. In all cases, the institution ensures that the relationship is consistent with its mission.

### **Compliance**

The institution has formal agreements in place for both of its affiliated foundations. These agreements, along with articles of incorporation and bylaws, support compliance with this standard and a relationship consistent with the institutional mission.

- 3.2.14** The institution's policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of all intellectual property. This applies to students, faculty and staff.

### **Compliance**

Review of UNC system policies and institutional policies and procedures clearly define intellectual property issues as they apply to students, faculty, and staff.

- 3.3.1** The institution identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results.

### **Non-Compliance**

The Committee's review finds that Western Carolina University identifies expected learning outcomes for each of its academic programs as well as clear objectives for the administrative and support units. Achievement of these outcomes is evaluated annually and documented in assessment reports. However, there is not always a clear or direct linkage demonstrating improvements based upon these outcomes. Systematic evidence documenting specific improvements resulting from the assessment process is needed across all units. This is true for academic departments as well as for student support programs and services and for academic support services.

While the assessment plan website is comprehensive and notes the use of CAS standards in the development of the plan, it does not show how assessment results are used for the improvement of student support programs and does not include current assessment results.

With regard to academic support, the committee cannot find systematically documented evidence that students have sufficient access to those programs and services. Usage statistics and analysis of student grades are provided by the Mathematics Tutoring Resource Center to determine whether they are offering the right services and effectively reaching their goals. The Academic Support Services for Student-Athletes includes student GPAs as evidence that their programs are successful. However, many of the other services listed do not provide any usage or evaluation data. It is clear that services are provided, but documentation depicting sufficiency is not generally available. The committee believes it would be possible for the institution to use information that is gathered through their NSSE and FSSE studies to demonstrate the usage and

effectiveness of some programs. This information would be of great assistance to the on-site team.

- 3.4.1** The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded (a) is approved by the faculty and the administration, and (b) establishes and evaluates program and learning outcomes.

#### **Compliance**

WCU's process for establishing and awarding academic credit in its education programs clearly involves faculty and administrators as stated in the Faculty Handbook. Faculty is involved at the department and university levels via the Liberal Studies Curriculum Committee, University Curriculum Committee, the Graduate Council, and the Professional Education Committee where appropriate. Deans review and approve proposals from their departments before the proposals are sent to the appropriate council. The provost provides final approval of courses.

WCU's academic units have specified program and learning outcomes, identified different types of measures, and provided discussions of how that information is used in their continuous improvement plans for existing educational programs in their strategic plans and the expected learning outcomes tables. Annual assessment reports are submitted to the University Assessment Office.

- 3.4.2** The institution's continuing education, outreach, and service programs are consistent with the institution's mission.

#### **Compliance**

WCU's continuing education, outreach, and service programs are consistent with its mission. Renaming the Division for Distance and Continuing Education as the Division of Educational Outreach communicates more clearly the credit and non-credit outreach focus of the division. The five centers and the partnerships with 14 community colleges are excellent examples of enacting WCU's proposed mission.

- 3.4.3** The institution publishes admissions policies consistent with its mission.

#### **Compliance**

The current *Undergraduate Catalog*, *Graduate Catalog*, and admissions web site publish WCU's admission policies that are consistent with its mission.

- 3.4.4** The institution has a defined and published policy for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, advanced placement, and professional certificates that is consistent with its mission and ensures that course work and learning outcomes are at the collegiate level and comparable to the institution's own degree programs. The institution assumes responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution's transcript.

#### **Compliance**

The undergraduate and graduate catalogs and website links provide information on evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit for transfer. Undergraduate

transfer information is initially reviewed by the Director of Admissions for students who have not attended any institution for two or more years. The Office of the Registrar coordinates the evaluation of transfer courses from accredited institutions, CLEP, armed forces service schools, advanced placement, correspondence courses, credit by exam, experiential learning, extension courses and other military training. The department head of the major provides the recommendation. Various articulation agreements also are a factor.

Students must apply to the department head to determine whether they can seek credit by examination. For experiential learning, a student submits a request to the department. If appropriate, a committee reviews a student portfolio and any credit to be awarded is decided. Recent programs which have awarded experiential credit are Emergency Medical Care and Criminal Justice.

Graduate transfer credit must be appropriate to the intended program and (1) approved by a student's advisor, (2) completed within the past 6 years, and (3) earned from an accredited institution.

- 3.4.5** The institution publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution.

#### **Compliance**

The institution provides information about academic policies through the undergraduate and graduate catalogs, student and faculty handbooks, and the schedule of classes bulletin. The Provost annually requests deans, department heads, and directors to review and update academic policy information. The Faculty Handbook is reviewed annually. The online versions of catalogs are updated monthly and print/CD versions are updated annually. All proposals for new academic policies or changes are reviewed and approved by the Faculty Academic Policy and Review Committee, the Faculty Senate, the Provost, and the Chancellor. Legal counsel is also employed. Actions and minutes of the Faculty Senate are available online.

Student Handbook materials are reviewed at the request of the Assistant Director for Student Media and Marketing. These policies are reviewed and approved by the Executive Council and legal counsel when necessary.

- 3.4.6** The institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery.

#### **Compliance**

WCU has a sound and acceptable process for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery that complies with the UNC system requirements. The process involves faculty at the department and university levels via the Liberal Studies, Professional Education, and Graduate Council Curriculum Committees as well as the Academic Policy Review Council.

- 3.4.7** The institution ensures the quality of educational programs/courses offered through consortia relationships or contractual agreements, ensures ongoing

compliance with the comprehensive requirements, and evaluates the consortial relationship and/or agreement against the purpose of the institution.

### **Compliance**

WCU's process and procedures for establishing, evaluating, and entering into consortia and contractual agreements ensures that the quality of educational programs and courses comply with the comprehensive standards and the university's mission. Specifically, WCU's policy #62 indicates that the department head, dean, provost, and chancellor participate in the process that includes a variety of educational experiences such as study abroad, dual degree program with UNCC, student teaching, and clinical experiences for nursing students.

- 3.4.8** The institution awards academic credit for course work taken on a noncredit basis only when there is documentation that the noncredit course work is equivalent to a designated credit experience.

### **Compliance**

The awarding of undergraduate academic credit for coursework taken on a noncredit basis is described in the university catalog and at online sites. Courses recommended through the American Council on Education (ACE) must be aligned with the ACE National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training or military training and do not exceed their recommendations. Credit is awarded if appropriate to the proposed degree program and approved by the department head. It is assumed that department head approval includes assessment of level of proficiency that matches existing credit courses.

- 3.4.9** The institution provides appropriate academic support services.

### **Compliance**

The institution provides appropriate academic support services. These services should strengthen the academic program, ensure the success of students, and be consistent with the institution's mission. The institution has numerous support services and provides information about these services to students through handbooks, websites, and the service sites themselves, such as, advising centers and mentoring programs.

- 3.4.10** The institution defines and publishes general education requirements for its undergraduate programs and major program requirements for all its programs. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs.

### **Compliance**

The institution defines and publishes general education requirements for its undergraduate programs and major requirements for all its programs in the university catalog.

The compliance certification document states that major program requirements are defined by the faculty and administration for the program and conform to accepted standards. All programs eligible for accreditation are currently accredited. Changes in major requirements are submitted by the department or

college to the CRC, Curriculum Review Council, for final approval. The committee meets monthly according to the Faculty Handbook and has 18 members, 12 of which are faculty representatives. Students and faculty can access major program requirements through the online degree audit SIS. Program completion information is also provided in the Catalog. No program brochures or locations of these documents or recruitment materials were found.

- 3.4.11** The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student academic records and maintains special security measures to protect and back up data.

#### **Compliance**

The University demonstrates the importance of the security of student records and all areas have been addressed adequately. Records are secured according to AACRAO standards, state regulations, FERPA and HIPPA. Security access to student records is overseen by Information Technology Services and is delegated to offices appropriately. In addition the University has a disaster recovery plan in place.

- 3.4.12** The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of its curriculum with its faculty.

#### **Compliance**

The Faculty Handbook clearly ascribes responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum to the WCU faculty. The content of the curriculum is determined through a course proposal process that begins at the department level and progresses through successive levels of review. The quality of the curriculum is ascertained and advanced through a program review process that is periodic and ongoing. The effectiveness of the curriculum is determined through a number of assessment methods carried out by the faculty.

- 3.4.13** For each major in a degree program, the institution assigns responsibility for program coordination, as well as for curriculum development and review, to persons academically qualified in the field. In those degree programs for which the institution does not identify a major, this requirement applies to a curricular area or concentration.

#### **Compliance**

Credentials provided by WCU confirm that program coordination and curriculum development in all academic programs at the university are being carried out by qualified supervisors. The oversight duties of program coordinators are clearly delineated in section V.4.3 of the Faculty Handbook.

- 3.4.14** The institution's use of technology enhances student learning, is appropriate for meeting the objectives of its programs, and ensures that students have access to and training in the use of technology.

#### **Compliance**

The University focuses on technology initiatives that enhance student learning, are appropriate for meeting its objectives, and ensure that students have access and training in the use of technology. Since 1998, the University has required

that students have a computer that meets the university's minimum standards for computer hardware and software. Ninety percent of entering freshmen are graduates of North Carolina high schools who require a computer proficiency test prior to high school graduation.

All new undergraduates are required to attend a computer training program (Jumpstart) prior to the beginning of classes. The Student Technology Assistance Center provides help, tutoring, and workshops. The 2003-04 graduating senior survey showed that 82% of graduating students reported good or excellent technology training classes.

In 2001, PricewaterhouseCoopers was contracted to analyze the institution's IT area. Results included a strategic plan, open meetings, advisory committee, and participation on the university's annual planning process.

All students have residence hall connectivity in their rooms. MyCat is portal software that provides links and access to faculty, advisors, and university services for students. There is one 24 hour computer lab and three open access labs. Eight electronic classrooms, two multimedia classrooms, and multiple portable laptop carts provide access to instructors and students. Additionally, over 90 computer demonstration classrooms contain a presentation computer, sound system, projector, and display unit. The 2003-04 Graduating Senior survey shows that 90% of graduating seniors reported good or excellent access to up-to-date technology facilities.

The institution has had several surveys assessing the use of technology for teaching and learning. The fall 2002 survey resulted in documentation of faculty using technology to enhance student learning. In 2004 a survey of educational technology resulted in additional support positions, reorganization changes, and reallocation of funding. A 2005 assessment study resulted in several initiatives including transferring of positions, adding positions, and implementation of a new on-line course management system. An Information Technology Policy Council has been formed with sub-committees that include the Academic Technology Advisory Committee, the Student Computer Requirement Committee, and the WebCT Course Management System Advisory Committee. The Student Computer Requirement Committee completed assessments of student technology competencies in 05-06.

- 3.5.1** The institution identifies college-level competencies within the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have attained those competencies.

#### **Non-Compliance**

WCU has identified a set of competencies appropriate to the general education of its students. These competencies are the foundation of what WCU identifies as its "liberal studies program." What remains largely undetermined is the extent to which WCU graduates have attained these competencies. Progress has been made in several areas, most especially the assessment of learning outcomes in writing, technology, and wellness. The assessment of learning outcomes in other areas of the liberal studies program is scheduled to take place over the next five years. Thus, at this point in time it is not possible to make an informed judgment as to the effectiveness of the curriculum in meeting general education objectives. The absence of course syllabi also makes it impossible to judge the extent to which individual instructors are incorporating general education learning objectives into their liberal studies courses.

- 3.5.2** The institution awards degrees only to those students who have earned at least 25 percent of the credit hours required for the degree through instruction offered by that institution.

#### **Compliance**

The WCU catalog clearly stipulates that students must earn at least 25% of their credits at WCU in order to qualify for graduation. The responsibility for monitoring adherence to this requirement is the purview of the Registrar, whose office performs an electronic degree audit before certifying that students have met all requirements for graduation.

- 3.6.1** The institution's post-baccalaureate professional degree programs, and its master's and doctoral degree programs, are progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs.

#### **Compliance**

WCU has policies in place that mandate that graduate-level education will be more advanced than undergraduate education at the university. The Faculty Handbook (sections 13.02.02, 03, and 04) delineates the expectations of graduate students studying at the master's or doctoral levels, most essentially the ability to carry out independent "original work" in their areas of specialization. There is a clear Graduate School policy on the need for separate syllabi for cross-listed courses.

- 3.6.2** The institution ensures that its graduate instruction and resources foster independent learning, enabling the graduate to contribute to a profession or field of study.

#### **Compliance**

There is a clear expectation that graduate students at WCU will engage in independent learning in their fields of study preparatory to making contributions to knowledge within their areas of expertise. A comprehensive table ("WCU Graduate Program Requirements") delineates requirements in each field, indicating whether students must complete a dissertation, thesis, or some other form of advanced and independent study or internship. It is also the case that the university provides substantial support for graduate assistantships and other forms of material support for independent research and learning.

- 3.6.3** The majority of credits toward a graduate or a post-baccalaureate professional degree are earned through the institution awarding the degree. In the case of graduate and post-baccalaureate professional degree programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortia arrangements, the student earns a majority of credits from the participating institutions.

#### **Compliance**

WCU's required hours for the master's degrees (30-74 semester hours), the specialist degree (36 semester hours beyond master's), and the doctoral degree (a minimum 60 semester hours beyond the master's degree) and the transfer credit policies of (1) only 6 semester hours for regularly admitted students and (2)

only 12 semester hours for non-degree students ensure that the majority of credits is earned at WCU. There are no joint graduate degrees offered.

- 3.7.1** The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline in accordance with the guidelines listed below. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty.

#### **Non-Compliance**

The committee is unable to determine from the documentation provided that the University is fully in compliance with the standard. In some instances, the committee finds that the alternative standards that the University has adopted for faculty may be a function of expediency rather than compelling academic justifications. The committee has identified faculty in each of the University's colleges whose credentials do not appear to be appropriate to their teaching assignments.

- 3.7.2** The institution regularly evaluates the effectiveness of each faculty member in accord with published criteria, regardless of contractual or tenured status.

#### **Compliance**

WCU has procedures in place that mandate the evaluation of all members of the faculty regardless of whether they are full or part-time. The most encompassing form of review is the annual faculty evaluation described in detail in the Faculty Handbook and recently revised to include more meaningful input into the evaluation of teaching effectiveness; these procedures are further supplemented by discipline-specific standards articulated at the department level. The Faculty Handbook also delineates the processes for carrying out promotion and tenure (section 4.02), post-tenure reviews (section 4.06), and the determination of graduate faculty status (section 4.08).

- 3.7.3** The institution provides evidence of ongoing professional development of faculty as teachers, scholars, and practitioners.

#### **Compliance**

Section 6.01 of the Faculty Handbook details the expectations for ongoing faculty development at WCU. Significant support for faculty development in the area of teaching is provided through the Coulter Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. The center coordinates a wide variety of activities designed to facilitate dialogue among colleagues regarding best practices in pedagogy. The University also supports faculty scholarship through summer research grants, funds for faculty travel to professional conferences, and sabbaticals. Joint student and faculty research and learning are supported by the Honors College and the Department of Service Learning. Finally, the

University gives awards to recognize and provide incentive for faculty development.

- 3.7.4** The institution ensures adequate procedures for safeguarding and protecting academic freedom.

### **Compliance**

The institution general defines academic freedom as a climate where faculty, students, and staff freely engage in the exchange of ideas and the pursuit of knowledge. Official and more detailed definitions are found in the Code of the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina (Chapter VI, Sections 601 and 600).

The University supports freedom of inquiry that is free from internal and external restraints that would unreasonably restrict academic endeavors. The Faculty Handbook, Section 4.02, Guidelines for Conferral of Academic Rank, Promotion, and Tenure, and the Student Handbook 2005-06, Student Bills of Rights and Code of Student Conduct, provides access to the policies of academic freedom. These sources are available online and in print.

Faculty and students who believe their rights may have been violated have recourse through official grievance, hearing, and appeal processes of the university. No instances of violations of academic freedom have been reported since the last SACS review in 1995.

- 3.7.5** The institution publishes policies on the responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters.

### **Compliance**

The responsibility and authority of the faculty in academic and governance matters are described in the Faculty Handbook, Section 3.02 The Faculty Constitution of WCU, 3.01 The Role of the Faculty in Policy Development and Implementation, and 3.03 Bylaws of the General Faculty of WCU.

The Faculty Senate is the chief policy-making body of the faculty. The Bylaws of the Faculty are available on-line and in hard copy. New faculty are given a hard copy as well. The Faculty Senate website includes activities, membership, minutes, and meeting times. Colleges also have Bylaws that are posted online.

The UNC Faculty Assembly serves as an advisory body to the President and General Assembly of the University of North Carolina. Institutional faculty are elected to serve as representatives to this assembly.

- 3.8.1** The institution provides facilities, services, and learning/information resources that are appropriate to support its teaching, research, and service mission.

### **Compliance**

The Hunter Library provides physical resources and services from a three-story building with adequate seating capacity, group and individual study rooms and a smart classroom. Computer terminals are available for patron use at all levels of the building. In addition, laptops can be checked out at the Library's Circulation

Desk, Hunter Computer Lab and the Student Technology Assistance Center. The Library building is a wireless environment to promote laptop computer use.

Library instruction is available for all students and faculty via the Reference Department. Multiple sections of English Composition I and II as well as course-specific instructional sessions are offered. The Reference Librarians travel to the off-site campus to provide instructional services. In addition, these services are provided by libraries located at or near the educational centers. Librarians participate in virtual discussions, provide research assistance to students and faculty and offer online research instruction via guides and tutorials for online courses.

The Hunter Library provides access to additional print materials via the Western Carolina Library Network, in a consortium with University of North Carolina at Asheville and Appalachian State University. A shared online catalog and a delivery system (ABC Express) accommodate resource sharing. Interlibrary loan and document delivery services provide access to resources that are not available at the library.

The Library's over 100 online databases, mostly full-text in nature, cover all subject areas and support the academic programs. These databases are selected and added to the collection after an evaluation by faculty, staff and students from the pertinent subject areas.

Library uses LibQUAL+ survey and other student satisfaction surveys conducted by the institution to determine the appropriateness of facilities, services and resources. The LibQUAL+ survey conducted in the Spring 2005 semester indicated that the library ranked above the minimum level of service expectations in all categories. Results of the other student satisfaction surveys such as "Your First College Year Survey" and ECU Graduating Senior Survey indicated high percentage of satisfaction. In addition, the Library's Liaison Program provides opportunities to collaborate with faculty to review collections and select relevant resources to support the curriculum and research needs of the faculty.

A librarian is responsible for coordinating off-campus student and faculty access to library services and resources. Specific instructions for remote users are available via a special web page for off-campus users. Distance learning students may also access an online orientation program, including a FAQ's, in accessing and using remote resources. Students enrolled in the nursing program at Enka are provided access to the Mountain Area Health Education Center Library located at Asheville. The Library's Health Science Liaison is available on-site at the Enka campus at scheduled times. Those students taking courses at the University of North Carolina at Asheville are served by the library at UNCA in accordance with an agreement between WCU and UNCA.

Coulter Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning is located in the Hunter Library. The Center provides professional development resources and facilities, and professional development opportunities in pedagogy, andragogy, instructional technology integration and research.

Information Technology Services provide a comprehensive information technology environment that enhances teaching, learning, research, services and business opportunities. IT Services is in charge of three computer labs, two multimedia classrooms and nine electronic classrooms. Services rendered include online class management software, assistance with electronic mail, and

web development. Faculty may use Karpen Hall computer lab in Asheville for classroom instruction. A lab technician is available for support. Faculty may also use eleven other computer labs at UNCA campus.

- 3.8.2** The institution ensures that users have access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources.

### **Compliance**

The Hunter Library provides access to library resources and services via personalized assistance, telephone and e-mail. Students enrolled in English Composition (English 101) attend orientation sessions at the beginning of each semester to learn about various resources and services available through the library. Course specific instruction classes are taught upon request. Library liaisons play a significant role in working with the faculty to customize instructions to meet the needs of students and faculty. Tutorials are available on the Library's web page.

The Library provides an Information Literacy instruction program which is designed to integrate information literacy skills into the curriculum. Due to the demand to have course specific instruction in Information Literacy, librarians have been concentrating on this area. Information Literacy services are also extended to the students at remote sites. The library provides a web site and tutorials for these students on its web page. Distance learning students may use the library's e-mail reference and the toll-free number for assistance. In addition, the librarians provide face-to-face Information Literacy sessions at the remote sites. These locations include community colleges, sites at Asheville and Enka, and Jamaica, W.I. Goals for the Information Literacy and Library instruction are set in cooperation with the faculty.

The Information Literacy and other library instructional programs are assessed by the Hunter Library Teaching Observation and Evaluation instrument which was drafted recently. Another tool of assessment used is the Faculty Evaluation of Library Instruction at Hunter Library. The instructional programs are also evaluated by the results of the pre-test/post-test instrument administered to the English Composition I students in 2003. The results were used in planning future instruction sessions. Librarians also gauge the success of the instructional programs by collecting student work including bibliographies or essays based on student library experiences, in class evaluations and surveying students and faculty. In 2005, LibQUAL + survey resulted in high levels of satisfaction with the Information Literacy program. In addition, the Hunter Library formed an Education Futures group to identify and discuss trends and challenges in library instruction issues.

The Library conducts its instruction sessions in an electronic classroom with 24 student PCs and instructor's workstation. The classroom provides interactive teaching and learning. Similar accommodations are available for off-site instruction classes.

The Student Technology Assistance Center (STAC) provides assistance to students who are having problems in completing their assignments that require use of computer programs. All new undergraduate students are required to attend a computer training program.

Coulter Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning provides assistance to faculty in the use of computers, multimedia equipment, and other technologies in teaching and learning. The Center's Advisory Committee assesses the training efforts. In addition, training is assessed by surveys, meetings with individuals and college committees.

Information Technology Services provides support for faculty, students and staff.

- 3.8.3** The institution provides a sufficient number of qualified staff—with appropriate education or experiences in library and/or other learning/information resources—to accomplish the mission of the institution.

### **Compliance**

In accordance with the Association of College and University Research Libraries (ACRL) Statement on the Terminal Degree for Academic Librarians, the Hunter Library employs librarians that support the teaching and learning mission of the institution. More information may be obtained from the Hunter Library Tenure, Promotion, Appointment and Reappointment Criteria document.

Currently fifteen librarians with faculty status who have earned master's degrees in Library Science from ALA accredited institutions are providing services. In addition, the library employs three administrative employees and 28 support members. The librarians per student ratio is highest among the fifteen similar universities identified as peers of the institution. The LibQUAL + Survey conducted in 2005 indicates high ratings for the service rendered by the library staff. In addition, the library consistently scored high in the WCU student satisfaction surveys.

Coulter Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning employs a Director, Associate Director, Instructional Designers, and two part-time faculty fellows. The staff includes members with terminal degrees, master's degrees and bachelor's degrees.

- 3.9.1** The institution publishes a clear and appropriate statement of student rights and responsibilities and disseminates the statement to the campus community.

### **Compliance**

The institution publishes a student code of conduct according to best practices in the University Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs and Student Handbook. Currently the statement is disseminated to new students and new faculty during orientation programs and to returning students via the web.

- 3.9.2** The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student records.

### **Compliance**

The institution has clear policies and procedures related to the security, confidentiality and integrity of academic, discipline, financial, health, and counseling records of students. Records are secured and retained according to best practices, FERPA, University records management policy, HIPPA, NASPA, and AACRAO standards.

- 3.9.3** The institution provides services supporting its mission with qualified personnel to ensure the quality and effectiveness of its student affairs programs.

**Compliance**

The University has provided evidence that the staff employed to oversee student affairs are qualified to perform the duties required. The Division of Student Affairs offers a new orientation program for new employees and is committed to on-going professional development for all staff members. A Staff Development Committee for Student Affairs provides regular programs to promote professional growth. The assessment plan for the Division includes annual personnel evaluations and related program assessments to determine overall effectiveness.

- 3.10.1** The institution's recent financial history demonstrates financial stability.

**Compliance**

Past history of financial stability has been clearly demonstrated through the review of prior year audited financial statements, fact books, enrollment data, and institutionally prepared narratives.

- 3.10.2** The institution provides financial statements and related documents, including multiple measures for determining financial health as requested by the Commission, which accurately and appropriately represent the total operation of the institution.

**Non-Compliance**

Appropriate data in the form of audited financial statements, foundation reports, and institutional narratives were reviewed by the committee. While this data appears to support compliance with this comprehensive standard, ultimate compliance is dependent upon review of the most recent fiscal year audited financial statements (fiscal year 2006). This audit was not completed at the time of the off-site review.

- 3.10.3** The institution audits financial aid programs as required by federal and state regulations.

**Compliance**

Review of single audit reports issued by the State of North Carolina Office of the State Auditor confirms compliance with both state and federal audit requirements for student financial aid programs.

- 3.10.4** The institution exercises appropriate control over all its financial and physical resources.

**Compliance**

Based upon the committee's review of audited financial statements and associated management reports and findings, as well as selected institutional policies and procedures, the institution exercises appropriate control over both financial and physical resources.

- 3.10.5** The institution maintains financial control over externally funded or sponsored research and programs.

**Compliance**

The review of institutional policies and the examination of audit report findings support compliance and financial control over externally funded programs.

- 3.10.6** The institution takes reasonable steps to provide a healthy, safe, and secure environment for all members of the campus community.

**Compliance**

The institution has made appropriate commitments to providing a healthy and secure environment.

- 3.10.7** The institution operates and maintains physical facilities, both on and off campus, that are adequate to serve the needs of the institution's educational programs, support services, and other mission-related activities.

**Compliance**

The institution operates and maintains physical facilities that are adequate to serve its needs on and off campus as evidenced by master planning, facility profiles, and space and utilization data and comparisons as compiled in the UNC Commission on Higher Education Facilities Inventory and Utilization Study.

**D. Assessment of Compliance with Federal Requirements**

- 4.1** When evaluating success with respect to student achievement in relation to the institution's mission, the institution includes, as appropriate, consideration of course completion, state licensing examinations, and job placement rates.

**Compliance**

The Committee's review concludes that Western Carolina University appropriately references course completions, state licensing examinations, and job placement rates as measures of student success. Detailed reports are available that follow WCU's retention, graduation, and persistence rates for a given cohort over a 10-year period and compare these rates with the rates of other UNC institutions. The number of program completers is compiled in the IHE Performance Report and communicated on the institution's website. These Performance Reports also document job placement demographics. Graduating seniors are surveyed regarding their plans following graduation. Through National Student Clearinghouse data, the University supplements this information by tracking graduate-level work pursued by alumni. Licensure pass rates are available for the assessment of graduates in Education, Accounting, Nursing and other health disciplines.

- 4.2** The institution maintains a curriculum that is directly related and appropriate to the purpose and goals of the institution and the diplomas, certificates or degrees awarded.

**Compliance**

WCU offers programs of study that are consistent with its mission as a public comprehensive university within the University of North Carolina system. The University provides instruction in general education, a broad range of majors, and graduate curricula of an applied and non-applied nature. All programs and curricula are reviewed internally and externally for quality, currency, and conformity to state and accrediting board standards.

- 4.3 The institution makes available to students and the public current academic calendars, grading policies, and refund policies.

#### **Compliance**

The Committee reviewed institutional catalogues, handbooks, and the registrar's schedule of classes booklet to confirm that WCU makes appropriate information available to students and the public.

- 4.4 The institution demonstrates that program length is appropriate for each of the degrees.

#### **Compliance**

WCU's *Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs* provide documentation that its bachelor's (120hrs), master's (30hrs), and doctoral degrees (a minimum 60hrs beyond master's) require the minimum program lengths to meet this standard. Many of the bachelor's degrees require more than the 120 hour minimum. The UNC System Policy Manual does not specify the number of semester hours for bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degrees; it only indicates number of years for a degree. However, the hours required for a new degree program (major only, not total hours) may be compared to institutions within or outside the UNC system. This process resulted in an adjustment of the hours required for a bachelor's degree in nutrition and dietetics.

- 4.5 The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints.

#### **Non-Compliance**

The institution has clear policies and procedures for addressing student conduct, complaints, and appeals. The policies and processes are included in the University's Undergraduate Catalog, Graduate Catalog, and Student Handbook. The documentation noted the types of complaints addressed including academic appeals, admissions decisions, student athlete grievances, judicial appeals, student life complaints, Title IX complaints, discrimination and harassment complaints, financial aid appeals, and grievances for students with disabilities. WCU did not provide evidence that it follows the procedures.

- 4.6 Recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution's practices and policies.

#### **Compliance**

The institution has an excellent and easy to navigate website for Student Recruitment. The information presented is descriptive of the University, its

programs, and its requirements of students. All areas have been addressed; excellent use of technology for recruitment of undergraduate students, transfer students, international students, distance education students, and graduate students.

- 4.7** The institution publishes the name of its primary accreditor and its address and phone number. (The publication of this information is presented so that it is clear that inquiries to the Commission should relate only to the accreditation status of the institution, and not to general admission information.)

**Compliance**

The Committee confirmed that WCU publishes appropriate information about its primary accreditor through its review of catalogues and various institutional web pages.

- 4.8** The institution is in compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the *1998 Higher Education Amendments*

**Compliance**

The committee reviewed audits performed in accordance with OMB Circular A-133 and other related documents and found the institution in compliance.

- E. Additional Observations regarding strengths and weaknesses of the institution. (optional).**

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

### Part III. Assessment of the Quality Enhancement Plan

To be completed by the On-Site Review Committee.

**A. Brief description of the institution's Quality Enhancement Plan**

**B. Analysis of the Acceptability of the Quality Enhancement Plan**

1. **Focus of the Plan.** *The institution identifies a significant issue(s) related to student learning and justifies its use for the QEP.*
2. **Institutional Capability for the Initiation and Continuation of the Plan.** *The institution provides evidence that it has sufficient resources to implement, sustain, and complete the QEP.*
3. **Assessment of the Plan.** *The institution demonstrates that it has the means for determining the success of its QEP.*
4. **Broad Based Involvement of the Community.** *The institution demonstrates that all aspects of its community were involved in the development of the Plan.*

**C. Analysis and Comments for Strengthening the QEP**

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS