



**CAPACITY AND
PREPARATORY REVIEW
REPORT**

**WASC RE-ACCREDITATION
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**1409 N Walnut Grove Avenue
Rosemead, CA 91770
Tel: (626) 571-8811
Fax: (626) 571-1413
www.uwest.edu**

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INTRODUCTION

Since receiving initial accreditation in February 2006, University of the West has grown and improved as an American institution of higher learning. It is now engaged in the process of re-accreditation, which it expects to complete in 2012. The guidance of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges has proven invaluable in this endeavor. UWest (by which abbreviation the University will be denoted) agrees with WASC that accreditation cycles are not so much periodic evaluative exercises, but rather incentives to engage in ongoing self-reflections that strengthen overall university functions and student learning. Through its ongoing interaction with WASC, the University has gained vital insights into its strengths and weaknesses, and has used these to guide its structural and educational development. This is readily apparent in UWest's approach to the current re-accreditation cycle. In its 2008 Institutional Proposal, the University chose a thematic approach so that it could better explore and address the recommendations and suggestions of the 2005 Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) Visiting Team and the 2006 WASC Action Letter. Three themes were identified: (1) Development and Implementation of a Comprehensive Student Enrollment and Retention Plan; (2) Improvement of Assessment of Student Learning to Ensure Educational Effectiveness at Course, Program and Institutional Levels; and (3) Defining and Adopting a "Teacher-Scholar-Service Leader" Model to Improve Faculty Performance in Instruction, Assessment, Research, Mentorship and Service. This Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) report is structured around these three themes.

All University stakeholders were involved in the preparation of this CPR report. At the initial stage of the self-review process, numerous meetings were held with the administrators and

faculty to discuss the Criteria For Review (CFR). UWest's conformity with the CFRs was evaluated, evidence illustrating this conformity was pinpointed, and work assignments were distributed. Drawing on the findings of these initial meetings, the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO), working closely with the President, the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Dean of Enrollment and Student Affairs, the Institutional Research Unit (IRU), the Director of Finance and Accounting, and the Department Chairs, completed the first draft of the CPR report. This and subsequent drafts were distributed among all stakeholders for feedback and corrections. The following consultative and decision-making bodies were also closely involved in the self-review process:

- The University Cabinet
- The Academic Senate (which includes student representatives)
- The Academic Policy and Curriculum Committee (APCC)
- The Finance and Budget Committee
- The University Wide Assessment Council (UWAC)
- The Strategic Team for Enrollment and Planning (STEMP)
- The Financial Aid Committee

Throughout the self-review process and the preparation of the CPR report, UWest received unqualified and effective support from the Board of Trustees.

Since WASC approved the Institutional Proposal in 2008, a few changes in context have arisen that have affected the CPR report. In the Proposal, UWest had developed a staggered plan of substantive changes in programs that envisioned a B.S. in Nursing and an M.A. in Teaching by 2010, and a B.A. in Criminal Justice and B.A. in Fine Arts by 2012. During the self-review, however, the University determined that this plan was over-ambitious and could not be

implemented in the time given. Consequently, it was decided to suspend the creation of these new programs until further studies on their viability and suitability could be undertaken. The following existing programs were also suspended due to consistent low enrollment numbers: the B.A. in History, the B.A. major in Buddhist Studies, and the B.A. major in Comparative Religious Studies. The suspension of these planned and existing programs has required a downward revision of the target student enrollment objectives. Finally, during the self-review, UWest discovered that before it could engage in the Annual and 5-Year Program Reviews, it needed to review and revise its academic programs and their Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) to better dovetail with the University's mission. Although this has been completed, it will take some time to generate the necessary data from the revised programs to undertake the Annual and 5-Year Program Reviews. The University anticipates that the Annual Review will be completed in 2012, with the 5-Year Review following in 2014.

This CPR report is structured around the three themes mentioned above: (1) Development and Implementation of a Comprehensive Student Enrollment and Retention Plan; (2) Improvement of Assessment of Student Learning to Ensure Educational Effectiveness at Course, Program and Institutional Levels; and (3) Defining and Adopting a "Teacher-Scholar-Service Leader" Model to Improve Faculty Performance in Instruction, Assessment, Research, Mentorship and Service. The report consists of the following elements:

1. A hardcopy and electronic version of the CPR report exclusive of data exhibits. This report is broken down into the following sections:

- i. This Introduction, which describes how the report was prepared, any changes in context that have arisen since WASC's approval of the Institutional Proposal, and the contents of the CPR report and data portfolio;
 - ii. A Reflective Essay which follows the thematic approach mentioned above and contains references to the CFRs and evidence provided by UWest;
 - iii. An Update on the progress being made in addressing issues identified in the Institutional Proposal for the Educational Effectiveness Review;
 - iv. A Concluding Essay that summarizes UWest's findings regarding its strengths and weaknesses with recommendations and follow-up-steps; and
 - v. UWest's response to concerns that were identified by the last WASC Visiting Team and Action Letter.
2. An electronic version of the Analytical Data Portfolio. This consists of the following:
- i. Updated versions of the data exhibits which were originally submitted with the Institutional Proposal;
 - ii. Prescribed exhibits and data displays, including a list of institutional policies required by WASC; and
 - iii. Evidence chosen by UWest to illustrate its compliance with the CFRs.
- Note:** This evidence has been hyperlinked with the electronic version of the Reflective Essay. In the Reflective Essay, references to the CFR and the evidence are contained in square brackets; the CFRs are highlighted in red, the evidence in blue. By clicking on the CFR hyperlink (*Press Ctrl + link*), the reader may view the entire text of the particular CFR. A click of the evidence hyperlink will reveal the relevant evidence.

REFLECTIVE ESSAY

Introduction

University of the West (UWest) was originally founded as Hsi Lai University in 1990 by Venerable Master Hsing Yun. It opened its doors in spring semester 1991 in facilities at Hsi Lai Temple and remained there until spring semester 1996. In the summer of 1996 it moved to its current campus in the City of Rosemead, where it has become an independent institution of higher learning based on the model of an American university, dedicated to academic excellence in an atmosphere of academic freedom and the advancement and dissemination of knowledge. In 1998 UWest decided to seek accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). It attained Eligibility in 1998, and in July 2002 was granted Candidacy Status. On February 16, 2006, UWest was granted Initial Accreditation by WASC.

From its inception, UWest has been guided by its mission to provide a “whole person” education informed by Buddhist wisdom and values that facilitates cultural understanding and appreciation between diverse religious and cultural systems. In particular, UWest is dedicated to furthering interaction and understanding between East and West [[CFR 1.1: UWest’s Mission Statement as stated in its Catalogue](#)]. While founded and sustained by Grand Master Hsing Yun and the Buddhist monastic order Fo Guang Shan, UWest upholds the highest principles of academic freedom. In its policies and public statements, the University affirms that its faculty, staff and students are free to share their convictions and responsible conclusions with their colleagues and students in their teaching and in their writing; faculty, staff and students are protected in their quest for truth, wherever it may lead [[CFR 1.4: Academic Freedom Policy; White Paper on Program Review and Revision](#)]. Furthermore, this affiliation with a Buddhist religious

organization does not interfere with UWest's functioning as a free and autonomous American institution of higher learning [[CFR 1.3: Decision Flow Chart](#)]: education remains UWest's primary purpose and there is no history of interference in substantive decisions or educational functions by Fo Guang Shan or any other external bodies outside UWest's own governance arrangements [[CFR 1.6](#)].

It is important to emphasize that the religious affiliations of faculty, staff and student are irrelevant to the hiring, evaluation or admission process. UWest's commitment to academic and religious freedom means that its doors are open to people of all religions or none. Applicants are neither required to indicate their religion nor sign a confession of faith. Consequently, the University possesses a diverse professional and student body that includes multiple nationalities, ethnicities and world perspectives [[CFR 1.5: Breakdown of FA 2009 Faculty & Staff by education level, ethnicity and gender](#); [Breakdown of FA 2009 Students by ethnicity and gender](#)].

In order to ensure a clear and consistent decision-making process, UWest has implemented an organizational structure that contains clear roles, responsibilities and lines of authority [[CFR 3.8: Organization Chart](#)]. At the top is the Board of Trustees, which functions as an independent governing authority that oversees institutional integrity, policies and ongoing operations. It regularly engages in self-review and training to enhance its effectiveness and is also responsible for hiring and evaluating the full-time chief executive officer [[CFR 3.9: Make-Up of Board of Trustees \(catalogue\)](#) and [By-Laws](#)]. Due to UWest's current small size, the Chief Executive Officer is also the Chief Financial Officer [[CFR 3.10, Chief Executive/Chief Financial Officer- Resume](#)].

After receiving initial accreditation, the University hired a non-profit higher education independent audit firm (SingerLewak Accountant and Consultant) to help UWest standardize its

accounting practices so that they meet the higher education standards of the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB). UWest has implemented a monthly financial closing practice, a quarterly financial analysis, and a yearly financial closing. These are presented to the President and the Board of Trustees and shared with University management, faculty and staff through the Cabinet and special retreats. The resulting improvements have been considerable: In 2006 the auditor reported 29 deficiencies; in 2008-2009 the auditor reported only four [[CFR 3.5 Audits](#)].

These clear and effective organizational structures and oversights have not only enabled UWest to quickly pinpoint and address shortcomings [[CFR 1.9: UWest's Response to Recent Concerns Raised by WASC](#)], but have also provided the University with a history of financial stability, unqualified independent financial audits, and sufficient resources to ensure long-term viability. The actual operating revenue that comes from tuition and fees has increased from \$842,158 in 2006 to \$1,559,598 in 2009, a rise from 20% to 47% of total revenue. In addition, the operational budget has increased from \$3.2m in 2006 to approximately \$5.5 million in 2010. Also, UWest benefits from the Board of Trustees' ability to raise substantial funds on the University's behalf. With the help of the Board, UWest has obtained continuous financial support from the International Buddhist Progress Society (IBPS). This support has grown from \$1.6 million in 2006 to \$3.3 million in 2009-2010. UWest's endowment fund has also increased from \$5.7 million to \$6.7 million. The University has been careful to ensure that resource planning and development include realistic budgeting, enrollment management, and diversification of revenue sources. Thanks to this fiscal strength and responsibility, UWest has not accumulated a standing deficit [[CFR 3.5: Audits; Audit report](#)]. As it looks to the future, UWest is confident that it has the structures, faculty, staff and resources in place to grow and

succeed as an accredited American institution of higher learning [[CFR 4.1, 4.2: Strategic Direction](#)].

The structure and approach of this Reflective Essay for the current Capacity and Preparatory Review was determined by a careful review and evaluation of the contents of the WASC Commission Action Letter of March 6, 2006 [[CFR 1.9: WASC Action Letter of March 6, 2006](#)]. Based on the concerns expressed in this letter and UWest's response to them, UWest proposed that the Reviews for Affirmation of Accreditation be theme-based, with the attainment of excellence in student learning as the overall objective. Three themes were chosen and laid out in UWest's Institutional Proposal: (1) Development and Implementation of a Comprehensive Student Enrollment and Retention Plan; (2) Improvement of Assessment of Student Learning to Ensure Educational Effectiveness at Course, Program and Institutional Levels; and (3) Defining and Adopting a "Teacher-Scholar-Service Leader" Model to Improve Faculty Performance in Instruction, Assessment, Research, Mentorship and Service [[CFR 1.9: Institutional Proposal](#)]. These three themes were accepted by WASC and are covered in what follows below [[CFR 1.9: Letter from Diane Harvey of WASC June 25, 2009](#)].

Theme I: Comprehensive Student Enrollment and Retention Plan

UWest recognizes that students are the foundation of a successful university. It is the students who challenge faculty to be the best in their field and who inspire new directions in thought and research. Furthermore, students are the center of campus life, creating an environment that stimulates inter-cultural experience and intellectual thought outside of the classroom. Without a critical mass of students, a university cannot succeed as an effective institution of higher learning.

Since receiving initial accreditation in 2006, UWest's student body has grown by 33%. This positive growth notwithstanding, the University intends to substantially increase its number of students over the next five years. To help realize this goal, UWest recently hired a full-time Dean of Enrollment and Student Affairs to help improve and upgrade its student recruitment and retention strategies [[CFR 3.1: Dean of Enrollment and Student Affairs- Resume](#)]. The University realizes that Enrollment Management requires a holistic approach that includes at least eight of the following interdependent activities: (1) Clarification of the Institution's Mission, (2) Program Development, (3) Marketing, (4) Recruiting, (5) Admissions, (6) Financial Aid, (7) Orientation, and (8) Retention. Consequently, with the help of the Strategic Team for Enrollment Management and Planning (STEMP), the Dean of Enrollment and Student Affairs has developed a holistic Strategic Enrollment Management Plan and a Working Philosophy for the Role of Co-Curricular Programs and Support Services in Student Retention [[CFR 4.2: Philosophy on the role of co-curricular programs, Strategic Enrollment Management Plan \(SEMP\)](#)]. This plan and philosophy has been incorporated into the 5-Year Enrollment Projection Plan and the 5-Year rolling budget plan [[CFR 4.2: 5 Year Enrollment Projection Plan \(2010-2015\), 5-Year Division Budget Plan \(2010-2015\), 5-Year Budget Summary Plan \(2010-2015\)](#)]. This will help improve enrollment and retention over the next few years.

Potential students are almost always initially attracted to a university because of its academic programs. These programs must speak to the potential student and offer something they cannot find elsewhere. UWest realizes that its mission of a "whole person" education creates a unique academic environment that combines intellectual development with the exploration of deeper questions of meaning, values and purpose. This "whole person" educational environment is clearly highlighted and explained in each of its program offerings

[[CFR 1.2](#)]. Potential students can easily find clear descriptions of degree programs with detailed explanations of how they correspond to UWest's mission. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) at the institutional and program levels are well defined to ensure that potential students can appreciate UWest's unique offerings. Through its Catalogue, its web page, and marketing material, UWest demonstrates that it has undergraduate and graduate programs of sufficient breadth and depth to prepare students not only for work, but for citizenship and a fulfilling life [[CFR 2.12: <http://www.uwest.edu>, \[Advertisements\]\(#\), \[Brochures\]\(#\)\]. These curricula are supported by a highly qualified full-time and part-time faculty with a substantial commitment to the University \[\[CFR 3.2: \\[List of FA 2009 Full-Time and Part-Time faculty\\]\\(#\\)\]\(#\)\]. Between 2006 and 2009 UWest increased its number of full-time faculty by 10%, and its part-time faculty by 52%. Consequently, the faculty is sufficient in number, professional qualifications, and diversity to achieve UWest's educational objectives \[\[CFR 3.1: \\[Faculty- Resumes\\]\\(#\\)\]\(#\)\]. It is closely involved in the development and oversight of academic programs and policies, and ensures the integrity and continuity of these programs wherever and however delivered. The lively, interesting and academically rigorous classes taught by this faculty help attract and retain students \[\[CFR 3.2\]\(#\)\].](#)

UWest's undergraduate offerings ensure the development of core learning abilities and competencies. The General Education Program trains students in college-level writing and oral communication, college-level quantitative skills, information literacy, and critical analysis of data and argument. Students are also required to develop a breadth of learning in the areas of cultural and aesthetic appreciation, social and political understanding, and scientific and technical knowledge. Equally important, students must acquire an understanding of diversity, civic responsibility, an ability to work with others, and the capability to engage in life-long learning [[CFR 2.1](#), [CFR 2.2a: \[General Education Program as described in the Catalogue\]\(#\)](#)].

Specific undergraduate majors are designed to provide students with an in-depth, focused and sustained program of study that not only imparts intellectual information, but challenges students to reflect on what this information means for their daily lives and personal development [[CFR 2.1](#), [CFR. 2.2a: Undergraduate majors as described in the Catalogue](#)].

As made explicit in the SLOs, the graduate programs are consistent with UWest's mission to provide a "whole person" education. These programs are in keeping with the expectations of their respective disciplines and professions and are described through nomenclature that is appropriate to the levels of graduate and professional degrees offered. Not only are the curricula visibly structured to include active involvement with the literature of the field and student engagement in research, practice and/or training, but they also challenge students to engage with the subject matter from the personal perspective of meaning, values and character development [[CFR 2.1](#), [CFR 2.2b: Graduate Programs as described in the Catalogue](#)].

Potential students attracted to either the undergraduate or graduate programs will find easy to access and follow application and graduation policies that clearly lay out entry-level requirements and levels of student achievement necessary for graduation [[CFR 2.2: Admission and Graduation Requirements as laid out in the Catalogue](#)]. Transfer students are provided with clear and accurate information on transfer policies that ensure equitable treatment and prevent such students from being unduly disadvantaged by transfer requirements [[CFR 2.14: Transfer Policies in Catalogue; Transfer Brochure](#)]. Together with the program descriptions and clearly described SLOs, students can easily discern that success at UWest requires more than a mere accumulation of courses and credits.

UWest appreciates that the recruitment and retention of students requires more than attractive and unique academic programs. Effective and easy-to-navigate student support

services are needed to serve the needs of the students and the curricula [[CFR 2.13: Philosophy on the role of co-curricular programs, Strategic Enrollment Management Plan \(SEMP\)](#)]. Since 2006, UWest has increased its full-time and part-time administrative staff by 30%. A full-time Admissions Officer is available to answer the questions of potential students and to guide them through the admissions process [[CFR 3.1: Admissions Officer- Resume](#)]. A full-time Registrar helps students understand and navigate the registration process and also ensures that student records are accurate and up-to-date [[CFR 3.1: Registrar- Resume](#)].

At the beginning of each semester UWest holds an orientation to familiarize new students with the University's policies, procedures, and support services. Furthermore, all new students are assigned an Academic Advisor upon admittance to UWest, who remains their advisor throughout their studies at UWest. This advisor, who is a member of the full-time faculty, helps the student understand the requirements of their academic program and ensures that the student receives timely, useful and regular information and advising about relevant academic requirements. Students are encouraged to seek out their Academic Advisor whenever they have a question concerning the curricula or University procedures and policies [[CFR 2.12: Orientation Day Schedule, List of Academic Advisors](#)].

Students need to be assured that they will be treated fairly and equitably, and UWest has developed and continues to review and update its Student Grievance Policy, Student Conduct Policy, Student Refund Policy, and Student Grading Policy [[CFR 1.8](#)]. These policies are readily accessible via the Catalogue and the UWest web page and are rigorously followed [[CFR 1.7: Student Conduct and Student Grievance Policies, Student Refund Policy, Student Grading Policy](#)].

The cost of higher education is a serious concern for students, and UWest has improved and expanded its financial aid resources. Besides offering access to state and federal financial aid, UWest has a number of scholarships which help attract and retain students. These range from small monetary awards of a few hundred dollars to scholarships and tuitions that cover most of a student's expenses [[CFR 2.13: List of Financial Aid and Scholarships available, including their value](#)]. These scholarships are openly advertised, and students and potential students are encouraged to apply. An Office of Financial Aid with a well-trained full-time staff has been created to oversee this financial aid and advise students on their eligibility and the application process [[CFR 3.1: Financial Aid Office 1- Resume](#) and [Financial Aid Officer 2- Resume](#)]. The result has been a marked increase in the number of recipients of financial assistance. In 2006, nine undergraduate students were receiving some form of financial aid or assistance; in 2009 the number had risen to 33 (an increase of 267%). The number of graduate students receiving some form of financial aid or assistance grew from 30 to 66 (a 120% increase). Pell Grant recipients expanded from 0 to 12 students.

To further raise the attractiveness of its academic programs, UWest has put in place and continues to update information resources sufficient in scope, quality, currency and kind to support student learning. Overseen by a highly qualified staff [[CFR 3.1: Director of Library- Resume](#) and [Assistant Librarian- Resume](#)], the University's Library and Computer Center has a collection of over 68,000 volumes and subscribes to more than 200 scholarly journals. An additional 12,000 journals and indices are available in electronic format through the library's website [[CFR 3.6: Detailed breakdown of library holdings by subject](#)]. The library catalogue is online on the library website. This online medium simplifies the search for books and research materials. It also makes it easy to link to various relevant e-locations and nearby libraries. The

library is integrated with WorldCat, the largest database of library catalogues around the world, which makes searching from the local catalogue to other catalogues worldwide a straightforward and intuitive process. The library website also puts students in touch with academic databases and online resources on various subjects. From journals to subject guides, the website presents an excellent starting point for research. A majority of the subscribed online databases are accessible off campus, which means anyone with Internet access and a school ID can log on to search for articles in journals and other reference materials, even when the library is closed. The library website is produced in-house so that students can look forward to greater functionality and services on a periodic basis. The library also provides online computer stations, printers, scanners, and copiers, and workshops to train students in the latest computer and information systems [[CFR 3.6: Schedule of Library Training Workshops](#)]. A full-time Information Technology staff [[CFR 3.1: Information Technology Manager- Resume](#), [Systems Information Technology Engineer- Resume](#), [Web Design / Media Specialist- Resume](#) and [Senior Information Technology Engineer- Resume](#)] is employed to ensure that electronic resources are sufficiently coordinated and supported to fulfill UWest's educational purposes and to provide key academic and administrative functions. This staff also serves students' computer and Internet access needs [[CFR 3.6: Information Technology services](#)]. Both the library and IT work with the Extended Studies Coordinator to ensure that information and electronic services serve students' learning needs [[CFR 3.6: Job Description of Extended Studies Coordinator](#)].

Since 2006 UWest has expanded and improved its classroom technology so that students and faculty can utilize the latest in electronic instructional pedagogy; LCD projectors have been added to many of the classrooms, a smart classroom has been constructed, and an investment lab has been created [[CFR 3.6: Photos of Investment Lab](#), [Smart Classroom](#) and [LCD Projectors](#)].

IT staff are available to address technical problems and to supply additional electronic resources at the instructor's request.

UWest has created a Student Success Center with a full-time coordinator [[CFR 3.1: Student Success Center Coordinator- Resume](#)] to work with students, faculty and the community to enhance the academic and professional success of the students. The Center offers English assistance for students who are non-native English speakers; tutors to help Buddhist Studies students fulfill their Canonical Chinese requirements; multi-literacy enhancement for students working on academic or professional writing, speaking or multi-media projects or presentations; individualized tutoring to help students understand course materials and concepts (e.g. mathematics, accounting, marketing); and career services. While career services does not yet provide actual job placement, it does help students design an individualized career plan, research jobs or careers, provide resources for career assessments, prepare resumes and cover letters, and participate in mock interviews [[CFR 3.6: Offerings of Student Success Center](#)].

Academic programs and effective student support services are crucial for student recruitment and retention. However, on their own they are not enough. Students may focus on their academic experience, but what happens outside the classroom and their studies is also a vital part of their university experience. It is in the area of co-curricular student needs that UWest is the most underdeveloped at this point. Part of this realized weakness arises from the small size of the University campus and the current student body. However, UWest has made a number of improvements over the years and plans to continue to do so in the future. Financial support for student clubs has been put in place, and a few clubs have been formed [[CFR 2.11: Financial Support for Student Clubs; List of Clubs in Existence](#)]. Residence hall facilities that include study rooms, television rooms, a kitchen facility and Internet access are available on

campus. A cafeteria serves breakfast, lunch and dinner five days a week, and there is a café next to the library. A swimming pool, spa, exercise room, game room and basketball hoops give students and faculty the opportunity to engage in a small range of physical activity. There is a Student Association and students are also involved in campus committees. Compared to other larger universities these offerings are modest, but UWest maintains a rolling plan to continue to upgrade and expand these structures [[CFR 2.11: Past 3-Year \(2007-2010\) infrastructure investment record](#), [Future 5-Year \(2010-2015\) capital projects](#)]. As the University grows, co-curricular offerings will also grow and improve.

The above-mentioned academic programs, personnel, support services, resources, and infrastructures serve to further student recruitment and retention. UWest, however, realizes that their effectiveness needs to be assessed in order to ensure continuous improvement of recruitment and retention strategies. UWest has created a University Wide Assessment Council (UWAC) to oversee, revise and improve assessment systems [[CFR 4.5: List of members in UWAC](#)]. A full-time Institutional Research and Assessment Officer [[CFR 3.1: Institutional Research & Assessment Officer- Resume](#)] has also been hired to run the Institutional Research Unit (IRU) [[CFR 4.5: Description of the Institutional Research Unit](#)]. Although in larger universities Institutional Research and Assessment are usually separate, the small size of UWest warrants the amalgamation of the two. Consequently, while the IRU works with the Admission's and Registrar's Offices to gather routine evidence on retention ratios, graduation ratios, class enrollment numbers, class cancellations, and FTE (Full-Time Enrollment) statistics, it is also closely involved in UWAC's development, review, oversight and implementation of assessment. The result is an effective and efficient system for assessing recruitment and retention strategies.

Upon their arrival at UWest, students are asked to fill out an Entry Survey [[CFR 4.1: Entry Survey](#)]. The results of these surveys provide valuable marketing data, since they enable UWest to pinpoint what attracts students to UWest. Advertisements, program offerings, brochures and other marketing methods can then be made more streamlined and effective. When students leave UWest, they are asked to complete a Transfer and Withdrawal Survey so that the University can accurately determine and assess the reasons for their departure [[CFR 4.1: Transfer and Withdrawal Survey](#)]. This survey provides data on the students' experience of UWest, what they liked and disliked, and helps the University locate areas in need of improvement [[CFR 1.8](#)]. Every year, the University also distributes a detailed Student Satisfaction Survey that covers most aspects of University life (e.g. academic programs, support services, residence hall, recreation, infrastructure) [[CFR 4.1: Student Satisfaction Survey](#)]. To encourage participation, UWest enters all students who complete this Survey into a raffle for some small prizes. The results of these surveys are shared with the University's multiple constituencies so that strengths and weaknesses can be discerned and corrective action, when necessary, can be taken [[CFR 4.1: Guidelines for Sharing Assessment Data](#)].

UWest has put in place unique academic programs to attract students who are interested in a "whole person" education that not only imparts intellectual information, but also challenges them to think about their role and place in life. Support services have been created to further student success, and the University's administrative system has been made clear and easy to navigate. In the area of co-curricular activities UWest recognizes that its offerings are modest, but it is committed to ongoing expansion and improvement. To ensure students' needs and concerns are accurately understood, the University has created an assessment system that provides useful quantitative and qualitative information. This information is shared with the

University's constituencies so that strengths and weaknesses can be pinpointed and relevant action taken. The results will be a better functioning and attractive University, which will, in turn, increase student enrollment and retention.

Theme II: Improvement of Assessment of Student Learning to Ensure Educational Effectiveness at Course, Program and Institutional Levels

UWest's mission to provide a "whole person" education informed by Buddhist wisdom and values and facilitate interaction and understanding between East and West is the cornerstone of its educational programs. This mission has been the guiding principle in the University's continuous review and revisions of its curricula. An annual and 5-year program review policy guides program review and has led to a number of changes and improvements over the years [[CFR 2.7](#), [CFR 4.4: Annual and 5-Year Program Review](#)]. In preparation for the current cycle of reaccreditation, however, UWest decided to put these reviews on hold for one year while it undertook a more detailed and systematic review and revision of its academic programs so that they would more clearly reflect and embody the Institution's mission.

This review was guided by a white paper that outlined UWest's mission and how it was to be pursued in a non-sectarian environment dedicated to academic freedom [[CFR 2.3](#), [CFR 2.7: Guidelines for Program Review and Revision](#)]. The University's multiple constituencies were involved in the creation of this paper, and it went through numerous drafts before it was accepted by the Academic Policy and Curriculum Committee (APCC) [[CFR 4.1: APCC minutes approving white paper](#)]. The white paper set the tone for the entire academic review process, ensuring a strong connection between institutional and departmental academic goals.

Upon receipt of the approved white paper, each department engaged in a systematic review and revision of its program. Through the process of departmental meetings, shared e-mails and informal discussions, learning goals for the departments in general, as well as for the more specific academic programs within these departments, were developed and approved [[CFR 2.4: Departments' Minutes approving revised programs](#)]. These took the form of clear Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) that set measurable goals for assessing student success [[CFR 2.3](#)]. These revised programs and SLOs were then reviewed by the APCC. Upon approval by the APCC [[CFR 2.4: APCC Student Learning Outcome \(SLO\) approvals](#)], they were officially incorporated into the UWest Catalogue. Furthermore, these SLOs became in turn the guidelines for the revision of the individual Course Outlines. Each course was reviewed and revised so that it clearly corresponds with both the departments' and the University's learning goals [[CFR 2.4: Samples of New Course Outlines](#)]. UWest is now in the process of having its SLOs and Course Outlines examined through outside peer reviews to ensure that the contents, standards and nomenclature are appropriate to an American institution of higher learning [[CFR 2.1: Completed Outside Peer Reviews of Programs](#)].

UWest has created standard documents and policies to inform students of learning expectations at the University, program and course level. The University's mission and departmental and program learning goals are easily accessible through the Catalogue and the Institution's web-page. At the course level, UWest has created a syllabus format that facilitates the clear laying out of course specific learning goals. It also contains course relevant descriptions of University policies and expectations [[CFR 2.5: Syllabus Format; Sample Syllabi](#)]. Faculty are encouraged, but not required, to use this syllabus format. More stringent rules, however, apply to the methods of assessing student work. UWest has adopted a policy that

encourages faculty to use multiple assessment techniques in a course [[CFR 2.5, 2.6: Assessment Structure, Policy of Multiple Assessment](#)]. This ensures that students receive timely feedback on their work during a semester so that they can discover strengths and weaknesses and improve their performance and learning.

During the current self-review process, UWest undertook to improve and expand its assessment of student learning. Working closely with the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Registrar, the Student Success Center Coordinator and the Departments, the University Wide Assessment Council created a multi-layered review system for the quantitative and qualitative evaluation of Student Learning Outcomes at the institutional, program and course levels. Beginning with UWest's mission, specific questions have been included in the Exit and Alumni Surveys to measure to what extent students have received a "whole person" education that facilitates understanding between East and West [[CFR 2.6, 4.8: Exit Survey and Alumni Survey](#)]. For the assessment of programs, UWest utilizes capstone courses. These take the form of final-year courses, comprehensive exams, or thesis or dissertation writing that integrate and evaluate what students have learned during their studies [[CFR 2.10: Capstone course outlines](#)]. At the course level, assessment is done by the instructors through the submission of grades. An assessment plan has also been adopted with the help of the University Wide Assessment Committee (UWAC) [[CFR 4.3 : Assessment system, Rubrics](#)]

Student involvement in the assessment process has been enhanced. The Student Satisfaction Survey now includes institutional and program-specific questions that enable students to evaluate whether UWest is achieving its stated learning goals [[CFR 2.10: Student Satisfaction Survey](#)]. The Student Course Evaluation Form has also been extensively revised. Students are asked not only to evaluate the instructor's effectiveness, but also to determine

whether the course has contributed to a “whole person” education. Furthermore, although most of the questions on this form remain identical from course to course, three or four course-specific questions are also included. These questions are taken from the Course Outline Form that was approved by the relevant department and the APCC [[CFR 2.10: Student Course Evaluation Forms containing course specific questions](#)]. These questions allow the students to state whether they feel they have learned the core material the course was meant to cover. The data gathered offers further insights into program, instructor and course effectiveness.

The above multi-level assessment system allows UWest to engage in ongoing inquiry into the processes of teaching and learning, as well as the conditions and practices that promote the kinds and levels of learning intended by its mission. The data from this assessment are fed back into the design of curricula and pedagogy, as well as into the improvement of evaluation means and methodology. Since leadership at all levels is involved in this process, data are automatically shared with the relevant academic or administrative departments [[CFR 4.7: Policy for Sharing Assessment Data](#)]. In particular, the faculty takes responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning and is closely involved in the development of any necessary improvements. Both full-time and part-time faculty are automatic voting members at their departmental meetings, and all Departmental Chairs serve as voting members on the Academic Policy and Curriculum Committee [[CFR 4.6](#)]. Suggested changes for improvement both in teaching and in assessment must go through a multi-level program approval process that ensures that quality and Student Learning Outcomes are maintained. Program and course revisions are first approved by the relevant department by majority vote. The APCC then decides, also by majority vote, whether to confirm these revisions or to send them back to the department for further work. Broad changes that fundamentally change a program must also be

approved by the Cabinet [[CFR 4.4](#)]. Changes to the assessment system are first reviewed and accepted by the University Wide Assessment Council, then by the APCC, and finally by the Cabinet [[CFR 4.4](#)]. University of the West has created a multi-level assessment system that enables it to gather data on student learning at the institutional, program and course level. These data provide information not only on student intellectual achievement, but on whether UWest is succeeding in its commitment to a “whole person” education that furthers understanding between East and West. Effective feedback loops have been put in place to ensure that the collected data are openly shared with the University’s multiple constituencies, and any resulting changes to the curricula or assessment system must undergo a multi-layered approval process. This method of assessment is simple and effective, and will enable UWest to continuously improve its student learning as it grows as an institution of higher learning.

Theme III: Defining and Adopting a “Teacher-Scholar-Service Leader”

Model to Improve Faculty Performance in Instruction, Assessment, Research, Mentorship and Service

Central to UWest’s educational mission is a qualified faculty who can impart to students a “whole person” education informed by Buddhist wisdom and values that furthers understanding between East and West. The University has determined that such a faculty needs to have and maintain skills in three key areas: (1) instruction, (2) scholarship, and (3) service [[CFR 3.3: Workload Policy](#)]. Consequently, UWest has devised policies and procedures that ensure that faculty recruitment, orientation, development, workload, incentives and evaluations are aligned with the University’s purposes and educational objectives.

As part of their contractual obligations, full-time faculty are required to teach a set number of courses each semester. This number varies depending on a faculty member's administrative responsibilities. Rather than assigning courses and class schedules from the top down, UWest is careful to foster a climate of collegiality which involves all faculty in course and scheduling decisions. Faculty are consulted on the courses they would like to teach and the scheduling of classes [[CFR 4.1: Department Minutes of approval of Semester Schedules](#)]. Furthermore, whether full-time or part-time, faculty are encouraged to propose new courses to further enhance the curriculum [[CFR 2.8: Department Minutes approval of new courses](#) and [APCC Minutes approval of new courses](#)]. The result is an atmosphere where faculty feel empowered to participate proactively in the mission of the University. This sense of empowerment carries over into the classroom, affecting student learning and thought.

Both IT and the library are coordinated to support instruction. Faculty can access LCD projectors, a smart classroom, and an investment lab. IT is available to address instructors' computer needs, and to provide additional classroom resources if available. At the start of each semester, the library requests instructors' syllabi and posts them on-line. Instructors may also have reading materials put on the library's web-page as long as copyright rules are maintained [[CFR 3.7: Library workshops](#)]. Training opportunities are also provided to introduce faculty to new computer technologies, teaching methodologies, and pedagogical theories [[CFR 3.4: Evidence from Budget of Financial Support for faculty development](#)]

At the university level, teaching and scholarship are closely related. UWest appreciates that only by remaining abreast of the current academic findings and theories can faculty provide their students with the most up-to-date and relevant instruction. Consequently, the University has created financial and professional incentives to encourage its full-time faculty to engage in

scholarly pursuits. Up to \$1000 is made available each academic year to individual faculty members to deliver papers at conferences. This money helps cover travel and accommodation expenses. To qualify, a faculty member must demonstrate that his or her paper has been accepted by the conference organizers [[CFR 2.8: Evidence from Budget of Financial Support for faculty to attend conferences](#)]. This support is also extended to students who have their papers accepted at conferences, although at the limit of \$500 per year [[CFR 2.2b](#)] UWest also periodically provides workshops on grant acquisition so that faculty can develop and hone their grant finding and writing skills [[CFR 3.4: Examples of Grants Received by Faculty](#)] Finally, faculty may request a reduction in teaching load in order to complete scholarly activities and publications. The amount of reduction is determined by the Department Chair.

UWest's educational mission seeks to encourage students to develop not only their intellectual knowledge, but their sense of responsibility to serve the greater community. Such an attitude of service is difficult to foster if it is not modeled by the University's instructors. Consequently, full-time faculty are required to engage in service-oriented activities that reflect a "whole person" approach to learning and life. At the most basic level, faculty must demonstrate effective academic leadership at the course, departmental and institutional levels. They are required to be available to students outside of the classroom, and to participate in department meetings. Chairs must be present at APCC meetings, which all other faculty may attend if they so wish [[CFR 4.1: Department and APCC minutes showing faculty involvement in academic decisions](#)]. Faculty may also serve on a number of other important University committees, including hiring committees, the University Wide Assessment Council, and the WASC Accreditation Committee [[CFR 4.1: Evidence of Faculty Participation on Hiring Committees, Faculty involvement in UWAC and Faculty involvement in APCC](#)]. Both full-time and part-

time faculty may also run for election to the Academic Senate [[CFR 4.1: Academic Senate Constitution and By-Laws](#)], which plays a vital role representing faculty ideas and concerns to UWest's leadership. Through these different levels of participation, the faculty both serve the University community and exercise effective leadership over academic quality and the appropriate maintenance of UWest's educational purposes and character.

Faculty service and leadership possibilities, however, are not limited to the University. Since UWest sees local community outreach as an important part of its mission, it encourages and supports faculty initiatives to serve the wider local population. A number of approaches have already had concrete results. The University, for instance, permits outside groups and organizations to use its facilities for special occasions and conferences. UWest faculty frequently participate in these events. For a number of years the Department of Business Studies has been offering a free Volunteers of Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program to help people file their taxes. More recently, this Department has begun a Business Assistance Center in cooperation with the City of Rosemead. The Department of Religious Studies has helped organize a number of public meditation workshops, which have met with great success and will continue in the future. Faculty also continue to give public lectures both on campus and at various temples and other venues [[CFR 2.8: Outside Groups Holding events with UWest Faculty Participation, Interfaith Dialogue, VITA Program, Meditation Workshops, Public Lectures](#)]. UWest, therefore, provides its faculty with a number of opportunities to serve the wider community, and these opportunities will expand as the University expands.

The University's evaluation practices and incentives for its faculty are aligned with this "Teacher-Scholar-Service Leader" model. In its Policy on Faculty Evaluation, UWest stresses that promotion and awards are linked to success in all three areas [[CFR 3.3: Policy on Faculty](#)

[Evaluation](#)]. In order to accurately and fairly measure faculty performance, the University has created a detailed and systematic Yearly Performance Evaluation Form [[CFR 2.9: Yearly Performance Evaluation Form](#)]. At the beginning of the academic year, faculty work closely with their supervisors (the Department Chairs) to set measurable performance goals in the three areas (the chairs develop their own performance goals with the Dean of Academic Affairs). These are written down on the Yearly Performance Evaluation Form. At the end of the academic year the faculty and their supervisors compare the original goals with what has actually been achieved. A quantitative system is used to determine whether the faculty member needs to improve, or has met or exceeded expectations. The evaluation results are submitted to the Dean of Academic Affairs [[CFR 1.3: Policy on Faculty Evaluation](#)] and play an important role in decisions relating to rehire, promotion and tenure.

UWest has created a number of professional incentives to reward faculty success in teaching, scholarship and service. Every year a faculty member is selected to be honored for outstanding performance in each of the three areas. Special selection committees consisting of administrators and faculty choose the recipients for the awards in scholarship and service, while students vote for the outstanding teacher [[CFR 2.8: Policy for Choosing Outstanding Faculty in Teaching, Scholarship and Service](#)]. Most importantly, UWest adheres to a policy of ranking and promoting faculty based on both their yearly performance and their time at the University. A tenure policy is also in place [[CFR 2.8: Policy for Ranking and Promoting Faculty- Tenure Policy, Pay Scales for faculty](#)]. Faculty, therefore, are provided with professional and financial incentives to succeed as teachers, scholars and service leaders.

Conclusion

From its foundation, University of the West has sought to provide a “whole person” education informed by Buddhist wisdom and values that fosters intercultural understanding between East and West. The guiding principles in this pursuit have been the highest ideals of academic and religious freedom within a non-sectarian environment that fosters mutual respect, open dialogue and academic rigor. More significantly, UWest has created academic programs that not only challenge students intellectually, but also require them to explore more personal questions of meaning, purpose and character development. Comprehensive Student Learning Outcomes have been put in place to ensure that the University’s various academic offerings support its institutional mission, and an effective assessment system has been implemented to measure whether these goals are being achieved. Facilities, information resources and technologies have been expanded and improved to further support academic programs.

UWest’s current student population is still modest in size, but the University has created a systematic plan to increase enrollment and retention over the next few years. Marketing, student support services, and extra and co-curricular activities are receiving renewed attention and have already shown levels of expansion and improvement. Assessment methods for improving recruitment strategies, campus life, and program attractiveness are in place and are regularly gathering data. Furthermore, by adopting and fostering a “Teacher-Scholar-Service Leader” model for its faculty, UWest is creating a body of professional academics who will better serve student needs and raise the University’s profile in the wider community and the

academic world. With these structures, systems, strategies and goals in place, UWest can look with confidence to its ongoing success.

UPDATE ON ADDRESSING EER ISSUES

With the Capacity and Preparatory Review in its final stages of preparation, University of the West has begun to address the Educational Effectiveness Review issues it identified in its Institutional Proposal. These issues may be summarized under the three themes of (1) Student Enrollment and Retention, (2) Assessment of Student Learning, and (3) Adoption of a “Teacher-Scholar-Service Leader” Model.

Student Enrollment and Retention

As the CPR Report demonstrates, a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (SEMP) has been developed. However, the effectiveness of this plan is yet to be determined. This will be addressed in the EER Report. The Institutional Research Unit is gathering data on enrollment, retention and graduation rates, and the new Entry, Exit, Alumni and Student Satisfaction Surveys have begun to collect evidence which will help improve marketing and publicity strategies. These surveys are also beginning to provide vital information on the effectiveness of the Student Success Center, academic programs, extra and co-curricular activities, and university community life. By the time of the EER, UWest will be able to show how these data have refined the SEMP and led to an increase in enrollment and retention.

Assessment of Student Learning

The CPR Report contains evidence of clear and detailed Student Learning Outcomes at the institutional, program and course levels that incorporate UWest’s mission to provide a “whole person” education informed by Buddhist wisdom and values. For the EER Report, the University needs to assess whether these SLOs and mission are being met. Data from revised

course evaluations are already being collected and shared with departments. This has led to some minor departmental reviews of teaching effectiveness. However, more comprehensive assessments at the program and institutional levels are still to be undertaken. The Exit and Student Satisfaction Surveys have provided some initial feedback, but more thorough data are needed before effective assessments can take place. UWest is currently creating department specific matrices to track student progress through academic programs, and once these are in place and generating data, comprehensive assessment of SLOs will quickly follow.

Adoption of a “Teacher-Scholar-Service Leader” Model

As the CPR Report explains, UWest has created a comprehensive system of evaluation to measure faculty achievement in the three areas of instruction, research and service. This system has been up and running for the last two academic years and has provided faculty with clear and detailed guidance on University standards and expectations. Furthermore, it has generated useful data regarding the quality of faculty teaching, scholarship and service. UWest anticipates that these data will have led to tailored faculty training workshops by the time of the EER.

CONCLUDING ESSAY

Years of close interaction with WASC have enabled University of the West to grow and improve as an institution of higher learning. During UWest's quest for Candidacy and Initial Accreditation, the University found the recommendations and support of WASC invaluable for enhancing the University's administration, educational programs, student support services, faculty development and physical infrastructure. The same applies to this current accreditation cycle. The concerns indentified by the WASC Visiting Team during the last EER enabled UWest to gain a clearer and more focused picture of its overall strengths and weaknesses. This picture, in turn, formed the basis of the current self-review, which adopted a thematic approach to address issues of student recruitment and retention, assessment of student learning, and faculty development.

Student Recruitment and Retention

In its 2008 Institutional Proposal, UWest estimated a substantial increase in student enrollments by 2010. The actual numbers, however, have proved more modest. Part of this is a result of the economic downturn and the cancelation of new academic programs, but the lack of a coherent and long-term enrollment management strategy has also played a role. The self-review revealed that the University is addressing this problem through the hiring of a full-time Dean of Enrollment and Student Affairs and the development of a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (SEMP). Furthermore, UWest has begun to gather quantitative and qualitative data to guide enrollment, recruitment and retention strategies. Nevertheless, these developments are still in their infancy and have yet to generate a substantial increase in enrollments. Target audiences

still need to be better defined and marketing techniques refined. UWest has already begun to do this, and expects significant increase in enrollment by the EER site-visit in 2012.

On the matter of retention, UWest has found that its student support services are well developed, comprehensive and easy to navigate. Admission, registration and tuition payment procedures are student friendly, and a number of scholarships and fellowships are available. Information Technology and the library provide students with computer and academic support, and residence hall rooms, a café and a cafeteria address their social and domestic needs. A Student Success Center has also been created to assist students in their intellectual development. However, the self-review also revealed that UWest cannot rest on its laurels. As the University expands, its support services will also need to expand. Although the Student Success Center offers numerous forms of workshops and tutoring, it does not offer career and placement services. Both the current economic climate and the small size of UWest make it difficult to offer such services, but it is a matter that the University will have to address as its enrollment increases. At this stage in the University's development, it is difficult to set a timeline for the implementation of such services; nevertheless, they should be in place when the current campus reaches maximum enrollment capacity.

It is in the area of co-curricular offerings that the self-review revealed the greatest need for improvement. Part of this weakness is caused by the small size of the campus and student body. Unlike larger universities, UWest lacks the land and resources to build gymnasiums, stadiums, or track fields. Consequently, it can offer its students only limited recreational facilities. Nevertheless, money has been allocated for student clubs, and the University is exploring the possibility of building modest sport facilities on campus (e.g. a basketball court).

Again, it is difficult to determine a timeline for these constructions, but they should take place as the student body expands.

Assessment of Student Learning

UWest took to heart WASC's request that the University improve its assessment of student learning at the institutional, program and course level. The self-review has revealed that UWest has made considerable progress in this area. Measurable Student Learning Outcomes have been put in place at all three levels, and a comprehensive assessment system has been created to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in student learning. Furthermore, both the SLOs and the assessment system reflect the University's mission to provide a "whole person" education informed by Buddhist wisdom and values that facilitates understanding between East and West.

A few matters, however, still need to be addressed. Although UWest has completed its reviews and revisions of its academic programs, they have not all been evaluated by outside peer reviews in order to ensure that the contents, standards and nomenclature were appropriate to an American institution of higher learning. The original intent was to finish all outside peer reviews before submission of this CPR Report, but this proved too optimistic a timeline. Instead, only the outside peer review of the Business Studies programs has been completed. The rest, however, will be accomplished before the CPR site-visit in December 2010. Another matter concerns the assessment system itself. The self-review revealed a weakness in tracking individual student performance throughout an academic program: how did the student improve, what were the student's shortcomings, and what do these findings say about the effectiveness of the program? To address this weakness, UWest has decided to create department-specific

matrices that faculty use to track student progress. These matrices will contain program-level learning goals that summarize the skills students are expected to have mastered by the time they graduate. At the end of every semester, faculty will use these matrices to assess each student's mastery of these skills. Over time, these matrices will reveal strengths and weaknesses of individual students and show whether student learning outcomes at the program level are being met. The University plans to have these matrices developed and in place by the end of Fall Semester 2010.

Although the main parts of the assessment system have been implemented, they have only begun to generate data and have not yet led to program and teaching improvement. In short, the feedback loop has not been closed. However, by the end of fall semester 2010, UWest anticipates that more detailed and systematic data on Student Learning Outcomes will become available. These data will be analyzed by the relevant departments during spring semester 2011, and the resulting program revisions and improvements should be in place by fall semester of that same year.

Faculty Development

The adoption of a "Teacher-Scholar-Service Leader" model has helped UWest clarify its understanding of what constitutes an effective faculty member and how that member should be evaluated. The University has improved instructional support, created financial and professional incentives to encourage scholarly research, and involved faculty in service oriented-activities. A formal system of peer review also has been created to decide questions of faculty retention, awards, promotion and tenure.

Nevertheless, the self-review found that more is needed to support faculty development. Currently, there are limited training opportunities for instructors to improve their skills. A number of workshops regarding instructional technology are provided, but these are directed at both the students and faculty. More specifically faculty-oriented training sessions in pedagogy still need to be developed. Likewise, UWest's support for scholarly activity could be enhanced. To date one workshop on grant acquisition has been held, and there are currently no provisions for sabbaticals. As the University grows, these issues will need to be addressed. Although it is difficult to determine a timeline for improvements in these areas, they should coincide with a growth in student numbers.

Conclusion

The current self-study reveals that UWest has made remarkable progress since receiving initial accreditation in 2006. A Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (SEMP) has been created, the assessment of student learning has been significantly improved, and an effective "Teacher-Scholar-Service Leader" model for faculty has been adopted. Furthermore, weaknesses have been located and either are already being addressed or will be in the foreseeable future. It is, therefore, the conclusion of University of the West that it has met the requirements of the Capacity and Preparatory Review.

***Response to Concerns Identified by the WASC Action Letter of
March 6, 2006 and the Major Recommendations of the Last Visiting
Team (October 12-14, 2005)***

Introduction

The concerns and recommendations highlighted by the WASC Action Letter of March 6, 2006 and the last Visiting Team (EER Visit, October 12-14, 2005) have provided University of the West with excellent guidance in its quest to improve and grow as an institution of higher learning. These concerns and recommendations may be summarized under the following headers:

1. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) at the program level should be clearly specified in the catalogue and in course syllabi.
2. UWest needs to establish a University-wide program for assessment of Student Learning Outcomes.
3. Program and course offerings should not exceed what enrollment numbers can sustain.
4. UWest should develop a comprehensive recruitment and retention plan.
5. A formal system of faculty peer review is needed for promotion and retention.

For the last four years UWest has given these recommendations its fullest attention. This is apparent in the thematic approach the University chose to adopt for the current review cycle. The three themes of (1) developing a comprehensive student enrollment and retention plan, (2)

improving assessment of student learning and (3) defining a “Teacher-Scholar-Service Leader” model embody and address the above concerns and recommendations.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) at the Program Level

The Visiting Team praised UWest’s General Education program for its clear learning goals and outcomes, but pointed out that similar clear and concrete learning outcomes were lacking in the other degree programs. The Team also suggested that the connection between Student Learning Outcomes and the University’s mission needed to be made more apparent. Consequently, the WASC Action Letter informed UWest that it had to better integrate SLOs at the institutional, program, course and syllabi levels, and “develop learning outcomes for information literacy and communication skills.”

As described in the reflective essay, UWest undertook a comprehensive review and revision of its degree programs in order to address this shortcoming. The faculty developed clear and detailed Student Learning Outcomes at the department and program levels, and revised its course outlines to reflect these changes. These comprehensive SLOs are stated in the current UWest Catalogue and correspond with the institution’s educational mission. Information literacy and communication skills are an integral part of these Student Learning Outcomes. UWest is in the process of requiring its faculty to integrate these SLOs into their syllabi. This will be completed in time for the EER stage of the accreditation cycle in 2012.

University-Wide Program for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

On the issue of quality assurance and educational effectiveness, the Visiting Team requested that UWest more fully develop mechanisms by which faculty can regularly and collectively assess whether student learning meets established SLOs, and use these assessment results to make program improvements. In the words of the WASC Action Letter, “it was recommended that a University-wide program for assessment of student learning outcomes be created and that the University demonstrate that it was using its course assessments for program improvement.” Considering UWest’s small size, the Visiting Team also advised that considerable “care and attention should be paid to develop a plan and process for assessment that is manageable and sustainable and that will not ... overextend or overwhelm the faculty and staff.”

Following the Visiting Team’s recommendations, UWest has created a straightforward, simple, yet effective assessment system that allows both quantitative and qualitative measurement of educational effectiveness. As described in detail in the Reflective Essay, UWest established an assessment committee in the form of the University Wide Assessment Council (UWAC) to create and implement a University-wide program for assessment of SLOs. Working closely with the Institutional Research Unit (IRU) and faculty and staff, the Council developed a University-wide assessment system that measures whether Student Learning Outcomes are being met at the institutional, program and course levels. Policies and procedures have also been put in place to ensure the timely dissemination of assessment results among faculty and staff.

UWest is currently in the process of implementing this assessment system, and it has already begun to generate useful data that is being shared with faculty, staff and University leadership. As this system matures and grows, it will generate a feedback loop in which the

collection of data leads to reviews and revisions of academic programs. The results of this feedback loop will be in place by the time of the EER stage of the accreditation cycle in 2012.

Program and Course Offerings Should Reflect What Enrollment Numbers can Sustain

The Visiting Team was concerned that UWest's five-year plans did not give enough consideration to actual enrollments and that the University had expanded its program and course offerings beyond what the student body could sustain. However, the Team also conceded that UWest's adoption, through the IRU, of a more comprehensive and evidence-based assessment of student enrollment had led to the pruning of the curricula to a sustainable level. Nevertheless, the WASC Action Letter expressed concern "that the enrollment of UWest may not be sufficient to sustain the extensive array of courses and programs the University currently offers and wishes to offer in the future."

The 2005-2007 Catalogue UWest listed eleven undergraduate degree majors, six master's programs, and two Ph.D. programs. As the Visiting Team feared, these offerings proved over optimistic and the University had difficulties sustaining minimum enrollment requirements for some of these programs. To rectify this situation, UWest utilized the IRU to evaluate curricula sustainability. The findings were used to trim unnecessary programs and steer resources towards more sustainable alternatives. Consequently, the 2010-2011 Catalogue contains only six undergraduate degree majors. The number of master's programs offered has increased to eight, but these reflect market research and are already proving sustainable. The Ph.D. offerings have remained the same and have also proven their sustainability. In total, over the last five years UWest has cut its program offerings from nineteen to sixteen.

Development of a Comprehensive Recruitment and Retention Plan

The above concern that student numbers be sufficient to sustain program and course offerings is closely connected to issues of enrollment and retention. The WASC Action Letter informed UWest that a “comprehensive approach to recruitment and retention is vital to achieving the University’s long-range plans and the creation of an educationally vital institution. Once students are enrolled, enrollment management will need special attention to assure that there is a critical mass of students to support the breadth of programs and course offerings. This is important both to create an effective learning environment and to maintain financial viability.” As described in the Reflective Essay, UWest has given the matter of student recruitment and retention considerable attention. A full-time Dean of Enrollment and Student Affairs has been hired to upgrade and expand the University’s enrollment and retention strategies. He has developed a five-year rolling Strategic Enrollment and Management Plan which has been incorporated into UWest’s overall 5-year strategic plan. Advertising and marketing strategies have been revised to better target potential students; student support services have been improved and extended to better meet students’ needs on campus; and an effective Student Success Center has been created to provide students with necessary tutoring and career advice. Although co-curricular activities are still modest compared to other universities, they are greater than before and will grow as UWest grows.

In order to continuously evaluate and improve recruitment and retention strategies, UWest has implemented an assessment system that provides quantitative and qualitative data on student expectations and satisfaction. Entry and Transfer and Withdrawal surveys provide valuable marketing data since they enable UWest to ascertain what attracts students to UWest. Advertisements, program offerings, brochures and other marketing methods can then be

streamlined and made more effective. The Exit and Student Satisfaction surveys allow the University to track student satisfaction with academic programs, student support services, and extra and co-curricular activities. Results are shared with the relevant University constituencies so that corrective action may be implemented.

It is clear that UWest has laid the structural and procedural foundations to improve student recruitment and retention. Strategies and procedures are in place and assessment data is being generated. Assessment of recruitment and retention effectiveness is still in its infancy, but hard data and examples of corrective actions will be available for the EER stage of the accreditation cycle in 2012.

Formal System of Faculty Peer Review for Promotion and Retention

While the Visiting Team acknowledged that a partial system of peer review of faculty was in place, it pointed out that this system had not been sufficiently formalized and did not include specific guidelines for such decisions as promotion and retention. As stated in the WASC Action Letter, “the University has no formal system for faculty peer review of teaching effectiveness for promotion and retention.”

This concern has been addressed by UWest’s adoption of a “Teacher-Scholar-Service Leader” model to improve faculty performance in instruction, research, and service. Rather than just focusing on teaching effectiveness, UWest has implemented a review system that assesses faculty performances in these three important aspects of University life. As described in the Reflective Essay, UWest has created a detailed and systematic Yearly Performance Evaluation Form that formalizes the peer-review process. Clear policies on faculty ranking, promotion and retention have also been put in place. At the beginning of the academic year, faculty, together

with their supervisors, set measurable performance goals in the three areas which are recorded on the Yearly Performance Evaluation Form. At the end of the academic year the faculty and their supervisors compare the targeted goals with what has actually been achieved. A measuring system is used to determine whether the faculty member needs to improve, or has met or exceeded expectations. The results are used to make retention, promotion and tenure decisions.

Conclusion

Over the last four years, UWest has given its full attention to the concerns and recommendations expressed by the Visiting Team and the WASC Action Letter. These concerns and recommendations laid the groundwork for the University's quest for ongoing self-improvement and shaped the theme-based approach UWest adopted for the current accreditation cycle. As is apparent in the Reflective Essay, the three themes chosen by UWest effectively address four of the five concerns raised by WASC. The first theme, Developing a Comprehensive Enrollment and Retention Plan, covers WASC's requests for both clear and effective enrollment and retention strategies and the implementation of an assessment system. The more detailed concerns regarding integrated Student Learning Outcomes and the development of an effective assessment system of student learning are covered by the second theme, Improving Assessment of Student Learning. WASC's request for a formal system of faculty peer review for promotion and retention is addressed in the third theme, Defining a "Teacher-Scholar-Service Leader" model. Although the Reflective Essay does not cover WASC's concern that program and course offerings should not exceed what enrollment numbers can sustain, it is clear that UWest has addressed this problem over the last four years.