

## PREFACE

Wheaton College conducted a broad-based process of self-study in preparation for the November 2009 accreditation visiting team empanelled by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). The resulting Self Study Report, as well as the extensive collection of supporting documents, is the result of an inclusive participatory process that accurately reflects the college's programs and operations.

This Self Study Report caps a decade of rapid growth and change at Wheaton College since the 1999 NEASC reaccreditation report. The growth has been multi-dimensional, including steady, incremental increases in student enrollment; the establishment of new academic and co-curricular programs; an expansion of the faculty and the staff; expanding diversity of students, faculty and staff; rising numbers of applications for admission and the resulting heightening of institutional selectivity; and the increasing academic accomplishments of our students and faculty. This multi-faceted growth has brought many changes to the college, as has the arrival of a new president and several new college officers during the past ten years.

President Ronald Crutcher formed the Wheaton Steering Committee in charge of the Self-Study for Re-Accreditation in September 2007 with Provost Molly Easo Smith and Professor of Political Science Darlene Boroviak as coordinators. In the ensuing two years the Steering Committee has consisted of

- Ronald Crutcher, *President*
- Molly Easo Smith, *Vice President for Academic Affairs, Provost, 2007-2008*
- Elita Pastra-Landis, *Interim Provost, 2008-2009* with continued oversight as *Associate Provost, 2009-2010* (The Academic Program and Faculty)
- Linda Eisenmann, *Provost, July 2009* onward
- Darlene Boroviak, *Professor of Political Science* (Planning and Governance)
- Audrey Adam, *Director of Institutional Research*
- Sue Alexander, *Vice President and Dean of Students, 2007-2008* (Students)
- Jack Kuszaj, *Interim Dean of Students, 2008-2009* (Students)
- Lee Williams, *Dean of Students, July 2009* onward
- Gail Berson, *Vice President, Enrollment and Marketing; Dean of Admission and Student Aid* (Students)
- Deyonne Bryant, *Professor of English, Faculty Curriculum Coordinator* (Curriculum)
- Claire Buck, *Professor of English, Coordinator of Assessment* (Curriculum)
- Mary Casey, *Vice President for College Advancement*
- Mike Graca, *Assistant Vice President, Communications* (Public Disclosure)
- Chris Kalberg, *Associate Professor of Chemistry, Chair Educational Policy Committee* (Curriculum)
- Barbara Lema, *Assistant Vice President, Director of Human Services* (Integrity)
- Terry Metz, *Vice President Library and Information Services* (Library and Information Resources)
- Rick Wallick, *Vice President for Finance and Operations* (Physical and Technological Resources and Financial Resources)

The steering committee met several times to review the NEASC comments from the 1999 and 2004 visits; to discuss what issues would emerge for this self-study; and to explore potential themes that would arise during the process. Various steering committee members were given primary responsibility for coordinating the reviews necessary under each standard. Committee members were encouraged to assemble coordinating groups and to hold meetings with various constituencies to gather information and opinions. We welcomed

President and Director of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education Barbara Brittingham to campus in December 2007 to share with her some of the early thinking about our self-study process.

During the 2007-2008 academic year, a number of preliminary meetings were held. Molly Easo Smith and Darlene Boroviak met with the senate of the Student Government Association several times during the spring of 2008, to educate them about the accreditation process and to encourage them to participate in meetings when invited to do so. Darlene Boroviak gave several interviews to the student newspaper, *The Wheaton Wire*, discussing the reasons for college re-accreditation and what the process involves. The self-study coordinators also reported at faculty meetings about the self-study process, its importance, what we hoped to accomplish, and how it would build on the strategic planning we had engaged in a few years earlier.

By spring 2008 the self-study working groups were collecting data and holding meetings with various constituencies to engage them with the process. For example, the Governance Working Group held two open meetings for faculty and met with the Senior Management Group, the Staff Council, and the Staff Association during March and April of 2008. These meetings, along with a meeting of some Governance Working Group members and the Chair of the Board of Trustees, helped outline the basis of the Standard Three report. The working groups for other standards also reached out to members of the Wheaton community in various ways as they drafted their reports. Reports at faculty meetings, student senate meetings, and in the campus newspaper kept the community abreast of progress on the self-study in both 2007-2008 and 2008-2009. Drafts of much of this study were posted on the college's website in April 2009, with an invitation to members of the community to submit comments on the documents.

The customary process for assembling a self study was affected by several events. The retirement of Dean of Students Sue Alexander was followed by an inconclusive national search for her successor during 2007-2008. Interim Dean of Students Jack Kuszaj stepped in on July 1, 2008 as a second national search was initiated. A year later, Lee Burdette Williams joined Wheaton as Vice President and Dean of Students. In June 2008 Provost Molly Easo Smith departed from Wheaton unexpectedly, and Interim Provost Elita Pastra-Landis stepped in as we conducted a national search for a new provost. In July 2009 Linda Eisenmann was appointed provost. Because of these transitions in leadership, the campus visit for the NEASC team was rescheduled from March 2009 to November 2009, as work on the self-study continued throughout the 2008-2009 academic year.

In the fall of 2008 the current economic downturn and national financial crisis confronted academic institutions nationwide. Along with its peers, Wheaton had to move swiftly to re-examine budgets and ensure smooth financial operations despite dramatic losses in investments and endowment income. President Crutcher convened an *ad hoc* task force of faculty, staff members and students to review current budgets and make recommendations about reductions for the fiscal 2010 budget. The task force identified a number of one-time responses to the crisis in the economy, including salary and hiring freezes, after making a commitment to protect positions and people. Wheaton's 2002 strategic plan had posited the possibility that an economic downturn could endanger the college's financial balance, and it suggested a range of possible responses, many of which the college has taken, such as the hiring and salary freeze. However, the severity of this economic downturn, combined with the long-term challenge of accessibility and accountability faced by all institutions of higher education, make it clear that Wheaton needs an ongoing strategic planning process to provide continual creative options for the future and to build upon the community-wide understanding necessary for successful change. Toward that end, a campus-wide Planning and Priorities Committee is now in place.

Each of these events was out of the ordinary, but their coming in rapid succession meant that, while the self study was a clear priority, institutional attention and time could not be focused on the self-study process as sharply and continuously as it might otherwise have been. The work on the eleven standards was completed between the fall of 2008 and the summer of 2009. The on-campus visit of Joanne Creighton, the chair of the re-accreditation visiting team, was reassuring and helped us to prepare for the arrival of the team in November 2009.

Preliminary drafts of the relevant standards were posted internally online in April 2009, and six open fora were held in the late spring: three for faculty, two for staff and one for students in the Student Government Association. Although attendance at these was not what we might have hoped, we gathered constituency responses for each of the standards. Darlene Boroviak and Elita Pastra-Landis produced final drafts of all standards; the final editing and production of the finished manuscript was conducted by the staff of the college's Communications Department.

The work of numerous faculty, staff and students is reflected in this institutional self study. It represents a dynamic Wheaton College that provides undergraduates with an outstanding liberal arts education. We know from the accomplishments of our alumnae/i that we are successful at what we set out to do. You will read about our strengths, learn of our concerns and our plans as we celebrate the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our founding in 1834, and look forward with us as we anticipate our next decade with enthusiasm and confidence.

Special thanks are due to Audrey Adam, Hannah Benoit, David Caldwell, Barbara Dill, Michael Graca and Lisa Lebduska. Our greatest debt of gratitude lies with Darlene Boroviak and Susan Colson, who kept the process alive, when the campus became submerged in the crisis of the economic downturn.

We look forward to meeting the members of our NEASC Visiting Team and to working with you as you come to know the Wheaton College that we are proud to present.