

STANDARD FOUR THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Overview

Wheaton College offers only one degree, a Bachelor of Arts, A.B. This centered commitment is manifested in the curriculum and expressed by the college's mission to "provide a transformative liberal arts education for intellectually curious students in a collaborative, academically vibrant residential community that values a diverse world." As approved by the faculty in December 2001, the Wheaton Curriculum embodies its mission by integrating all aspects of a student's education. Major courses culminating in a capstone achieve depth, while Connections, foundational courses, study-abroad opportunities and experiential learning cultivate breadth. This holistic approach to student learning allows students to contextualize their knowledge within wider worlds.

While we can find many ways to enhance the academic program, we take great pride in the quality of academic life at Wheaton. Students and recent graduates regularly rate the courses they have taken, and the guidance of faculty, as outstanding. This viewpoint emerges strongly not only in Wheaton's own survey work, but also in the surveys and interviews conducted by external organizations, from independent research centers to mainstream college guide publications. Furthermore, our students regularly win admission to many of the nation's top graduate schools, and many have had notable success in winning prestigious scholarships such as the Rhodes, Fulbright and Truman. In fact, Wheaton students have won more than 115 of these awards since 2000.

A multitude of offices and staff, in addition to the faculty, are charged with helping students to achieve the overarching goals outlined in the mission statement. Many of these offices have undergone major changes during the past ten years, and some, like the Center for Global Education, did not exist in 1999 at the time of the last college accreditation. These structural changes will be discussed as part of this Academic Program Standard.

Description and Appraisal

The Faculty

The members of the faculty hold primary responsibility for carrying out the academic mission of the college. The Committee on Educational Policy, comprising five faculty members elected to three-year rotating terms, along with the president, the provost and two student representatives, is responsible for the Wheaton curriculum broadly defined. This group is charged in faculty legislation with oversight of academic policy, formulating changes to that policy when deemed necessary, and bringing academic policy issues to faculty for "deliberation and decision." It is also responsible for examining proposed changes to courses, majors and minors as well as assigning designations related to the general education curriculum. Through this committee structure, the faculty determines the curriculum and the process by which changes shall be made.

The makeup of the faculty has changed considerably over the past decade. The changes have reduced the student-faculty ratio and diminished the college's reliance on contingent faculty. The hiring of faculty in new tenure-track lines was a priority for the college, accomplished under two different provosts and through a variety of strategies. The incremental hires resulted in strengthening many majors and programs and also aided in the establishment of several interdisciplinary programs. The result of these changes is that the college relies less on contingent faculty and that the number of full-time tenure-track faculty has grown significantly, from 108 in 1998 to 141 in 2008. Major changes to many of the offices and other services that support both students and faculty with respect to teaching and learning have occurred in the past decade as well.

The Curriculum

General Education

Starting in 1999, Wheaton faculty members, through the Educational Policy Committee and in conjunction with the provost, undertook a two-year, thorough review of the Wheaton curriculum. The review process focused on two questions: “What will the liberally educated student of the 21st century need to be productive and successful?” and “What is the best education for the students we want to attract?” The committee assembled five teams composed of three to four faculty members each, who visited twelve other liberal arts colleges with then-recent curriculum changes to learn what guided the design of their curricula. Faculty/staff teams also attended a variety of conferences on curricular and pedagogical issues. Finally, 17 faculty “working groups” were established. These groups studied a host of issues ranging from all aspects of general education and workload to interdisciplinarity and majors. The groups then submitted “debatable proposition” proposals for each of these areas. The culmination of this process was a two-day faculty retreat in August 2001 attended by 98 percent of the continuing faculty, at which discussions led to the formation of the basic outline of the new curriculum. This basic outline was developed further by the Educational Policy Committee to become faculty legislation during the fall of 2001. The “Wheaton Curriculum” was passed by a 91-3 vote of the faculty in December 2001.

The Wheaton Curriculum, which began with the class entering in fall 2003, strives to be both more rigorous and more flexible than the former curriculum. It emphasizes that learning, discovery and problem solving require multiple perspectives. The curriculum uses a holistic and integrated approach to general education and overall learning with key initiatives like Connections, Writing across the Disciplines and Infusion. This integrated model stands in stark contrast to the traditional model of liberal arts, which is based primarily on a lengthy list of requirements with the assumption or hope that the individual student will be able to integrate knowledge from many different areas of the curriculum.

The Wheaton Curriculum is based on “Foundations,” which include courses in writing (First-Year Writing), quantitative analysis, foreign language, beyond the west and the First Year Seminar. Layered on this foundation is the unique “Connections” breadth requirement, which demands that students link courses from across traditional disciplinary boundaries to see the impact of multiple approaches to a single topic or problem. In addition the Wheaton Curriculum invests departments with responsibility for writing instruction beyond the introductory level with the “Writing across the Disciplines” (WID) initiative and also commits to “Infusion” of race/ethnicity and its intersections with class, sexuality, religion and technology throughout the curriculum. The commitment to experiential learning and the use of information technology are also present in the Wheaton Curriculum. The major remains the primary means of focusing the interests of students, developing in them the detailed knowledge and skills associated with a disciplinary (or clearly defined interdisciplinary) approach to identifying and solving problems. Each major is also required to have a culminating “capstone experience,” which has been defined differently by each major. Some majors have a senior seminar, while others have an independent research project and still others have an internship or experiential learning capstone. Through the relationship of the major to other general education initiatives, like Infusion and Connections, students will also understand the relation of their chosen major to other areas of inquiry. The Wheaton curriculum legislation required formative and summative evaluation stating, “It will be the responsibility of the Educational Policy Committee to undertake a thorough review of this curriculum in the year 2007 and report to the faculty for discussion.”

The implementation of the Wheaton curriculum was, and is, overseen by the Educational Policy Committee, working closely with a set of sub-committees formed shortly after the legislation was approved. The early work of these faculty groups was to interpret the legislation, agree on basic guidelines and create procedures for designating courses to fulfill each of the curricular requirements. Over the course of the seven years since the Wheaton Curriculum was passed, the set of sub-committees has changed to meet evolving needs.

The pages that follow describe each of the general education components, highlighting some of the successes as well as areas needing additional work, as detailed in the evaluation reports prepared by each panel and submitted to the Educational Policy Committee in 2007. These reports were summarized, and the summary was distributed to faculty in March 2008. Discussion of the data and information contained in those reports began in spring 2008 and continued throughout the 2008-2009 academic year.

First Year Seminar

This requirement did not change substantively from the former curriculum to the current one. The First-Year Seminar (FYS), required of all first year students in their first semester at Wheaton, is designed to prepare students for a successful career at Wheaton, emphasizing reading, writing, critical thinking, research, academic responsibility and the use of information technology. It allows students to participate in a small, discussion-centered course at the beginning of their academic careers, introducing them to a variety of modes of inquiry and presentation. Each seminar section centers on a disciplinary topic or theme that has “generated controversy among the scholars, policy makers, and others who have grappled with it.” Faculty from all departments participate in this course; a listing and descriptions of the 28 fall 2009 section titles can be found on the college website.

FYS also plays a crucial role in advising. The FYS faculty member serves as the formal academic advisor for the students enrolled in that section of the course. A wide variety of structures support the advising function. FYS faculty members attend two workshops run by the FYS Steering Committee that are designed to assist faculty with all aspects of the course, but especially to provide information and support related to the advising process. There is also an advising team associated with each FYS section, composed of two preceptors, students who have been trained to be peer advisors by the Advising Center, and an administrative mentor—a staff member who can assist students in navigating the administrative structures of the college. The advising relationship described above typically continues until the student declares a major, which must occur by the end of the second year. Funds are available for the FYS groups to gather for mini-reunions at the end of each academic year. This advising role is crucial as we seek ways to educate students about our curricular goals for the unique integrated and connected Wheaton curriculum. The size of the FYS enrollment has varied from 19 students per section (18.7 average in 2005) to 12 (13.3 average in 2007). Following discussion at faculty meetings, an enrollment target of 16 was established for the fall of 2009, both because some faculty members felt that a larger group enriched classroom discussions and because current budget constraints necessitated staffing adjustments.

During the past two years, FYS has also been part of a pilot program that involved pairing a section of FYS with a section of English 101. In this pilot program, several sections of FYS students in the fall remained together for their English 101 experience. This pilot project seeks to improve retention of students from the first to the second year by forming a stronger cohort. We intend to evaluate the data to see if such clustering of students into informal learning cohorts has a positive impact on retention.

Writing

Writing instruction at Wheaton is situated both within the English department and across disciplines in each department. The majority of students fulfill their writing requirement by taking First Year Writing (English 101). This course, housed in the English Department, represents only the beginning of students’ development as writers at Wheaton.

The desire to more fully integrate writing throughout the curriculum led Wheaton to make some substantial changes to the teaching of writing as part of the 2001 curriculum. In accordance with a plan developed by the English Department and external consultant Rebecca Faery of MIT, Wheaton added a director of college writing—a tenure-line position in composition and rhetoric responsible for teaching courses in writing, coordinating First-Year Writing (placement, exemption, scheduling, adjunct hiring, faculty development), and facilitating WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum) and WID (Writing in the Disciplines) through multiple approaches. Additionally, the college appointed, over the course of three years, three full-time

writing associates, professional positions with responsibility for teaching First-Year Writing and tutoring students in writing from any discipline. As well as reducing the department's reliance on adjuncts, the writing associates support the teaching and learning of writing in all disciplines.

In 2001 Wheaton replaced the previous requirement of two writing-intensive courses with a discipline-situated approach to writing that invested each department with the responsibility for, and authority to, develop its own approach for delivering writing instruction. This WID initiative represents a substantial shift in providing writing instruction beyond the first year, as it fosters students' understanding of the discourses, practices and purposes of writing in their chosen major. In a 2008 report on Wheaton's writing program, the National Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) Consultant-Evaluators described this initiative as "extraordinarily productive and worthwhile, with clear benefits to students' ability to use writing to learn and to demonstrate learning."

Faculty legislation mandates ongoing evaluation of this discipline-based approach to writing. In addition to stipulating that "[a]ll departments and programs shall provide appropriate instruction in writing," the legislation notes that "[p]rograms of writing instruction shall be periodically reviewed by the Writing Sub-Committee of the Educational Policy Committee and the Director of College Writing." All departments have submitted writing plans. These reflect the commitment of the departments to teach writing that is appropriate to the discipline and the recognition that writing is not the only means of communication in many disciplines. Many of the plans also include details of instruction in public speaking and presentation skills as well as presentation of data through means such as tables and graphs. Students learn to make rhetorically appropriate choices when they communicate in a variety of media. All of this is considered "instruction in writing."

The Writing Sub-Committee works with the college writing director on the development of individual departments' writing plans and on support for the efforts of the Filene Center for Academic Advising and Career Services to provide ongoing tutor education. Since 2003 the director of college writing and the writing associates have been responsible for annual workshops for First Year Writing faculty, faculty across the disciplines, and departments. The course required of all peer writing tutors, Peer Tutoring in Writing (Education 220) received some amplification as a result of the above changes, evolving from a half-credit to a full-credit course, thereby allowing prospective tutors more time and deeper engagement with the theories and practices of peer tutoring. Additionally, Filene Center collaborations afforded writing tutors the opportunity to engage with peer tutors from across the disciplines while also continuing their professional development after they had completed the required course in tutoring. Support for students requiring specialist instruction is also provided by the course "Basic Writing" and "Writing for Multi-Lingual Students."

First Year Writing (English 101) introduces students to some of the shared expectations of academic writing at Wheaton, while helping them to develop approaches to encountering unfamiliar genres and differing writing contexts. Each member of the English Department teaches the course, and although there is no standard syllabus, the department has established a set of shared goals and best practices for the course. These goals are posted to the writing program website, distributed to FYS advisers and sent to newly admitted students. All faculty members teaching the course gather for an annual half-day workshop to discuss teaching strategies and to identify areas of concern. Most recently, the department met for a full-day retreat to develop a separate student course evaluation that would more fully assess the extent to which the department was meeting its course-specific objectives. The WPA Consultant-Evaluators noted the department's "robust sense of shared responsibility and commitment" and affirmed the department's commitment to a diversity of approaches that allow faculty "to teach to their strengths."

All students are required to take English 101 or the equivalent during their first year at Wheaton; students who received a score of 4 or 5 on AP English may request a waiver. The number of students waiving 101 has generally increased: from 26 in 2003 to 79 in 2007-2008; in 2008-2009 the number decreased to 51, suggesting a need to develop an intermediate-level writing course so that all students are exposed to

processes of college-level writing. In response to this need, the English department will pilot “Rhetoric and Advanced Composition” (English 398) in the fall 2009 semester.

The increased structural support for writing has been essential to the college’s successful implementation of the Writing in the Disciplines program. The WPA report, while greatly impressed with Wheaton’s vision and achievements, points to some remaining areas of concern, principally regarding the category of the writing associates. The English Department, the provost, and the Educational Policy Committee will need to respond to the Writing Program Review report and its recommendations. Additional support from the Provost’s Office will be required as all departments enter a second phase of assessment in which they design plans aimed at measuring the goals and objectives that they articulated in the first wave of WID development. The Writing Sub-Committee will be able to coordinate these efforts, while the director of college writing and writing associates facilitate the work at the departmental level.

Quantitative Analysis

Faculty members shared broad agreement that numeracy was desirable and necessary to a liberal arts education. In the former curriculum, support for numeracy took the form of a “Math and Logical Reasoning” requirement. The current Wheaton curriculum also recognizes that numeracy is broader than “just mathematics” and that it is better to have students see how Quantitative Analysis (QA) applies to their own discipline than simply to take a statistics course for the sake of fulfilling a math requirement. As a result, the faculty adopted a set of guidelines that allowed courses that predominantly teach and make use of logic, abstraction/mathematical structures, statistics/data analysis or geometry/special concepts to be designated as QA. Some examples are the DNA course in the Biology Department, the “Analyzing Social Trends” course in the Sociology Department, and the “Euclid and Greek Mathematics” course in the Classics Department. In addition, several new courses in the Mathematics and Computer Science Department, such as “Computing for Poets,” “Math in Art,” and “Colorful Mathematics” were awarded the QA designation. These courses also form the basis for Connections with courses from other areas of the curriculum.

The percentage of students who rely on “Introductory Statistics” to fulfill the QA requirement but who are not required to take it for their major, has decreased from 42 percent in 2002 to 26 percent in 2007, while the number of students using that course, when it is required for their major, has remained steady at about 37 percent over that same period of time. More work remains to be done with respect to getting information to advisors, particularly those working with first and second year students, about the array of courses that are designated as QA, and to try to get students into the appropriate QA course based on the requirements for their major and/or their interests if their major does not offer a QA course.

There have also been significant improvements in the support services surrounding quantitative analysis. The college hired a director of quantitative analysis as well as QA associates. The QA associates, who are professionally trained in the application of quantitative methods across the disciplines, are a resource for both students who need help with QA and for faculty who are trying to improve the teaching of QA topics in their courses. In addition, there are peer QA tutors available to help students. The model for the support system related to quantitative analysis closely mirrors that used for writing.

Foreign Language

Students are required to take “[t]wo courses in the same language at the level appropriate for each student.” Though this requirement did not change in the current Wheaton curriculum, the importance of languages was highlighted by making it part of Foundations and by surrounding it with the Connections and a greatly enhanced global education component of the curriculum. Students can complete the requirement in more ways than ever. Instruction in Japanese was added in fall 2006, and is now offered at the introductory and intermediate levels, as are Chinese (first offered in 2002) and Arabic (started in 2007). Many questions concerning enrollment in foreign languages and their relationship to study abroad experiences were raised by the languages’ faculty members in the 2007 evaluation report. For example, how many students continue in the same language they studied in high school as compared to those who begin a new language upon entering

Wheaton? How many non-major students complete more than the required two courses? How many students study abroad in non-English speaking countries? The data necessary to answer these questions are being gathered and analyzed in an effort to understand the patterns of enrollment and determine if any adjustment is needed.

Beyond the West

Beyond the West requires students to take “one course that engages the cultures of or issues pertaining to a country, people or region historically excluded from the mainstream experience of Western Europe, the United States and Canada, or neglected by western scholarship.” This requirement resembles the non-Western requirement of the former curriculum. There was no evaluation report for Beyond the West, but approximately 100 courses have been approved by the Educational Policy Committee to carry the Beyond the West designation. These are offered in a wide variety of departments, from anthropology and astronomy to history and music. In 2008, the Educational Policy Committee responded to the relative lack of written material about Beyond the West by initiating a study of Beyond the West courses so that it could develop clear guidelines about the content needed in order for a course to receive a Beyond the West designation.

Infusion

Under our previous curriculum, Wheaton students were required to take a single course addressing cultural diversity in the United States. Infusion represented an ambitious shift, as departments now integrate the study of race and ethnicity into courses wherever feasible. Our goal, as stated in legislation, is to “emphasize the study of race/ethnicity and its intersections with gender, class, sexuality, religion and technology in the United States and globally.” Legislation also mandated resources to implement the initiative college wide, as well as to evaluate its impact on student learning. Wheaton obtained support for the Infusion initiative from both the Andrew W. Mellon and Christian A. Johnson foundations.

As a result, Wheaton has been able to devote significant resources to support departments as they have addressed the often considerable challenges of revising individual courses to realize the Infusion goals. The Mellon grant of 2002 funded study groups, conference attendance, speakers, and workshops, all initially implemented through the Infusion Sub-Committee. Between 2004 and 2008, an infusion coordinator, appointed from the faculty, has facilitated a more systematic approach. For example, the coordinators ran 45 workshops for specific departments over four years. In 2005 only five departments had Infusion plans; this number had risen to nine by 2006. As of 2008, all 22 departments had submitted reports, 21 of which detail the transformation in course content, methodology, pedagogy, and evaluative measures that are consistent with standard or emerging disciplinary practices. The reports include discipline-specific goals and objectives for Infusion, and indicate high levels of engagement with the Infusion initiative.

Departments are necessarily at different stages of implementation, since the study of race and ethnicity has not played a central role in all disciplines, making its integration especially challenging for disciplines such as the natural sciences, mathematics and computing. We now have models of good practice and success in departmental implementation from every division to move us forward. The strongest reports include the following elements: (1) a plan that systematically addresses how issues of race and ethnicity are structurally integrated so that students reliably encounter them as an embedded feature of their majors, (2) a plan for how the department will continue to strengthen its approach to Infusion—through faculty development, for example, (3) explicit learning goals and objectives that are expressed in specific disciplinary terms, (4) evidence of substantial attention to content, methodology, learning assessment and pedagogy.

We are now ready to move from implementation to consolidation by focusing curriculum transformation funds on growth and exploration in diversity education, based on stated goals and objectives. By sharing best practices Wheaton will continue to evaluate departmental progress, but we are now ready to evaluate student learning, as required by faculty legislation.

We already have quantitative data from various student data sources (SS, SSAQ, NSSE) that we expect to analyze along with qualitative data from departments about their evaluative measures of curricular diversity. In 2009 the Educational Policy Committee, working with the Infusion Sub-Committee and the Evaluation Sub-Committee, is charged with developing shared learning outcomes for Infusion that will allow us to assess student learning. The 2008 infusion coordinator's report lists shared Infusion goals emerging from the department reports and falling into the following categories: to educate in critical analysis of cultural differences; to educate in critical analysis of inequality; to subject to critical analysis the social constructions of race, ethnicity and other categories of difference; to provide more equitable educational experiences through inclusive pedagogies and methods. Out of these shared goals, we anticipate departments will be able to articulate discipline-specific outcomes.

Connections—Breadth Requirements

The Connections program highlights the intersections of disciplinary knowledge, signaling the recognition that more than one discipline or area of knowledge has significant insight into any given issue. Six distinct areas—creative arts, history, humanities, math and computer science, natural sciences, and social sciences—were designated for the purposes of connections. This aspect of the curriculum replaced the traditional breadth requirements. Each student must complete a minimum of two connections involving two courses each or one connection involving three courses. For the classes of 2009 and earlier, each Connection must cover at least two of the areas listed above. For the classes of 2010 and beyond, a two-course Connection must cover two areas and a three-course Connection must cover three areas. Students may enroll in faculty-approved connections or they may develop their own connections and submit them for approval.

To date there are 80 faculty-initiated connections (FIC) that involve 114 (81 percent) of full-time faculty. More than 250 courses are identified as connected. These FIC range from Connections that involve only two courses to Connections that involve as many as ten courses, from which a student must choose groups of two or three. At present 40 percent of FICs include at least one course from the science division (including Math/CS). Additionally, the number of student-initiated connections (SIC) receiving Educational Policy approval has grown dramatically, from 49 SIC proposals during the 2005-2006 academic year, to 115 in 2006-2007 and 156 in 2007-2008. Since inception, 495 SIC have been implemented. This rapid increase required more and more of the committee's time, resulting in a delay of policy discussions. To handle this juggernaut, the Connections Sub-Committee was reformed in fall 2008 with one of its primary responsibilities to be the evaluation of SIC proposals.

Connections is the most evaluated part of the curriculum. There are multiple data categories related to initiative that have been gathered by the Curriculum Evaluation Sub-Committee over the past several years, including student surveys, faculty surveys, focus group interviews and case studies. Most of these data were gathered in conjunction with the Brett Consulting Group, yielding Connections success stories as well as areas needing redress.

Understanding Connections: Survey data from 2006-2007 showed that student understanding of the purposes of Connections was growing, although only about half of the students were "very clear" about them. The extent of clarity increases with class year (first year students, 39 percent; seniors, 62 percent). About two-thirds of faculty members were "very clear" at that time about what it means for a course to be connected. Students use multiple means to obtain information about Connections, including faculty advisors, the Connections web pages and preceptors. Students consider all these sources only "somewhat helpful" at best, with the web pages deemed most helpful, but they have expressed a desire for more current information, such as a list of which Connections courses are being offered during upcoming semesters. These data suggest that all faculty members, but especially those who advise first year students, need to clearly and effectively articulate the purpose and value of Connections. The Registrar's Office has reviewed and revised information on the web to ensure that there is a clear and consistent message about Connections in relation to the rest of the curriculum. That office has also inventoried and made the appropriate changes to print materials and online tools, such as the catalog, curriculum maps/guides and the degree audit functions, to ensure that a common vocabulary is used across departments when referring to divisional requirements, areas and

Connections. These changes should increase consistency in the description of Connections as well as student understanding of this important aspect of the curriculum.

Fulfilling Connections: Students tend to fulfill their Connections requirement late in their education. Connections do not appear prominently on most first-year students' radar screens as freshmen fulfill other foundation requirements first. Although three-quarters of responding juniors had completed at least one full Connection, only one third had completed two by spring of their junior year. Students report that interest is an important motivating factor in their initial choice of a particular Connection, with a majority saying they would have taken at least one of the courses anyway. That said, about 70 percent of students report that fitting courses into their schedules is "somewhat of a factor" in the ultimate choice of a Connection and that the frequency of some connected course offerings is also problematic. Increasing numbers of students are using SICs to fulfill the Connections requirement. Some report this as a way to fulfill Connections without leaving their comfort zone. The number of new FICs grew steadily for the first four years under the current curriculum, but has dropped off considerably during the past year. To encourage faculty development of new Connections, Wheaton held a May workshop featuring successful Connections and their instructors. These professors shared with their colleagues the collaborative techniques that they had used to emphasize the links between their courses. Building on the success of this workshop, we initiated a program of Summer Conversations in the summer of 2009, with the intention of identifying best practices for building cross-disciplinary intellectual bridges through Connections; 40 faculty members have participated and will report on their findings. However, we still need ways of motivating and sustaining the initiation of Connections. The development of tools, such as a website listing new courses and their descriptions, could aid both new faculty and continuing faculty in forming Connections by noting faculty with similar interests. This type of work could reside with the newly re-formed Connections Sub-Committee.

In addition to developing new FICs, we must seek to better understand why some FICs have been taken only infrequently by students. We will review the role of "mega connections," those in which students have six or more courses to choose among. While these Connections do provide flexibility in scheduling, students are often not clear about how the courses are truly connected, and faculty report that joint planning decreases when a particular course is connected to three or more other courses. A discussion of the pros and cons of mega connections was started at the April 2008 faculty meeting, but more work remains to be done to ensure that this component of our curriculum embodies the reflexivity that we so deeply value.

Student Outcomes: The majority of students report positive gains from their Connections courses—whether exposure to new ideas or points of view (32 percent), a better understanding of the relationship between two subjects (20 percent), or some more fundamental insight about the connectedness of ideas in general (10 percent). About two-thirds of the students who completed a Connection (either FIC or SIC) reported that what they gained from the Connection was more a result of their own initiative than the initiative of the faculty teaching the courses. This finding suggests that students do accept their role in maximizing this aspect of the curriculum, and that faculty could be more explicit about indicating that a course is part of an FIC and what this means. Most of the remaining group (35 percent) viewed Connections as "another requirement needed for graduation." For students not majoring in science, science Connections appear to have piqued their interest in that particular topic (for about half) and in science in general (for about one third). Students report becoming more interested in science when it was connected to something in which they were interested. Those students completing an SIC indicated they valued and learned from the experience of proposing a Connection, and many say they have encouraged other students to do the same.

From the data gathered in the Connections surveys, focus groups and case studies, some common themes surrounding student learning outcomes were articulated by the Curriculum Evaluation Sub-Committee, which shared five general learning outcomes related to Connections at an April 2008 faculty meeting. We are in the process of working with the faculty to develop a broader consensus about these learning outcomes. The sub-committee, working with the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and outside experts, can then develop tools to measure our success with respect to the outcomes. Clearly funding will be needed for this enterprise.

Backup for Science Breadth: If in the course of completing Connections a student has not taken at least one course in each of the three traditional academic divisions—arts and humanities, social science, and natural science—the student must take additional courses until one has been taken in each. The only area we will discuss in this self study is natural science. We are confident, based on evidence from the registrar, that the vast majority of students are taking multiple courses in the social sciences and arts and humanities and that students taking only one course in these areas are not waiting until late in their careers to take them. This reflects national student enrollment trends.

For the sciences, Connections with the breadth backup represents a dramatic shift in requirements. Under the former curriculum, students were required to take two science courses, at least one of which had a laboratory component. Under the current Wheaton curriculum, this requirement was decreased to one course. We were confident that, through Connections, advising, and the development of new and exciting courses, students would take more than one science course.

As a result of the change in curriculum, faculty in the sciences seized the opportunity to change, and in many cases dramatically improve, the pedagogy of science courses taken for general education. The very large (80- to 100-person enrollment) lecture-only courses that fulfilled the former requirement have been eliminated, as the sciences faculty committed themselves to offering hands-on experience in every course that could fulfill the requirement. In many courses these experiences take the form of the traditional laboratory sections, but in others they assume the form of field trips to gather primary data for analysis in the course. Still other faculty members have experimented with the studio or lecture/laboratory combined model, where the boundaries between lecture and laboratory are blurred or disappear completely. This migration away from large, lecture-only courses is meant to show students that science is a way of doing as much as a way of knowing.

To be sure, the dramatic changes described above have not come without difficulty. The data from two years of seniors, the classes of 2007 and 2008, show trends in student enrollment that are puzzling, if not discouraging. On average, about 75 percent of students not majoring in the sciences took only one science course. Further, over 40 percent of the non-science majors took that single science course in their senior year. This delay obviously precludes taking additional courses in science. Faculty in the sciences and the Evaluation Sub-Committee are in the process of gathering additional data to understand why so many students are waiting until their senior year to take their science course. This postponement could be the result of growing pains related to the transition from the old requirement, under which some students still needed to take two science courses. At the same time, class sizes were reduced to accommodate new pedagogies, thus resulting in a log jam of students needing to fulfill the science requirement. It is also possible that advising is more critical in the Wheaton curriculum than it was in the old curriculum and that the advising process is not working as well as it should. To address this possibility, a workshop on advising in the sciences was given in spring 2007. Those who attended found a wealth of useful information about how to direct or advise non-science majors into science courses based on their interests, and about the support systems available to students enrolled in science courses. We now need to get that information out to all faculty members, especially those who are teaching First Year Seminar sections. The important message here is that we have identified a problem with enrollment trends of non-science students in science courses, that we are taking steps to understand fully the inherent issues, and that we are making adjustments so that the sciences are more accessible to all students. Additionally, we need more information about the positive influences that encourage some students to take more than one science course to see if some best practices can be developed from those success stories.

The Major

Wheaton students have the opportunity to concentrate in one of 34 disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary majors. Despite limitations of size and resources, Wheaton has been responsive to new developments in knowledge, learning, and student interest. Departments' experience in working across disciplinary boundaries and perspicacious use of hiring opportunities have served us well, allowing us to add four new majors since 1999: African, African American and Diaspora Studies; ancient studies; bioinformatics; and

theatre and dance studies. Wheaton has not simply added majors; where the directions of disciplines have changed departments have restructured some majors and discontinued others, such as the discontinuation of the major in social psychology.

Wheaton students declare their major by the end of the sophomore year, although many choose to declare much earlier. On declaration, they receive a faculty advisor in their major area, who plays a central role in course selection and support for learning until (and frequently after) graduation. The majors vary in their structure and sequencing in accordance with the practices of their disciplines, but faculty legislation sets a common framework (a minimum of 9 courses at least 3 of which must be at or above the 300 level). This framework is designed to enable the student to develop discipline-specific skills and knowledge culminating in a required Capstone experience. Major and minor requirements are well advertised and available in multiple web and text form, including the course catalog, Academic Advising materials, and major web pages, which are regularly updated. The majority of the majors (28 out of 34) report that they have shared learning goals. These goals are conveyed to students through a variety of methods, including the catalog, department web pages, syllabi, departmental writing plans, advising materials, and advising meetings. Fewer departments, however, have systematically developed materials to help students understand how the goals and learning objectives for their major programs are met. In the small liberal arts college setting, this work is done individually with students. The Educational Policy Committee recognizes that there is work to be done to share models already used by some departments.

The Capstone takes a variety of forms, ranging from a seminar, which is used most frequently, to internships, the thesis, portfolios, and performances (see Major Survey/E Forms). The Educational Policy Committee's 2008 Summary Report on the Curriculum recommended that departments develop and publish explicit learning goals for their Capstone experiences, as well as articulate the relationship between learning in the major and the general education curriculum. A workshop was held in May 2009 to begin this process; 24 participants from almost every major attended and shared information about the format of their major's capstone. Students are also offered a variety of opportunities for independent work in the major, ranging from independent study courses to internships and service learning projects, summer research opportunities with faculty members, and the honors thesis.

The Wheaton Curriculum makes significant demands on departments and majors. Wherever possible, the Educational Policy Committee implements the revised general education curriculum through departments and majors to realize the goals of integrating general education with the disciplines and fostering multidisciplinary learning. This strategy has been very successful and is especially important as the college looks to sustain its curriculum in the present economic environment. Infusion and writing provide very clear examples of this success. Each department has published its approach to teaching writing within the discipline, and every department prepared a report on Infusion. This effort is visible, too, in a series of initiatives concerning the departmental role in student learning in the areas of experiential, science, global, technology, and quantitative analysis. For example, all the department chairs in the natural sciences, together with the chair of psychology, attended an AAC&U Institute on Engaging Departments during the summer of 2009, as a way of exploring and making more explicit student learning outcomes for the sciences. This will allow them to better support students who take science for general education purposes, as well as their majors. Departments have also played a critical role in supporting Connections, as students regularly complete this requirement in their junior and senior years, actively looking to explore links between their chosen field of concentration and other disciplines. The design and implementation of the curriculum ensure that our general education goals are met within the major while simultaneously inculcating students' understanding of the relationship of the major to other areas of inquiry.

Departments and major coordinators use their regular meetings to engage in discussion and development of their concentrations and the relationship of these to the general education curriculum, and many make active use of internal and peer data from the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. Departments also take advantage of a slot held for departments in the May faculty workshop schedule to review aspects of their major concentrations. Ten departments have had external reviews since 2006, and the remaining departments

are scheduled for review over the next four years. The Educational Policy Committee and Institutional Research and Assessment gather and review data on the majors. With the Provost's Office, the committee initiates events and activities relevant across majors. Examples of this work include the capstone workshop, participation in AAC&U conferences and institutes, and special initiatives such as Wheaton's proposed participation in the University of Wollongong's International Benchmarking of Academic Standards project, which is focused on learning in the major.

Academic Support Structures

The development and implementation of the new Wheaton Curriculum not only led faculty to revise existing courses and pedagogy, as well as create new courses, but it also inspired the establishment of new academic support programs and significant restructuring of existing departments within academic affairs. The goal of these administrative changes has been to collaborate with faculty in facilitating new curricular offerings and support students in making the most of the opportunities that the college offers.

Library and Information Technology

The first of the structural changes involved the combining of three distinct, formerly autonomous groups — the library, academic computing, and information technology and services—into a single unit called Library and Information Services. This combination is a concrete manifestation of our recognition that although information and its access and use have changed over the past decades, they are inextricably linked to the print materials and information traditionally housed in a library. Standard Seven, Library and Information Resources, describes not only our physical resources but also the ways we introduce information literacy into the curriculum.

Advising, Experiential and Collaborative Learning

A second major restructuring involved the Academic Advising Office, the Filene Center for Work and Learning, and the Kollett Center for Collaborative Learning into a single unit now called The Filene Center for Academic Advising and Career Services. In July 2007 the three formerly independent offices were merged and relocated into Kollett Hall, a wing of the Science Center. There are four functional units within the "new" Filene Center: Academic Advising, Career Services, Disability Services, and Tutoring/Academic Resources.

The college's strategic plan calls for the independent centers to develop and begin implementation of a plan, by 2009, to educate students about the services available to them in the centers, and to enable all students to access the resources of the centers. It also calls for the implementation of a system to document and evaluate the use of the centers. These charges from the strategic plan helped to focus the work of the new center during the first two years of its existence.

Mark Hoesly was hired, beginning July 15, 2007, to be the dean of this new enterprise, supervising a staff of nine professional employees (two associate/class deans, an assistant dean for disability services, five career services professionals, and a half-time coordinator of the tutoring program) and three administrative support staff members. Although there was initial resistance to the merger and reorganization of the centers, recent staffing changes and the passage of time have helped turn that resistance into support for the synergy and improved student services the Filene Center now provides. The staff members engaged in a deliberative process to develop a common vision, mission, and goals and to identify the new center with a new logo, signage, and website. Career Services has been reorganized so that each advisor is assigned to serve as liaison to the faculty and students majoring in each of the academic divisions. Each advisor is now also responsible each year for outreach to a designated segment of the first year class. New strategies (e.g., brochures, newspaper advertisements, Facebook ads, etc.) for educating students about the resources available in the center will be utilized in the 2009-2010 academic year.

During 2008-2009, the staff of the center began collecting and compiling data on the usage of the various components of the now merged center. In the past, the former dean of the Filene Center for Work and

Learning had estimated that the center worked with roughly half of the Wheaton student body and spoke of finding a way to serve the “missing 800.” In our first full year of collecting data on every student contact, the staff of the center met with 1,165 students, or 75 percent of Wheaton’s 1,550 students in 4,511 advising contacts. These figures do not include more than 2,600 peer tutoring contacts or almost 400 student contacts in workshops and information sessions. The missing 800 have become the missing 385.

The staff of the center identifies a number of primary reasons for initial contact with students, and such contacts, in two-thirds of the cases, become relationships that keep students returning to the center. The center is well known for advising Wheaton students on how to apply for and win national scholarships and fellowships at a rate rivaling virtually any other small liberal arts colleges. One reason for Wheaton’s success is that the college provides generous financial support for students undertaking meaningful and often transformative summer experiences through the Wheaton Scholars, the Wheaton Fellows, and the Davis International Fellows programs, all of which are administered by the Filene Center. These opportunities provide Wheaton students with experiences that make them very competitive on the national level. Other reasons that the students come to the center include reflection upon and discussion of students’ life experiences and future plans, the resolution of issues related to academic policy or procedure, academic support, and accommodation of documented disabilities.

An important program that the center coordinates with help from the faculty is the annual Academic Festival in the spring. For eighteen years, the Academic Festival has served as a celebration of Wheaton’s scholarship and creativity. In profound ways, the students and faculty members who participate in the Academic Festival demonstrate the extraordinary intellectual and creative possibilities provided by Wheaton’s learning environment and reaffirm the significance of a liberal arts education. Approximately 160 to 180 students participate in the festival each year through dance performances, voice and instrumental recitals, an exhibition of visual arts, readings of poetry, creative and dramatic writing, paper presentations, panel and roundtable discussions, and poster presentations. In 2009, 18 members of the faculty representing 10 different academic departments also participated. In the spring of 2009, more than 65 students were involved in exhibitions or performances in the arts and an additional 95 students presented their research in virtually every discipline offered at the college.

Each year, approximately 160-170 students are employed as peer tutors in the Filene Center for Academic Advising and Career Services. Tutors are recommended by members of the faculty in every department and receive initial and ongoing training to become more skilled tutors throughout the year. Important changes with respect to the administration of peer tutoring have occurred in the last ten years. Formerly, peer tutoring occurred within various departments and, with the exception of writing tutors, did not include any formal training of tutors. Now all tutoring has become centralized under a single coordinator of tutoring. As in the past, writing tutors still must successfully complete a full-credit course in peer tutoring to be eligible to become tutors; now, tutors in other content areas must participate in an orientation workshop and attend training workshops during the course of the year. Math tutors must also meet monthly with a QA Associate.

Through the consolidation of peer tutoring there was also a shift in mission. Formerly, tutors tended to see themselves (and to be seen) as “mini-teachers” (to borrow a phrase from writing theorist Ken Bruffee). Now, the tutors have begun to realize their mission as co-learners who model approaches to thinking and discovering, rather than as students who simply appear to have the answers. All of the tutors regularly meet and discuss the challenges and rewards of being peer tutors; some of these meetings occur in face-to-face workshops, while others have taken place through Blackboard discussion posts in an electronic environment. In this way the peer tutors have begun to form their own intellectual community of reflective learners.

The development of the part-time coordinator of tutoring position also allowed us to gather data more systematically. The college purchased Accutrak software that enabled us to collect information about the kinds, lengths and number of tutorials and the demographics of the students seeking tutoring. In the future we hope that the position will serve as a means of faculty outreach and education. We will need to secure resources in order to ensure that this crucial position becomes permanent.

Center for Global Education

Founded in 2001, the Center for Global Education (CGE) has progressed from a one-person office into a fully staffed center with a home in the Davis International House and adjacent buildings. The mission of the center is to provide leadership on global initiatives by helping to shape an internationalized curriculum; implementing programs of study that prepare students to be globally competent; and supporting faculty who seek opportunities to generate international teaching and research connections. Started with generous grants from the Shelby Cullom Davis Foundation, Diana Davis Spencer '60, and Sukey Nichols Wagner '56, the center's operational budget is now supported through a combination of this original endowment and the annual budget of the college, as the center is an integral part of its mission. On June 1, 2004, the Board of Trustees approved a resolution directing that the dean's position be designated as the Mildred H. Bray '30 Endowed Chair in order to ensure appropriate leadership toward the goal of establishing a global perspective throughout the curriculum. Today, the center fosters academic study through real-world experience in over 70 study-abroad programs, fieldwork opportunities and internships. In addition the CGE supports international student and faculty services, and provides a home to the college's foreign language teaching assistants in residence. The CGE also supports an array of programs and activities designed to "bring the world to Wheaton." In 2006, the CGE broke new ground by offering for the first time the course, EDUC 225 "Global Education for Intercultural Competence." The purpose of this course is to provide linkage between students' experience overseas and the campus community. The course is seated in the understanding that our past, present and future raise questions that can only be understood when we look beyond our borders.

Study Abroad: When the center was first established, a decision was made to allow all forms of financial aid to "follow" the students participating on Wheaton-approved study abroad programs. In addition, Wheaton decided to provide support for airfare. These two decisions were intended to erase financial and geographic obstacles and allow all Wheaton students who met the minimum academic requirements to engage with the world through an international experience. Since that time the number of students studying abroad has steadily increased, now exceeds 200 students, or close to 50 percent of the junior class, who participate in semester-length programs. While affiliated with partner institutions in over 30 countries, Wheaton also participates directly in three consortium programs. Our programs in Mexico, Spain and Germany require substantial commitment on the part of our faculty members who regularly serve as resident directors and campus coordinators. In partnership with colleges including Vanderbilt, Oberlin, Wellesley, Smith and Wesleyan, Wheaton supports more than 60 students a year through these three programs. Furthermore, through the dedication of our faculty and with grant support (from the Alice F. Emerson Global Awareness Fund, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and the Shelby Cullom Davis Foundation) an additional number of students have been able to participate in short-term faculty-led programs. Since 2004 over 200 Wheaton students have accompanied faculty members to locations such as Greece, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Botswana and Bhutan to study topics as diverse as bronze-age archaeology, religion, education, political science, environmental science and social change.

International Student and Faculty Services: Conscious admissions outreach supported by an expansion of international student services is the basis for the increase in the number of international students over the last four years—from 40 in 2003 to about 150 today, representing 12 percent of the student body. The center serves as a hub for international students who seek advise about immigration and visa issues as well as a safe zone for discussions on issues of cultural adjustment and a home base for informal gatherings. Student services and the presence of international faculty members allow students to feel at home as they pursue their academic careers. Increased funding to support international students has served the double purpose of generating greater opportunities for students from a broader range of international locations while creating a more diverse student body.

Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program: Through an array of exchange agreements, targeted funding and fellowships, Wheaton College brings to campus six teaching assistants from Italy, France, Germany, Argentina, Russia and Spain. These graduate students spend the year supporting a wide array of language programs both in the classroom and through sponsored activities. As resident teaching assistants,

they receive housing, meals, airfare and a stipend and are allowed to enroll in courses. These TAs fill an essential role in Wheaton's foreign language teaching.

International Programming: Every year the center supports a number of globally oriented events and activities. Some, such as the international student fair and "Eye on the World" photography contest, are annual events. Others are proposed by faculty and students and funded by the college. Annually the "Worldfest" fund provides \$10,000 for speakers, visiting scholars and musicians, and for events designed to generate global understanding. Recent events and activities include: The Panberi Steel Drum Orchestra; Wheaton's World Dance Program: Experience West African Dance & Drumming; an anti-apartheid lecture series by Penny Siopis and "Platanos and Collard Greens," a Wheaton College experimental theater presentation.

Davis United World College Affiliation: Wheaton accepts students from the United World College (UWC) network of 12 two-year international baccalaureate institutions on five continents dedicated to creating peace and understanding through education. Supported by the Davis United World College Scholars Program funded by Mr. and Mrs. Shelby C. Davis, in conjunction with Wheaton College, these students come from around the world and enhance the global community on campus. In the fall of 2008, through a generous gift from Diana Davis Spencer '60, the Center for Global Education organized a three-day retreat for UWC students attending schools across the northeast United States. Approximately 50 students from over 30 countries attended this event, which featured speakers from as far away as Nepal and was built around the theme of social entrepreneurship. Energized by the success of this inaugural retreat, students are already planning a similar event for next year.

Marshall Center for Intercultural Learning

The Marshall Center serves the campus by providing academic, social, cultural, and co-curricular programs and services that support the college's academic mission. The center's aim is to provide the college with an inclusive and diversified approach to educating Wheaton students, each of whom contributes to creating and sustaining a truly multicultural community. In conjunction with faculty, staff and students, the center is dedicated to providing leadership, education, support and resources around issues of diversity and inclusiveness. The center operates under the guidance of the Office of the Provost and collaborates closely with the Filene Center and Student Affairs, bridging the academic and social lives of students. Its activities are described more fully in Standard Six: Students.

Academic Standards

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit

The Bachelor of Arts degree awarded by Wheaton College is appropriately named as it embodies all the elements that contribute to creating a well-rounded graduate. Our A.B. degree, designed to be completed in four years, incorporates a general education component composed of arts/humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and mathematics, as well as opportunity for in-depth study in a major, culminating in a capstone experience. Our graduation rate is published on the web and is therefore available to the public.

We provide appropriate and accurate information about requirements for graduation in both electronic and print form. Information regarding the academic standing of students and the readmission process as well as the terms for suspending or terminating a student is outlined in the college catalog. The Committee on Academic Standing (CAS), which includes the dean of students, the two associate deans of advising, the registrar, three faculty members, and two non-voting student representatives from the Educational Council of the Student Government Association, has oversight over student progress. CAS conducts academic review of all students each semester, and makes decisions about those students who fail to stay in good academic standing. The committee also has responsibility for making recommendations to the faculty concerning academic standards, such as standards for honors and policies concerning low grades. Exceptions to general requirements are decided upon by CAS; however, the option of granting an Incomplete to a student is governed by clear guidelines in faculty legislation. The oversight of granting Incompletes rests with the

Filene Center for Academic Advising and Career Services. All grade changes submitted after final grades are posted are accepted only with a rationale for the change from the faculty member.

Both students and advisors can track academic progress by consulting our online degree audit, which outlines a student's progress toward the degree for both major and institutional requirements. At the end of the semester, each department chair is provided with a "grade distribution" report summarizing the grades awarded by each faculty member in the department. This allows chairs to review grading trends over time.

Students diligently continue to foster an appreciation for the importance of the college's Honor Code, which originates from the constitution of the Student Government Association, is incorporated into faculty legislation, and is the basis for all policy concerning students' academic integrity. Standard Ten: Integrity discusses the Honor Code in detail, while Standard Five: Faculty describes faculty involvement with the Honor Code.

Calendar and Schedule

The two-semester calendar, as voted upon by the faculty, complies with the federally mandated guidelines of a minimum of 16 weeks of instruction and exams. This academic calendar as well as the catalog and the semester's schedule of courses are available on the college's website. Academic departments are encouraged to build their roster of courses for as many future semesters as possible in order to facilitate planning and advising; however, this task remains difficult for most departments because of the fluidity of faculty schedules and various course releases.

Some departments consider our weekly schedule inadequate for their needs. Although the schedule provides for both 50-minute and 80-minute class meeting times, some departments would prefer to have more 80-minute slots. Additionally, some students indicate that they cannot get into the classes they want/need, owing to enrollment caps and conflicts that arise from too many courses taught at the same time or the shortage of classrooms. In response to this shared frustration with the existing schedule, some faculty members have suggested that we look at an alternative schedule in the near future. In the spring of 2009, a uniform policy for the capping of course enrollment was established by the Committee on Educational Policy in consultation with chairs of all departments.

Recruitment and Retention

With the arrival of our the director of institutional research and assessment, and a renewed interest from the Committee on Academic Standing, our practices relative to recruiting and retaining qualified students are undergoing review. Renewed efforts include using data about our students from the clearinghouse more effectively, returning to our practice of obtaining basic information from students considering transfer and looking more strategically at our existing institutional survey data. The new provost and dean of students are planning to re-constitute a cross-divisional "Retention Committee."

Transfer Credit Policies

Transfer credit policies have been established by faculty committees and faculty legislation. In order to maintain the integrity of the Wheaton degree, the faculty has approved faculty legislation that clearly specifies the limits and restrictions relative to the curriculum and degree. For example, only one half (16 courses) of a student's total courses may be completed off campus, only one half (typically 5 or 6 courses) of a major may be completed off campus, and Distribution and Connections requirements may not be completed off campus.

All institutions, programs and courses in which students enroll in the U.S. and abroad are subject to content review and credit approval prior to enrollment. Students must enroll in institutions that are recognized by a U.S. accrediting body, or are recognized degree-granting institutions of higher education in the host country. Appropriate academic departments, the Filene Center for Academic Advising and Career Services and the Center for Global Education review programs, institutions and all courses. The academic departments are

responsible for the approval of transfer work. Once we have determined that the host institution is regionally accredited, the content, duration and applicability of the course to the Wheaton degree is evaluated by the appropriate department chair. The policies and practices relative to awarding transfer credit are available on the college's website. The actual credit awarded is based on a calculation that weighs the credits earned at the host institution against our 4-credit course system.

No credit toward graduation is awarded for pre-collegiate level or remedial work designed to prepare the student for collegiate study. However, in an effort to enhance the fall semester for some of the students admitted for January, we have articulated a roster of courses offered in London, England, through an NYU exchange program. This semester of course work, completed before the student arrives at Wheaton, provides the students admitted at mid-year the opportunity to finish in May with their cohort class. This program of study is clearly promoted and coordinated by our Admission Office.

Domestic Study

Wheaton students may study away in an established domestic off-campus study program, take courses outside of Wheaton, or take courses through cross-registration opportunities.

There are six established and pre-approved off-campus domestic programs. The course content of four (Marine Biological Laboratory, National Theatre Institute, Williams-Mystic Maritime Studies Program, and Salt Institute for Documentary Studies) has been approved by faculty as part of the conditions for joining the programs as members. For the other two (Washington Semester Away and Twelve College Exchange), students must meet with a faculty member to discuss the specific course content at that institution in order to receive college credit toward the major.

Although the administration of our joint degree and dual degree programs is housed in the Filene Center for Academic Advising and Career Services, a faculty member from the appropriate department is considered the academic liaison for the program. There are a total of six dual degree programs, the most popular being the graduate degree in marketing communication from Emerson University and the engineering program with Dartmouth College. Our records indicate a very solid success rate of completions. Currently, students are enrolled or completing programs in engineering, optometry, and communications. A comprehensive review of our existing programs took place two years ago.

The awarding of credit for courses that are not part of an established program is contingent upon the student's presenting a course description to the appropriate department chair for review and approval.

Overseas Study Opportunities

The Center for Global Education is the administrative hub for all international experiences for which students are approved to receive academic credit towards the degree program, major and minor fields of study. Program structure and governance are defined in three models: (1) direct partnerships with overseas institutions of higher education, (2) membership in consortia, which offer established programs combining university integration, with program courses; and (3) center-based programs, generally thematically defined, through the sponsorship of an accredited U.S. college or university.

New Wheaton program affiliations are developed in collaboration with faculty and often involve faculty/staff site visits to evaluate all aspects of the in-country program, including academic structure and courses, facilities, research and library resources and other academic support services. New international program proposals are reviewed and approved by the faculty Global Advisory Committee. The dean and associate director for global education work closely with appropriate department chairs in reviewing the degree, credit and grading systems of overseas universities and institutions of higher education to determine the articulation of credit transfer back to Wheaton. Where appropriate, the dean or the associate director for global education and faculty participate in program governance through membership on executive boards and committees of programs.

For every Wheaton overseas program, the CGE maintains guidelines for credit evaluation, the awarding of credit, grading scales and equivalencies. Students are given this information in pre-departure sessions. All overseas credit transfer is approved by faculty and evaluated within the CGE. The award of credit is processed in the Office of the Registrar. For students who have not received pre-approval, credit is not guaranteed. Upon the student's return to campus, the program and courses completed are reviewed under the same criteria and process.

There is a well-defined advising and application process, which all students must follow to receive approval to study abroad on a Wheaton or non-Wheaton program. The Center for Global Education maintains a web-based database identifying all pre-approved courses, which is updated twice annually. This information is available online to all students, faculty and advisors. Students are required to work closely with faculty advisors as they develop a written plan of study (in the form of a petition), specifying courses to be taken and the way these courses will support and integrate into the students' academic goals and degree program. The plan of study and all courses must be reviewed and approved by the major advisors, as well as other appropriate faculty/department chairs if a course lies outside the major field. Students are encouraged to consult their major advisors throughout the period of overseas study. Mandatory pre-departure orientations include presentations on academic expectations. Students are informed that all course changes must be reported to faculty for review and approval, and these are sent to the Center for Global Education. This process is handled via electronic communication, which becomes a critical advising tool between faculty and students. At the end of the period of study, upon receipt of the official transcript of overseas study, the associate dean in the Center for Global Education, working in collaboration with the Office of the Registrar, conducts the final evaluation to determine course credit awards, as approved by Wheaton faculty.

Wheaton faculty-led, short-term overseas programs are offered in January and in summer through the Center for Global Education. Guidelines and support are provided by the Center for Global Education to faculty who wish to develop this kind of course offering. All courses are reviewed and approved by the Educational Policy Committee.

Credit for Internships, Independent Study and Service Learning

Internships: Credit for overseas and domestic internship programs must be pre-approved by Wheaton academic departments. The internship must be linked to an academic program course, which requires written work to be evaluated by a faculty member at the host program or institution. In the case of studio art, majors are required to present portfolio work for review upon return from a visual arts program.

For Wheaton courses with an internship component, credit is awarded when the internship is embedded within the course and the student's learning is evaluated by the course faculty member. The design of these courses is approved through the Educational Policy Committee. The amount of credit for each course is determined by committee.

Credit for internship experience, whether domestic or overseas, is not uniformly approved by Wheaton departments. The Educational Policy Committee will review the question of whether a uniform policy is desirable. The Experiential Teaching and Learning Sub-Committee of the Educational Policy Committee has drafted "Experiential Teaching and Learning Guidelines," that will be brought forward for discussion and action by the Educational Policy Committee. Once approved, these guidelines will be available for faculty on the web.

Experiential and Service Learning: Wheaton does not accept academic or other forms of credit for experiential learning, whether this occurs prior to a student's entering the college or once he or she matriculates. All entering students receive an Academic Planning Guide that outlines this policy by supplying a list of programs that are experiential or non-collegiate in character that will not receive credit at Wheaton (for example: CLEP, NOLS, etc.).

Independent Study: Students are awarded credit for Independent Study (course codes 299, 399, and 499) that allows for sustained work on a specialist topic agreed upon between the student and a faculty member. The opportunity for guided study or research is valued as part of Wheaton's emphasis on student involvement in faculty scholarship and research. No set guidelines exist for the Independent Study, although many departments require a proposal before approving such study. In order to ensure consistency of credit, the Educational Policy Committee should consider developing guidelines based on current best practices.

Assessment of Student Learning

Assessment is a priority for both administration and faculty at Wheaton, mandated by faculty in the legislation for the revised curriculum, and named as a strategic planning priority. Wheaton identified "Demonstrating Success" as one of its three implementation priorities for Vision 2014: "Wheaton focuses on student learning, development and change, and provides evidence of institutional effectiveness" ("Transforming Lives to Change the World"). As noted in Standard Five, faculty legislation requires that student evaluations be conducted for all courses. In addition to reading these evaluations and revising courses as appropriate, Wheaton faculty members engage in other learning assessments regularly, modifying assignments and exams, conferring with students and redesigning syllabi based on student performance. As at many small colleges, this well-founded trust in the individual faculty member's ability to assess learning has slowed our move toward institutional assessment, though the past decade has brought much progress.

Since its last self-study Wheaton has begun cultivating values-informed assessments that are learning-centered, collaborative and reflexive. A full-scale curriculum review in 2001, the implementation of the new curriculum in 2003, and the development of a new strategic plan have helped us to evolve systematic approaches to gathering, interpreting and sharing data in the service of curricular transformation. Our focus has largely been on formative measures that have engaged faculty and other stakeholders. With the completion of the interim review in 2007, Wheaton is now developing summative assessments of student learning.

Responsibility for the systematic assessment of student learning rests with the Educational Policy Committee, which includes the provost and the president. In spring 2008, the President's Coordinating Council, which oversaw Wheaton's progress toward realizing its strategic goals, defined priorities and implementation stages or "milestones" for the curriculum. Within that framework, derived from many meetings over three years, the Educational Policy Committee carries out its responsibilities for assessing the extent to which progress toward the milestones is being achieved.

Since 2002 the Educational Policy Committee has delegated responsibility for curriculum assessment to a faculty-chaired Curriculum Evaluation Sub-Committee (CES). This broad-based committee includes faculty from each division, the chair of the Educational Policy Committee, the registrar, a student and staff from the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and the Filene Center for Academic Advising and Career Services. In 2008-2009 the chair of the Curriculum Evaluation Sub-Committee (CES) also served as curriculum coordinator and a member of the interim provost's team. CES works closely with all the Educational Policy sub-committees to include a wide group of faculty members in assessment.

The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment supports the work of the Evaluation Sub-Committee to implement, improve, and report college assessment activities. IRA also consults with faculty and departments interested in using student survey data to evaluate their programs. In 2006, the appointment of a director for institutional research and assessment helped to prioritize curriculum assessment in the overall responsibilities of the office. IRA has made significant strides in regularizing institutional data collection and analysis, clarifying the relevance of data to the college's assessment needs, and sharing data more effectively with a range of internal and external constituencies. The close working relationship between CES and IRA ensures that relevant data about the effectiveness of the curriculum are available to all administrative groups, committees, departments and programs.

Resources are a significant concern for the IRA office, as the budget cannot adequately support its present work, with the result that difficult decisions must be made about the frequency with which major surveys are administered. It is also difficult to support special projects and staff training. Funding constraints are an even greater concern for the development of assessment strategies for student outcomes. Currently, the IRA office primarily collects data offering indirect measures of student learning. The absence of direct data and personnel to work one-on-one with academic departments and individual faculty is an obstacle to future developments, and this matter should be addressed for both the short and medium term. Optimally, the college would add a staff member able to work on student learning outcomes assessment. If this proves impossible, the college needs to find other ways to address the gap if we are to make further progress in direct assessment of student learning.

In 2002, the Education Policy Committee charged CES with supplying data that would inform the interim 2007-2008 curriculum review. The sub-committee extended its role considerably, running a series of workshops aimed at engaging faculty in curriculum assessment; sending representatives to conferences on educational assessment run by AAC&U, NEEAN, and Hamilton College's annual colloquium on liberal arts assessment; collaborating with other committees and individuals to define learning goals; designing and implementing a two-year Connections assessment; and collaborating with Educational Policy Committee in drafting the interim report. CES has also worked closely with the provost, the president and the President's Coordinating Council to align assessment activities across institutional levels.

The results of the Interim Review and the Educational Policy Committee's recommendations for change are discussed under the General Education section of the self study. Here we reflect on the process and next steps rather than its results.

Student Learning Outcomes

CES, in conjunction with the Educational Policy Committee and IRA, has begun extensive work on identifying student learning outcomes for Connections and Infusion, fulfilling a strategic planning milestone for 2009.

There is also considerable impetus for the development of learning outcomes for several other areas of student learning. LIS has done significant work to monitor Wheaton's success in developing student information literacy, especially since the NSSE Survey of first-year and senior students included the category in its questions. Wheaton's results are positive. Formal outcomes assessment is a logical next step, as described in Standard Seven. Various assessment instruments should be reviewed and a recommendation brought to the appropriate faculty committees and administrators in the next few years. Targeting FYS and/or English 101 would require close work with faculty members in those areas, as well as with faculty, librarians and technology liaisons concerned with developing students' skills for 21st century literacy.

Communication of Goals: Wheaton communicates student-learning goals through its online catalog, department websites, individual course syllabi, and several online and print publications from the Office of the Registrar and the Office of Advising. A review of these online and print publications in 2006-2007 led the CES to recommend that the Education Policy Committee produce guidelines for increasing consistency between individual majors and programs in catalog descriptions.

Connections Evaluation: The evaluation of the Connections curriculum offers a model in which goals were established and communicated; the extent to which goals were realized could be evaluated initially by indirect measures. The results of this evaluation, which included surveys of students and the faculty, focus groups, and outside consultants, were shared with the faculty and administrators so that plans for revising the administration and advising of Connections could be developed. Work with the Educational Policy Committee and the Connections Sub-Committee on the next stages of evaluating the Connections program includes formalizing our baseline data, redrafting the faculty and student surveys to conform to these data, regularizing survey administration, and planning for direct evaluation and resources.

Projections

Assessment Cycle: Wheaton has become increasingly attentive to the value of evidence-based decision making grounded in a continuous cycle of assessment and change. The college needs to establish checkpoints for the collection and dissemination of curriculum assessment data, and to ensure that our data are available to and used by all relevant constituencies. Wheaton also needs to create a wider variety of sustainable ways to disseminate and receive feedback on the results of assessment to faculty and students, perhaps through existing structures like the New Faculty Seminar and the First Year Seminar. The challenge in such a process will include ensuring that various groups do not operate in parallel to one another. While some aspects of our curriculum, such as Writing in the Disciplines and QA, are structured exclusively through the departments, other requirements, such as Connections and Infusion, have established goals that are common across disciplines. So, while some assessment loops need to be designed intra-departmentally, others need to be developed inter-departmentally. At the same time, any department assessments will ideally include goals that connect the major to the overall curriculum.

Curriculum Evaluation: Since 2001, the Curriculum Evaluation Sub-Committee has carried out important work, building faculty and administrative support for assessment, undertaking specific assessment projects, and moving Wheaton toward a systematic assessment cycle. Significant value was derived from having the foundations for curriculum evaluation emerge out of a faculty committee. However, the coordination, oversight and communication of a curriculum assessment plan must be separated from the assessment work and needs to be embedded in the Provost's Office. In 2008-2009, the appointment of the CES chair to the role of curriculum coordinator allowed the sub-committee to restrict itself to advisory and oversight functions, while the appointment of the curriculum coordinator demonstrated the value of having evaluation represented within the Provost's Office. In the interests of effective and sustainable evaluation, Wheaton should make curriculum evaluation a permanent and central responsibility of an associate provost.

Resources: Wheaton needs to rethink the way assessment is supported. Currently, resources are primarily channeled toward the collection, analysis, and reporting of survey data and quantitative data on institutional benchmarks. Direct assessment of student learning does not rely on predictable and sustainable resources in the same way. To address this issue, the college should integrate better assessment planning, communication and resource allocation. Wheaton must therefore establish a clear and realistic vision of the various purposes of assessment for the college: establishing and demonstrating institutional effectiveness, making improvements in student learning, resource allocation, and strategic planning. On the basis of such a vision, the college can establish mechanisms to ensure that resources are available for the assessment of student learning and that such resources are used effectively.

New Directions: Even as we evaluate the 2003 Wheaton Curriculum, we maintain a visionary focus, considering which measurements and interpretations of our past will lead us to the best of all futures. We hope that student learning assessment will turn to portfolios, used in a variety of formats, to document and reflect upon laboratory experiments, internships, artistic efforts, essays and practica. We must also be able to pilot ideas, even as we recognize that any new developments will have to take place by substitution. Some of the many possibilities we are considering include sustained thinking about the impact of technology in each discipline and developing team-taught, sophomore-level seminars on global issues. New directions abound.

The Wheaton ethos counters popular conceptualizations of assessment as bureaucratic, commodity-driven education. As a private institution, Wheaton has had the privilege of rejecting a Procrustean bed of assessment, though it has long embraced traditions of accountability. The challenge now is to think creatively about the resources we do have as well as those we have yet to discover. We need to uncover information about student learning that is genuinely useful, including an iterativeness that is respectful and gazes outward even as it is looking inward. We are, first and foremost, creatures of inquiry, so reaching for this thing called "assessment" from the liberal arts platform may simply entail focusing our curiosity on all forms of knowledge and the mysteries of learning.