Introduction

I. Structure and Context for the Capacity and Preparatory Review:

Whittier College is a small private liberal arts institution, founded in 1887 by members of the Society of Friends. Though the college no longer has any formal association with that society, our identity today is tied closely with our history. Quaker values deriving from that association still influence our ideals and practices. Located on a 75 acre campus seventeen miles east of downtown Los Angeles, Whittier's primary mission is undergraduate education, but we also offer graduate programs in education. Additionally, like a select group of liberal arts colleges, Whittier has a law school.

In 1975, Whittier Law School became part of Whittier College and it is now – with a beautiful stand-alone campus in Costa Mesa - the oldest Law School fully-accredited by the American Bar Association and the Association of American Law Schools in Orange County, California. It offers a full-time day program, a part-time day program, and a part-time evening program leading to the Doctor of Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree. Foreign law students may also earn an LL.M. in U.S. Legal Studies. The School's strengths include Business Law, Criminal Law, Public Interest Law, Trial and Appellate Law, and the burgeoning fields of Intellectual Property Law, International Law, and Children's Rights.

Whittier College's 2009 Institutional Proposal describes the academic and social principles upon which the college was founded, and the ways that our Mission Statement provides a framework for defining the academic, co-curricular, and administrative elements of the College. The Institutional Proposal also summarized how the Whittier College "core curriculum" provides an academic framework for collaboration and transformation through its emphasis on cultural perspectives and the importance of connections between different fields of knowledge. Both critical thinking (the development of the skills and methods necessary for systematic investigation - i.e., the ability to define, analyze, and synthesize using a variety of methods and technologies) and the practical application of knowledge inform all elements of the program and are central to the transformation that distinguishes Whittier College graduates.

The 2009 Institutional Proposal also describes the administrative and academic governance structures in place at Whittier College, noting the leadership provided by President Sharon Herzberger, the senior staff, the Board of Trustees, and the faculty (Organizational Structure; Key Financial Indicators).

II. Overview: Whittier College and its Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity

As stated in the 2008 *WASC Handbook for Accreditation,* Whittier College is required to demonstrate a commitment to institutional capacity—that is, we must demonstrate that we have the administrative and faculty structures in place to study the college's educational program, reflect on what we find, and modify our program accordingly. Furthermore, we must illustrate that "[Whittier College] functions with clear purposes, high levels of institutional integrity, fiscal stability, and organizational structures to fulfill its purposes."

This Capacity and Preparatory Review report is comprised of three reflective essays—Community at Whittier College; Diversity and Liberal Education at Whittier College; Promoting Connections through Undergraduate Research. The CPR report also includes a collection of appended data tables, reports, and other reference documents that provide quantitative and qualitative evidence of the college's commitment to institutional capacity, and our efforts to use this capacity to study our educational effectiveness.

III. Responses to Issues Raised in Previous Action Letters.
A. Visiting Team Report and Commission Letter; Whittier College's 2002 Reaccreditation

Whittier was last reaccredited by WASC in 2002 in a process in which the College sought to design for itself an accreditation framework that would enable us to reflect on "the extent to which individual projects and programs resonate with the College's over-arching institutional goals and mission, and to discover new directions and programs that would sustain our mission and excellence." That Self-Study was organized to reflect on a series of issues, including: the core curriculum and the Whittier Scholars Program; department and

program assessment; personnel issues; diversity issues; retention; the capital campaign; the library; support for disabled students; and campus renovations.

The Commission applauded the College's ability to launch a successful capital campaign, stabilize enrollment and increase retention, and renovate substantial parts of the campus, even as there was then considerable turnover in the senior administration. With recognition of our progress, the Commission's Action Letter contained four important recommendations, to which we responded.

1. That the newly revised Liberal Education Program build into its implementation a mechanism for assessing the mechanism of the core in meeting student learning and strategic goals.

- We began our assessment of the Liberal Education Program by examining the gateway writing course required of all first year students. Our data showed that Hispanic students were not as successful as peers from other ethnic backgrounds in this course, and other data indicated that these students often learned best studying in more informal groups under the guidance of a mentor. As a result of this information, we took two steps that have dramatically improved our results: first, we established a Living and Learning Community program where students who were in the same writing class also share living space in the same residence hall. Second, we created a "linked" course structure wherein students in the writing classes also take a subject class together, so that groups of about fifteen students are linked through participation in both classes and in living arrangements. In addition, the freshman writing instructor also serves as the student mentor until they declare a major.
- The role of the Assessment Committee on campus has grown considerably, and the language of assessment has become ingrained in campus culture. The administration gave concrete support to assessment by naming an Associate Dean whose responsibilities explicitly include assessment (half-time), as well as the First-Year Program. She, together with the Assessment Committee, developed a comprehensive plan for assessment. The Faculty Assessment Committee began with a program to assess each year one of the 4C's that comprise the Liberal Education Program.

As of June 2011, the Assessment Committee has completed an examination of *Community and Culture*.

2. That the College integrate learning outcomes into programmatic reviews and that programmatic reviews be separated from the preparation for an accreditation visit. The Commission asked that Whittier go beyond collecting student satisfaction measures in seeking to assess the effectiveness of its academic programs.

(A) All academic departments have developed mission, goals, learning outcomes and curricular maps. Each department has been asked to complete an assessment of one of their learning outcomes annually. Departments have submitted a long term plan (five years) for assessing all of their learning outcomes. The annual assessment is designed to contribute to the five year department review. The Inventory of Effective Educational Indicators shows the progress of our assessment efforts for both academic affairs and for the co-curriculum.

(B) The Assessment Committee and the Associate Dean have crafted a completely revised program for analyzing the effectiveness of the academic programs through a comprehensive self study. The measures for analysis go well beyond "student satisfaction" data to include the following:
- Providing for a comprehensive departmental-level assessment, the College has developed a process that is assessment-rich and provides a mechanism for "closing the loop." Departments now have two options: either a traditional review or a theme-based review. Consistent with Commission recommendations, all departments are now on a five year cycle for department review. Moreover, there is a mechanism for college-wide review of departmental reviews that involves reports to both the College's Assessment Committee and the Faculty's Educational Policy Committee. This provides a mechanism to review the department conclusions as well as assess interdepartmental trends. The conclusions of the committee are used in any considerations of curricular policy across disciplines, and

are folded into the budgetary process for cases such as position requests. Recommendations are then sent to the Dean of the Faculty for review.

- Over the past five years we have brought departments through the assessment process of developing a mission and goals, then learning outcomes, then a plan to assess the learning outcomes; then a process of analyzing the data, reflecting on the results in the context of curriculum and students' learning; finally, using the results for change.

- In an attempt to integrate the department review process into our assessment model as well as into the College culture, we completely revised the criteria for review as well as the process. The ultimate goal is for departments to assess their learning outcomes over a 4 year cycle culminating, in a department review in the 5th year. Currently all of our departments will be assessed at least once in the new cycle by the fall of 2012. We will assess the "academic programs" in 2013 (Environmental Sciences, Gender and Women's Studies, Global and Cross Cultural Studies). Two of our programs were recently reviewed with our departments: Social Work (2009) and the Whittier Scholars Program (2011).

- An interactive course web site was developed to both showcase and house assessment work, allowing departments to view each other's progress and provide a mechanism for the Assessment Committee to work on department-level assessment with faculty from each department through the web site itself. Members of the Assessment Committee provide input on the development of learning outcomes and methodology for assessing outcomes, and they help in analyzing and interpreting data directly through the web site. A rubric was developed, based on the WASC rubric on assessing learning outcomes. Each department's assessment project is "scored" based on the rubric.

- The annual assessments have already elicited curricular changes based on evidence of student learning. For example, the Economics Department found that students were not learning the objectives established in their introductory courses at the level they expected. This led the faculty to re-evaluate their introductory courses so that more time could be devoted to the objectives, allowing students to gain a better foundation of knowledge. They also did an analysis of student learning of specific content through a comparison of the different sections of the course and the pedagogical approaches used.

- The Department of Education and Child Development examined the learning outcomes established for their field methods course CHDV 220. A rubric was developed and student papers were evaluated by the faculty in the department, pointing to weaknesses in writing research papers. It was decided that more class time needed to be devoted to the writing and analysis components of this course, and less time on alternative assignments such as poster presentations, observations, and interviews.

(c) Whittier College was awarded a grant by the Teagle Foundation in 2008 that has helped us develop a systematic way to provide data for departments to use in their assessment plans. Through the use of a data reporting system, "ARGOS," departments will now have the ability to develop custom reports using multiple sources of internal and external data, including data held in our Banner System as well as national data such as NSSE, HEDS. The data management model will first be tested through the examination of two specific learning effectiveness issues: 1) improving underrepresented minority students' performance in gateway courses in math, science, and writing that are critical predictors of later student success; and 2) measuring the impact and effectiveness of community-based learning initiatives on student engagement and learning.

3. That the College establishes a budgeting process that would establish greater alignment between curricular demands and available resources, with priorities that recognized that not all good ideas could be funded.

Budgets reflect an institution's goals. Therefore, at Whittier we establish criteria and priorities that guide our budget deliberations. The Strategic Plan calls for us to develop a more distinctive and attractive program, improve our reputation, and thus attract a larger body of well-qualified applicants who will matriculate as strong and committed Whittier College students. We recognize that not everything included in the Strategic Plan can be accomplished or funded in a given year, and our current budget priorities have driven budget allocation decisions since 2005. Therefore, the Budget Group establishes annual budget priorities. While all budgets are

reviewed and reallocations are sometimes made, the Group focuses primarily on allocating new resources. Because budget lines have not been increased "across the board" in the last nine years, some revenue has been available to allocate through the planning process to strategic initiatives.

- *Financial stability and integrity.* Strengthening activities include supporting student recruitment and retention, enhancing reputation and visibility, securing grants, maintaining the endowment's spending rate at 5%, and realistic but opportunistic budgeting. The College has reduced our spending rate to 5%, and we have shifted substantial revenue to our First Year Program, with resulting increases in retention and graduation rates. In addition, we put $250,000 into a complete revision and rebuilding of our website and $115,000 into the creation of new admission materials, with good results, including an 18% increase in applications.
- *Enriching the Academic Experiences.* We preserve the integrity of, and promote progress in, our core educational mission by implementing the results of program reviews and providing necessary academic support for departments, as well as library, media, and technology resources. Additionally, select areas of distinction are being created by developing strategic clusters. These academic clusters form the centerpiece of fundraising in our upcoming Capital Campaign. Critical to Whittier's academic experience is recruiting and retaining the very best among faculty and staff by offering competitive compensation packages. We are making progress in achieving faculty salary parity by continuing to implement the multi-pronged approach endorsed by the Board of Trustees at its November 2003 meeting. Beginning with the 2005-2006 academic year, salary increases were in the 5-6% range, with a total increase of 22.5% between the 2004-2005 and 2008-2009 academic years. Though we have made progress relative to our comparison group in some areas from year-to-year, our comparison schools have been progressing as well. Perhaps the best way to think about this is that, as compared to the past, we have not fallen significantly behind in the salary market, are offering competitive entry level salaries, and have eliminated salary compression and equity concerns. Even during the recent economic "Great Recession," Whittier College was able to provide modest salary increases, and for the 2011-12 year, the salary pool was 5%. A recent survey conducting by HEDS - the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium - showed that nearly two-thirds of 92 participating colleges were not able to provide salary increases during 2009-10, while Whittier gave 1.5%. An important point is that there is significant variation in the number of comparison schools that actually provide us with data. For example, in the 2008-2009 data, one of the missing schools is towards the low end in compensation for full professors. The absence of these data had the impact of increasing the average salaries and hence the parity gap at that rank.
- *Improving student recruitment.* Recruitment efforts and messages have been updated. We are leveraging our designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution in the nation, California, and Los Angeles/Orange County areas. The role of the College's coaches in recruitment has expanded, and strategic decisions about facilities improvements have been made. Financial aid funds are used to maintain academic profile while maximizing net revenue and supporting retention. In fact, net revenue from tuition has increased from about $16M in 2002-03 to about $30M in 2011-12.
- *Improving student retention.* The aspects of Whittier College that make us distinctive as a national liberal arts college (e.g., location, practical liberal arts, interdisciplinary focus, diversity of our student body) have been promoted through investment in the first-year experience and additional attention to the engagement and success of sophomores. After dropping to a low of 72.3% for the Fall 2005 entering class, first-year retention rose to 80.6% for the Fall 2007 class, as the new first-year programs took effect. Retention of the fall 2008 entering class saw a slightly lower rate at 79.3%, but the Fall 2009 class near record of 82.1%, while very preliminary data show that the rate for the 2010 entering class is near 84%.
- *Preserving and enhancing the physical plant and support services.* We have, and will continue to address campus environment issues with an emphasis on providing safe, well-maintained, program-appropriate, and aesthetically pleasing campus facilities. During 2002 to 2004, improvement projects included a library expansion and renovation that doubled building capacity and created The Rose Hills Foundation Center for Library and Information Resources. In April 2004, the College issued $60 million of variable-

rate demand revenue and refunding bonds. From that bond issuance, approximately $17 million refunded bonds issued in 1993, $24 million was used for the acquisition of land and buildings previously leased by the College for use of the Law School campus, and $16 million was used for Whittier campus projects. These projects included the renovation of Stauffer and Johnson residence halls including interior upgrades and improvements to the electrical, mechanical and plumbing systems; expansion and renovation of the Campus Center, including the addition of A.J. Villalobos Hall, a complete renovation of the dining facility, and addition of a north wing to create a student lounge and new space for student services; renovation to Hoover Hall, one of oldest and highest-use academic buildings including the replacement of the HVAC mechanical system, electrical and plumbing system improvements, and refurbishing of the interior. All projects included ADA improvements as required by building codes.

4. That the Board of Trustees approve the Faculty Handbook, which includes the Academic Freedom Statement, and notify the Commission by September 1, 2002 that this had been adopted.

As reflected in the minutes of the Plenary Session of the Board of Trustees meeting on November 1, 2002, the Board "adopted in principle the American Association of University Professors' 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure." The Statement was then and is now posted on the College's web site under: (1) Academic Requirements, Policies and Procedures and (2) Faculty Resources (Via email from Martha Balshem in September 2003, WASC indicated that the College had made a "fully satisfactory response" and that we were "current" with WASC).

IV. Whittier College's 2009 Institutional Proposal.

Our commitment to reflection and review continued following the approval of our December 2009 Institutional Proposal. A December 14, 2009 letter from Teri Cannon, Executive Associate Director of WASC, summarized two recommendations for the college's consideration: (1) That the College clarify the outcomes and the work product for the two stages of the review, explaining what we wished to accomplish at the capacity stage and at the final effectiveness stage of the review, and (2) That the College formulate a plan that more explicitly included Whittier Law School in the reviews, either through connections to the themes or through some other method. The panel thought it important to remind the College that WASC expectations about student learning outcomes and assessment of these outcomes extended to all programs, including at the Law School.

The WASC Steering Committee took these recommendations seriously and addressed each in turn in a letter to Teri Cannon on February 9, 2010.

1. For the CPR: We noted that our CPR will attempt to ensure that decision-making is based on evidence and that our processes for gathering evidence have buy-in from our entire community. Our plan was to examine our current data and our plan is, when necessary, to put in place mechanisms for evaluation and assessment to collect the type of evidence we need to make carefully planned decisions. Some questions include: (a) do we have the capacity in place to accomplish this? (b) are we prepared to undertake our EER? (c) do we have the systems in place to not only meet our goals but to continually gain insight and knowledge so we can grow as an institution? We submitted a work flow plan that elucidated our specific goals for each of our themes, and the ties each of these themes had with specific WASC Standards.

2. For the EER: We noted that our overall (Institutional) goals include: (1) To enhance the development and use of indicators of institutional performance and educational effectiveness; (2) To enhance Whittier's use of indicators of institutional performance and educational effectiveness for our institutional planning and decision making.; (3) To engage the faculty on issues of assessing and improving teaching and learning and to help Whittier align support systems for the faculty more effectively; (4) To identify and assess barriers to student

success and graduation; (5) To ensure that we live up to our commitment to diversity by identifying barriers to student success; and (6) We also elucidated the goals for each of the three themes.

3. Regarding the Law School's involvement in the Review: We noted that the Whittier Law School had begun a comprehensive strategic planning process that was dovetailing with the ABA's movement towards Outcome Measures. While the ABA's measures are still at the draft stage, as of April 2011, the Whittier Law School Faculty adopted institutional student learning outcomes and will begin its assessment process in fall 2011. The Law School also adopted seven learning outcomes with the criterion to meet them (refer to Standards).

V. Approach to the CPR in Relation to the Institutional Proposal.
The Capacity and Preparatory Review report continues the analysis of, and reflections on, the specific goals and research questions indentified in the Institutional Proposal for the themes of Whittier College's self-study: Essay 1 focuses on Community; Essay 2 focuses on Diversity; and Essay 3 focuses on Undergraduate Research and Scholarly Activity (URSCA). The research questions for each theme that are presented in the Institutional Proposal and in the Response to the WASC Letter are carefully addressed through research and analysis of relevant data, consultations with outside consultants, and examples of best practices at other institutions. These essays are a distillation of reports provided by our WASC Steering Committee's "Subcommittees on Themes." These theme committees, constituted by faculty with help from relevant college staff, have worked together for several years. Though they are Ad Hoc committees (i.e., not permanent faculty committees), they have often served concurrent terms on the Faculty Assessment Committee, providing a continuity of intellectual thought and admirable service.   Each "Theme Sub-Committee" has been responsible for answering the research questions in the Institutional Proposal, assessing the validity of the related research hypotheses, and summarizing the extent to which Whittier College has in place the capacity to fulfill institutional goals related to these themes.

VI. Evidence of Campus-Wide Engagement in the Re-accreditation Process.

Whittier began its discussions for our next WASC review during the 2006-7 academic year. The Academic Vice President and WASC ALO, Dr. Susan Gotsch, attended a WASC workshop. To begin early planning, the Academic Vice President and ALO sent out a proposal to department chairs in the spring of 2007. She noted the need for college-wide development of a proposal, and she explained that the process was heading in the direction of a streamlined, collaborative program review process.

The planning process developed into a college-wide discussion about the nature and shape of the proposal. Service on WASC Visiting Committees and the WASC workshops proved very useful. President Herzberger demonstrated her commitment to the accreditation process with service on two WASC Visiting Review Teams (October of 2007 and March of 2009), and Dr. Gotsch served on a Visiting Team in October of 2006. The college recognized the value of the WASC conferences. In fall of 2007, the college sent the chair of the College's faculty assessment committee, the Associate Dean for the First Year Experience and Assessment, the Dean of Students, the Director of the Library to the WASC conference; in 2008 the Dean of the Faculty attended a workshop; and in 2009, the President's Executive Assistant and the Associate Dean, together with two faculty, attended another conference and workshop.

Participation in the WASC workshops led to discussions with the senior staff during the winter and spring of 2008. Based on the recommendations of the Dean of the Faculty and the team that attended the WASC meeting, the Senior Staff decided in February of 2008 to chose a Thematic, rather than a Traditional, format for reaccreditation. Following the decision by the Senior Staff, an invitation was sent to all members of the community to participate in discussions regarding the development of the topics, themes or questions that could be asked and answered as part of the WASC reaccreditation process.   The first step in the process was to identify the themes and develop a proposal that described what was to be studied, how it would be studied, and why it was important to the future of the College. Specifically, groups were asked to consider the following in suggesting themes:
1. Themes should be institutionally focused;

2. Themes should cross boundaries and be interdisciplinary in nature;
3. Topics should be focused on things the College is already working on; things the College needs to improve, wants information on for marketing or fundraising, or think that the questions would help the institution move forward. In essence, this would provide an opportunity to look at something that was already being done at the College and would have substantial benefit for the College to analyze systematically;
4. New areas for examination should not be discouraged as long as those areas would help the College clarify specific issues; and
5. The topics should be able to be assessed in ways that are doable and useable.

Senior staff members were asked to engage their respective constituent groups to ensure broad campus input. The faculty Educational Policies Committee (EPC) served as the "clearing house" for vetting the various ideas. Feedback from various faculty groups, the Student Senate, Student Life, and departmental offices was received and summarized in March 2008. Three themes emerged as possibilities for study:
1. The development of *community* as it relates to the first-year experience and specific components such as living-learning communities, declaration of major, advising, collaborative learning, faculty-staff interaction, and co-curricular engagement;
2. Learning through *diversity* as a key characteristic of Whittier College, the only Annapolis Group HSI, examining how well the institution is prepared to provide a good learning environment for a diverse student body by studying access, retention, institutional receptivity, and achievement in student learning and leadership;
3. Connections between various disciplines and experiences, specifically community-based learning and *undergraduate research*.

Based on this input, at the end of May 2008, the Faculty and Staff WASC committee developed the three themes that form the basis for the Self-Study. The College community began to formulate more explicit plans during the 2008-9 academic years. The Board of Trustees was involved in the process and informed regarding the initial foci. In November 2008, President Herzberger sent a letter to the members of Steering Committee, charging them to develop a proposal. Members were chosen from the wider college community, and included faculty, administrators, a student representative, and a liaison to the Law School. Discussions continued with the Deans Council and the Faculty Executive Committee. At its May 2009 meeting, the Board of Trustees engaged in a brief presentation about the themes as they had evolved; trustees provided some input and acknowledged that these areas of inquiry would be beneficial for the College's future.

With the arrival of the new Vice President for Academic Affairs, Charlotte Borst, who became the College's Academic Liaison Officer, the planning process continued. The structure for preparation was to have a Steering Committee chaired by a faculty member, Mike McBride. Members included the VPAA/WASC Liaison, the Chair of each Theme Committee, the Director and Associate Director of Assessment, the Chairs of each 'theme group', the Chair of the Faculty, the Associate Dean of Faculty and the Dean of Students. The Committee's for the three themes involved current standing committees that embarked on a two-year capacity analysis. The Assessment Committee was responsible for the Diversity/Culture theme, the Enrollment and Student Affairs Committee was responsible for the Community Theme, and an Ad-hoc Committee was developed for the Undergraduate Research Theme. Each group produced a report that serves as the basis for the Reflective Essay that will be submitted with our CPR. These committees will continue and have already begun their work on the EER.

With the naming of Penelope Bryan as the Dean of the Whittier Law School in 2009, the law school faculty also began to think more broadly about learning outcomes. During the 2010-2011 academic year, the Whittier Law School faculty developed and adopted seven institutional student learning outcomes (SLOs). The process began in fall 2010 with the appointment of the Experiential Learning and Assessment Strategic Planning Committee (the Committee). The Committee met multiple times to discuss fundamental institutional objectives, and then presented a draft of nine possible SLOs to the whole faculty. During the spring, the faculty discussed, refined, and ultimately finalized seven institutional SLOs, including their corresponding criteria. The faculty voted to approve the SLOs and criteria on April 21, 2011.

Whittier College's CPR report is the result of the work of several faculty committees at both the Whittier campus and the Whittier Law School. It has been shared with and reviewed by key groups of faculty, staff and administrators. We believe firmly that Whittier College's Capacity and Preparatory Review demonstrates the following:

1. Whittier College "functions with clear purposes, high levels of institutional integrity, fiscal stability, and organizational structures to fulfill its purposes." (WASC's Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity).
2. Whittier College is prepared (and has even begun) to fulfill its obligations for the WASC Educational Effectiveness Review.

For this third phase of the reaccreditation process, Whittier will demonstrate a strong commitment to WASC's Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness by showing that the College has identified and implemented "clear and appropriate educational objectives at the institutional and program level" and that the College employs processes of review, including the use of data, that assure our students are learning and performing at a level appropriate for the degree awarded.

As a final note, although it is traditional in Capacity and Preparatory Review reports to include in-line references to the standards and criteria for review (CFR), we have taken a different approach that is more appropriate to the structure of this analysis. Because the standards and CFRs are meant to guide the comprehensive assessment of an institution, and we are undergoing a more narrow theme-based review, we felt that merely using in-line references would not allow us to address the scope of the standards. Instead, we have included Appendix 1 where we address each standard and CFR in detail.

Reflective Essay 1: Community

I. Introduction
Community was, and is, an important value for the essentially non-hierarchical Society of Friends (see Theme Community Report). As an academic organization, Whittier certainly possesses both an intellectual and an administrative hierarchy, but we continue to place a high value on community, attempting to reach consensus where we can, fostering the development of the whole life of individuals within our community. Moreover, we are committed to the ideal that the life of the mind requires interaction with other minds. Community is also one of the "Four C's" (Liberal Education Learning Goals), in which students are expected to be part of a learning community that introduce the idea of building connections across disciplines, as well as the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to understanding the world.

In the last five years, we have put substantial resources into a First-Year program to address student experiences, as well as learning and retention issues, believing that the sooner students find a niche in the institution, both academically and socially, the more successful their identification with the institution and its mission will be. Student retention has been a concern for the institution for many reasons, including financial, social, moral and societal. What we want to understand during this reaccreditation process is why we lose almost 20% of our students between the first and second years, and then almost another 15% of students between the second and third years, and the factors within our control and capability to address.

Whittier's fall-to-fall retention of first-year students is a long-standing concern. Our current rate fluctuates in the low 80% range, an improvement from a significant decline that took place during much of the 1990s. Although we would very much like to improve retention rates, and hence graduation rates, our consultant, Dr. Darnell Cole from the University of Southern California, has told us that we do an excellent job considering the demographics of our incoming student population and when compared to other Hispanic serving institutions (see also Rising to the Challenge: Hispanic College Graduation Rates as a National Priority, 2010). We know that there is a strong correlation between retention and the academic quintile of incoming students, and this is, in turn, related to our financial aid policies. (Academic

quintiles are formulated on using SAT scores and high school grade point average.) Financial aid packaging is based on quintile, with the better-prepared students receiving better aid packages. Clearly, then, our financial aid policies potentially affect retention, but it is also clear that, independent of aid, better-prepared students do better academically.

Our analysis of the retention data confirms that we lose students who are less academically prepared and those who incur more financial burden to attend college. This contributes to a large proportion of our first and second year attrition (see Figure 1.1). Securing more financial aid through fund-raising from individuals, corporations, and foundations is an ongoing activity and will be a priority in our upcoming campaign.

As a Hispanic-Serving Institution, we are very cognizant of the diversity of our student body, and we are particularly interested in the success of our Latino students. Retention for first-year students from a variety of racial and ethnic groups since 2005 is as follows:

Table 1. 1. Retention data					
	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10
Asian/Pacific Islander	75.0%	87.5%	90.9%	73.5%	89.7%
International	77.8%	50.0%	72.7%	83.3%	75.9%
African American	66.7%	50.0%	84.6%	88.2%	48.0%
Hispanic	77.5%	81.6%	78.3%	82.1%	94.0%
Native American	100%	66.7%	100%	60.0%	100%
White, Non-Hispanic	69.0%	78.0%	80.5%	80.2%	78.2%
Other/Unknown	67.2%	79.3%	69.2%	74.7%	75.6%

The data shows an improved retention rate, but we are most excited about our ability to retain our Hispanic population at the same rate as our majority population (See Table 1.1 above). The percentages for other racial/ethnic groups vary substantially over the years due to their low numbers. However, we remain concerned about the retention of our African-American population, and a further breakdown of the data has pointed our attention to the retention of African-American men.

Our approach to the study of student success was to examine student attitudes, practices and academic performance.   We know from the research that certain attitudes and practices lead to student success. When these positive attitudes and practices are present they lead to better academic performance, improved graduate rates and overall learning. When students are academically engaged, socially integrated, and have an affiliation with the college, their chances of staying at the institution greatly improve (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Thus, our study examined the presence and the degree to which these factors existed.   As a small private college committed to a personalized and meaningful education, Whittier has many student focused practices already in place. Since the mid-1980s, the Writing Program has been taught by faculty from throughout the college.   As a part of our curriculum revision of 2005, we instituted "linked courses" in which all students in a particular freshman writing section were co-enrolled in a second course, generally a course with some intellectual link to the writing section. Additionally, the student's faculty mentor (first-year advisor) is the instructor in one of the two courses. More recently, in 2006, we added the "living" component to the link, so that all students in a particular link live near each other in the residence halls. (Commuter students have access to the hall in which their group lives.) This arrangement has led to significant academic interaction among students in an LLC. There have been other incremental changes based on the results of our systematic assessment (see WC First Year Programs 2005-2011). These include the implementation of an early alert program in 2008; a change to the academic status policy to include Academic Recovery Programs for students on probation; the establishment of a Center for Advising and Academic Success; the hiring of a First Year Dean. The College would now like to know:

Our goals for Community:

1. After completing freshman writing and the class it is linked to, students should develop an understanding of, and competency in, the use of signs and symbols to construct, create, perceive, and communicate meaning.
2. Students will engage in the academic, social and co-curricular aspects of the college community.
3. Students will develop the skills, attitudes and dispositions to be successful college students and an educated community member.
4. Students will grow intellectually, personally and interpersonally.

II. Process and Capacity First-Year Programs

In 2006 we began a capacity study that collected students' perspective of their first-year experience, then carefully and comprehensively looked at many parallel aspects of our first to second year and second-to-third year retention rates. Our findings include:

- **Engagement**- Positive findings: students describe their strong positive relationship with faculty; the majority of our first year students report their classes are active and student focused; our students report they "value diversity and experience rich diversity experiences." Negative findings: Wabash results show that student academic motivation decreased from the fall to spring of their first year; fortunately by sophomore year it rises slowly, increasing incrementally until the senior year; students are not studying to the degree their faculty expects and a percentage of students are not coming prepared to class. These findings were in line with the schools we benchmark with but we still consider them as areas of growth.
- **Retention**- Positive: retention has increased since 2006 and has stayed relatively stable for the last six years. We retain our Hispanic population at the same or at higher rate than our majority population. Negative: the first-to-second year fall-to-fall cohort loses at least 18% of our students, and this cohort's population drops another 10 to 15% the following year. Analysis: trends show we lose more students in our higher quintiles (lower academic preparation groups); men are not retained at the same rates as women; students who deposit late are more likely to do poorly academically.

We have also been tracking sophomore-to-junior retention very closely. Looking only at those students who actually return as sophomores, an average of 88% return as juniors. As Figure 1.2 shows, sophomore retention rates have improved in recent years, coinciding with both the introduction of our new curriculum in fall 2005 and our explicit retention efforts aimed at sophomores. As with our examination of first-year students, we have also broken our analysis of sophomore-junior retention down into various subcategories (gender, race/ethnicity, academic preparation,

etc.). Perhaps not surprisingly, in all cases, the differing rates among these subcategories mirror those for first-year students.

III. A Review of Community at Whittier College—Research Questions and Learning Outcomes.

A. Academic Engagement and Social Integration

Question A.1. Are students academically engaged? How and when does this develop?

The data on Academic Engagement and Challenge show that instruction at Whittier is active and challenging. *Academic Challenge:* The results from the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) indicates that Whittier students read and write more (both more and longer papers) than students at our peer institutions. They are also asked to do less memorization and more higher-order thinking, such as analyzing and synthesizing, than students at peer institutions, and are more likely to collaborate on projects in class. Whittier College students report experiencing high academic challenge on college-constructed surveys (First Year Community Survey) and NSSE specific questions.   Whittier students score higher on the number of assigned textbooks [1], number of assigned papers requiring 5 pages or lower, and number of assigned papers requiring 5-19 pages.[2] In addition, Whittier's first years and seniors both report doing more reading and writing than students in peer institutions nationwide. The Wabash Study of Liberal Arts Education (2006 student cohort) reported that Whittier College students were more challenged academically than students at small colleges (see Theme Community Report).

Using a college-developed instrument, the assessment of our first year Writing Program (2008, 2009, 2010) has entailed a review of a small, random sampling (15-20%) of first year students represented with two papers each) of papers from first year writing seminars. Evaluators found that most students demonstrated general mastery of the conventions of written English and basic composition skills, while exercising critical thinking skills such as analysis and synthesis. Comparison scores on early and late papers show that students have generally improved in each area over the course of the semester.

Active Pedagogies: Whittier College is effectively engaging students in active classroom pedagogies. This is indicated by Whittier 2008 NSSE responses that were higher than other institutions on the item "worked on projects during class."[3] Additionally, Whittier students see themselves as doing less memorizing but more analyzing and synthesizing. [4] The First Year Community Survey (Theme Community Report; FYCS Comparison Report) also indicates that students worked harder than they thought they would have to, and shows that students perceive faculty as well-organized, well-prepared for classes, and in command of course material. They also give faculty high marks for clarity of explanation.

Question A.2. Are students forming positive academic relationships?

Positive interactions with faculty members and peers can lead to improved degrees of educational attainment, student persistence and student satisfaction.   Specific faculty behaviors and attitudes can have an effect on student retention. Some of these behaviors include being supportive of students' learning, communicating caring, and providing timely feedback (Kuh, 2005). Studies of faculty-student interactions found that both formal and informal interactions enhanced student learning, and that course related interactions were positively associated with academic engagement. Informal contact with faculty was also found to be beneficial. Faculty-student interactions were linked with intellectual growth, growth in autonomy and independence, improved interpersonal skills; they also strengthened bonds between the student and the institution, resulting in higher levels of persistence.

As Kuh's work has demonstrated, the type and quality of student interactions with faculty and peers are important. Thus, we studied the relational dimensions of the First Year Program. When examined from an academic engagement and involvement perspective, the data demonstrated rich, supportive academic relationships. The First-Year Community Study survey results from 2007, 2008 and 2009 overwhelming reported that students believed they had a positive relationship with their faculty mentors. Between 80 and 90% of all comments made when asked to

describe the relationship were positive. The students described their faculty mentor as being easy to talk to and helpful with their transition to college (see FYCS Comparison Report).[5] A Whittier College Faculty Survey was developed to evaluate academic programs that had been implemented over the past five years, including orientation, first year programs, undergraduate research and liberal education. The survey looked at how all the programs developed faculty-student relationships.[9] The findings for first year programs reported that First Year Orientation is 61.4% effective at developing faculty-student relationships, First Year Writing Links are 60% effective, First Year Mentoring is 59.5% effective, and our Peer Mentoring is somewhat effective (50%) at developing faculty-student and student to student relationships.

Results from our participation in the Wabash Study of Liberal Arts Education confirmed the results gathered from our in-house instruments.[6] After the first year of college, Whittier College students scored about the same as students from other small institutions (WC 73.1, others 73.2); but after four years, our seniors scored higher (80.9) than other small institutions scored (78.2). Students described faculty as wanting to work with students to ensure student success and reach academic goals, and they rated academic advising highly.[7]

Other national survey data confirms the strong satisfaction Whittier College students had with their faculty mentors. NSSE senior survey (2005-2008) showed even higher percentages than the Wabash Study on these questions (between 80-90%). HEDS Survey results (2006-2010) reported that 60-70% of our senior students chose the highest level of student satisfaction (4 out of 4) on faculty availability outside of class. Furthermore, in the 2008 NSSE study, students (freshman and seniors) scored their relationships with faculty at a 5.9 out of 7 scale.[8] This relationship is a true strength of our freshman experience.

Question A3. How is academic engagement and relationships related to retention? First year? Beyond first year?
 The data revealed that the majority of first-semester students built strong academic relationships with their faculty mentors. They met with them both in and out of class, were engaged in discussions about their academic performance, and believed that faculty members were approachable and caring, yet had high expectations for them. Specifically, the HEDS senior survey (2006-2010) reported a 60-70% level of satisfaction (generally to very satisfied) with first year advising, major advising, faculty availability outside of class, and student interactions with faculty. The Faculty Survey reports a 60% effectiveness level with first year orientation, first year writing, and first year mentoring. Whittier can be confident that first year students are building strong academic relationships.

B. The Role of the Broader Community--*Institutional Affiliation*

Question B.1. The role of the larger Whittier College community in developing students' institutional affiliation?
 Whittier receives high marks for institutional commitment to student success.   Quantitative and qualitative data show a positive trend in students' opinions of the greater Whittier College community and its commitment to their well being. Both our NSSE survey data and our in-house First-Year Community Survey afford us the opportunity to capture opinions of recently enrolled students as well as those of students who are about to graduate, enabling us to see how opinions develop over time. In NSSE 2007, when students, were asked how they evaluated their entire educational experience, our freshmen scored lower than overall NSSE but higher than Carnegie Peers. Our seniors, on the other hand, scored considerably higher than all comparison groups.[10]   By 2008, First Year students scored higher than the Carnegie Peers and the overall NSSE cohort; and seniors, once again, scored higher than Carnegie Peers and the overall NSSE cohort.[11]

The spring 2008 FYCS Survey, in which students were asked if they planned on staying and completing their degree at Whittier, provided additional evidence that Whittier College students are satisfied with their overall experience. On this survey, 59.6% reported a 4 out of 4 chance (or an excellent chance) they would be completing a degree at Whittier, and 23.6% reported a 3 out of 4 (or a good chance) they would complete a degree from Whittier.

In addition to positive feedback regarding overall satisfaction, the College gathered data regarding specific programs intended to support students academically, administratively, and with their extra-curricular activities. When asked on

the NSSE 2007 survey if the institution provided students with the support they needed to succeed academically, Whittier College First Year students scored higher than the Carnegie Peers and the overall NSSE cohort for both freshmen and seniors. In 2008 Whittier freshmen and seniors scored higher than both comparison groups, and all scores were statistically significant.[12] On the NSSE Survey freshmen and seniors are asked, "To what extent does the College help you cope with non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)?" In both the 2007 and the 2008 NSSE survey, students scored Whittier College much higher than the Carnegie Peers and the overall NSSE cohort.[13] The fall 2007 Whittier College's Community Survey also asked students about the helpfulness of different nonacademic departments. Students overwhelmingly (80-90+ percent) reported "yes," they were satisfied with the services provided by Admissions, Financial Aid, the Business Office, and the Office of the Registrar. The lowest marks are to be found on computer use, an issue that is being addressed.

Question B. 2. How is institutional affiliation related to retention? First year? Beyond first year?
The data we have available with which to address these questions lack direct correlations since the surveys are anonymous. We can draw conclusions based on trends and what the research tells us. Measuring institutional affiliation by looking at student satisfaction regarding the nonacademic college offices is one way to understand our question. In this category (what we term "the broader Whittier community"), we included Admission, Financial Aid, the Business Office, and the Office of the Registrar. The first and the last of these are offices that first year students rely on heavily in finding and settling into their places at Whittier College, and in each case over 90% of the students queried found the staff in these offices to be helpful. The numbers for the other two offices were in the mid-80s, a difference likely attributable to the financial aspects of college life that these offices control. In current economic times, money can be a large, and not necessarily pleasant, aspect of our students' experience. These high levels of student satisfaction correlate with the fact that 84% of students asked in the spring of 2008 of the chance that they would stay at Whittier College to finish their undergraduate studies chose either good (23.6%) or excellent (59.6%). Of course, this question measures intention rather than actual retention; but nevertheless, it is promising that we have high numbers of students who are happy with those nonacademic offices and a roughly similar number of students who intend to stay at Whittier College for their full four years.

Cultural diversity and interaction amongst diverse groups of students (analyzed in Essay 2) is another way we've chosen to consider this relationship. We feel that it is reasonable to conclude that if students are engaging in significant amounts of intergroup interaction, it suggests that they are affiliating with one another based on their identities as Whittier College students. One NSSE question asks if the "institution encouraged contact among students from different economic, social, racial and ethnic backgrounds." Our freshmen and seniors scored higher than both comparison groups (overall NSSE and Carnegie Peers) in 2007 and 2008. The freshman and senior scores were both statistically significant for 2007 and 2008.[14] Our numbers for seniors were higher than for first year students, whereas everyone else's were lower, which may imply that Whittier is finding success in encouraging intergroup interaction and contact across traditional groups. This affiliation with the broad community may assist in encouraging students to stay at Whittier.

The Wabash Study, conducted with our incoming freshman class (2006 cohort), produces results that helped us see how the level of our students' engagement in good practices changed over four years at our school compared with students at the other 19 small institutions. The results showed that our students recorded higher levels of good practice after four years at Whittier College (see Theme Community Report, Question A.1).

C. Co-Curricular--Primary Objective: *Peer Relationships, Institutional Affiliation*
   Question C.1. What are the characteristics of positive peer communities?
   Question C.2. Are students developing positive peer communities and institutional affiliation?
   Question C.3. How do student communities relate to retention?

Student engagement in higher education represents the amount of time students put into their academic work, but also how an institution is organized to provide purposeful activities that contribute to student success (persistence, satisfaction, learning, and graduation). Higher education has long recognized the importance of student engagement,

the development of positive peer relationships and institutional affiliation in contributing to student success).[15] Students enter an institution with a set of expectations about the college experience; and ultimately this influences their behavior, which affects not only their academic performance, but also their social adjustment to the college experience.[16]

At Whittier College, the expectation for student involvement is high. Described as a meeting place that brings together people, ideas, traditions, and experiences, the College seeks to connect those experiences in the formation of a strong sense of community. The goals for community stress not only the development of academic engagement, but also social engagement through participation in college activities, traditions and rituals known to solidify institutional affiliation, development of friendships, and a commitment on the part of the College to student success and fair and equal treatment (Whittier College Liberal Education Program Community; Mission Statement, 2010).

Data collected through the Community Assessment Scale (CAS) were used to understand Whittier College's sense of positive peer communities through peer relationships and institutional affiliation as demonstrated through friendships, clubs, organizations, societies, athletics, Cultural Center programming, student activities, and music/theater performances. [17] All Whittier College students were invited to participate by identifying their primary community and then completing the survey. Eighteen percent (n=268) of the student population completed the survey during spring 2010. Nineteen percent were first-year, 26% sophomores, 21% juniors, and 35% seniors. Data demonstrated that, for each of the six principles and overall for their experience at Whittier College, students living in the residence halls, participating in athletics, clubs and organizations, music/choir, societies, or theater articulated "moderately strong" to " very strong" communities. Data were analyzed by specific demographic groups: gender, ethnicity, resident and commuter. Data were analyzed using ANOVA by testing to find the difference among nine primary communities and their six principles of community scores. The analysis showed that three of six principles of community were statistically significant, but only a few scores within those categories between communities were significant.   The statistically significant principles were "caring, purposeful and celebratory."

Students graduating from the College participate in the annual HEDS survey, which measures a variety of experiences engaged in while at school. Data from graduates of the Class of 2005 through 2008 indicate high levels of participation in a variety of co-curricular communities including student government, religious groups, politics clubs, social fraternities, performing arts, intercollegiate athletics, newspaper, magazines, campus media, social action groups, cultural groups, volunteer service, and faculty research. Although it is not possible from our data to determine whether a few students participated in many co-curricular activities or if many students participated in fewer activities, the level of participation in co-curricular activities is impressive across all four years (See Theme Community Report).

NSSE data enabled us to look at specific behaviors associated with participation in the co-curriculum and the positive peer communities that result. In the 2008 NSSE survey, when students were asked about serious conversations with students who are from a different race or ethnicity than their own, Whittier first-year students and seniors scored higher than peers at other schools. These differences were also apparent in questions about conversations with students of different religious, personal or political values or opinions, and trying to understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looked from his/her perspective.[18]

Other indicators of students establishing positive peer communities and institutional affiliation can be drawn from the 2008 data. Both first-year and seniors rate their relationships with others at Whittier on the supportive end.[19] Whittier students spend a good amount of time during the week participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, student government, fraternity or sorority, sports, etc.), with an average of six to ten hours per week engaged in these types of activities.[20] These data suggest that students are involved in numerous campus groups, which can further develop their institutional affiliation.

The Residential Life Department regularly assesses the quality of programs and services offered. The 2007 survey on "a Quality of Life" focused on the role campus housing plays in fostering community. Specifically, we wanted to identify those behaviors that distract from or enhance the ability of students to study, sleep, engage in behaviors that promote

respect and understanding, and follow policies that support health and safety of residents and the building. Students responded supportively to such behaviors as "Relationships among people on my floor are generally positive"; "My floor follows the community norms we developed," "Resident Hall Association provides meaningful program in the residence halls"; and "The programs I have attended in my residence hall have been worthwhile"; "I have learned to resolve conflict." Identified issues related to roommate conflicts, noise, and visitation have been addressed through the implementation of a formalized roommate agreement exercise completed by all roommates at the beginning of the academic year and through the development of community standards/norms for each floor.

New first-year students register for two linked classes, one of which serves as their freshman writing course. As part of these links, students are assigned to residence halls based on the course selection. This intentional assignment is designed to foster the development of community outside the classroom through informal interactions, formal programming, and community engagement in academics. As part of this arrangement, commuter students are given access to the residence halls. According to the First Year Community Survey, the majority of students describe their overall relationship with their Living Learning Community classmates as good or positive. [21] In additional 63.1% (fall 08) of first year students said that their peer mentor was helpful with their overall transition to college. To enhance the ability of peer mentors to be effective in their role, all new peer mentors must enroll in a one credit course which explores the role of peer mentors in new student development and strategies to engage new students.

The NASPA/Student Voice Benchmarking project provided insight into the role that orientation plays in developing positive peer communities and commitment to the institution. Benchmarked against 89 other institutions and 29,000 respondents, this instrument provided information about new student orientation, the quality of the experiences provided, and areas needing improvement

Practical Application of Findings for Community and the Educational Effectiveness Review
Our findings examining our first year programs and how they influence the student experience were overall very positive. Students are actively engaged in their academics. Many students are engaged in co-curricular communities, such as clubs, societies, and athletics. In addition, students are developing positive peer communities and institutional affiliation as demonstrated by their positive experiences in various peer groups and/or living learning communities and by the College's generally high retention rates. Our assessment of the first year experience began in 2006 when we implemented many of these new programs. The assessments and data guided us in our further programming. We implemented many changes over the past five years including discontinuing our linked first year classes in the second semester, developing a peer mentor program, changing orientation from five days to eventually three days and revising our program for both provisional and probationary students.

Most recently we made some major changes to our "probationary" student first year program. After both retention analysis and qualitative data collection we decided to move away from providing this group with a remedial writing course in their first semester. Students in this group reported feeling "tracked" and embarrassed by their status and their retention (and their GPA) remained much lower than the general population (60+ %). This year we will be placing our provisional students in the Freshman-Linked courses and require that they take an additional writing lab for 3 credits. They will also be required to participate in an academic support program developed to meet each students' individual academic needs through the Center for Advising and Academic Success. This program will be closely monitored and re-evaluated for its success as well as areas that may need further development. This example demonstrates how assessment has guided us through our program development leading to consistent improvements in student success. Please refer to WC First Year Programs 2005-2011 for a list of changes that have occurred to the first year experience based on assessment and data collection.

Conclusion
Community is an important value for Whittier College, and its value is reflected in our curriculum and in our co-curricular practices. Thus, retention, or conversely, trying to understand why students leave our community, is the focus of this reflective essay. We now feel that we have the capacity to study this issue. We have been collecting and carefully analyzing retention and student engagement data since 2006. Our data have comprised large scale analyses such as

NSSE, Wabash and HEDS, as well as more specialized instruments developed in-house. As we review our data, we see that we are doing good work in engaging our students in academic endeavors and in relationships with faculty and their peers. These studies allowed us to identify trends and make many changes based on evidence, but we do understand that they have not provided us with direct correlations for specific practices. However, the literature shows that the sorts of activities discussed in the previous paragraphs have a very positive effect on retention.

In the next stage of our accreditation cycle we will move from identifying trends in student success and retention, to looking for direct relationships as well as measuring student learning. For the EER, with the help of the Wabash research team and Teagle Scholars, we have developed a methodology that will allow us to answer our research question: *what specific practices improve retention?* In this study, we are concerned about both first-year students and sophomores. Our plan is to collect data from a sample of students using student identifiers to enable us to look at factors in relationship to each other. We plan to look at seven sections of our academic link groups, selecting approximately 120 students (25-30% of the entire first year class, and including subgroups of particular interest for improved retention). We will examine the students' incoming attributes, academic experiences, attitudes and perceptions; then evaluate their academic performance, including their performance in our first-year writing program. The EER assessment will include examining, a) Direct relationships between retention and first-year practices using student indicators, and b) Examining the relationship between the first year experience and student learning (in particular the first year writing program). In addition, because these "best practices" are identified with sophomore to junior retention, we will expand our assessment efforts to the sophomore year.

This will allow us to focus specific attention on our practices for first-year and sophomore students. Many of the factors identified in the literature are high-impact practices we already follow. For example, we believe that our faculty relationships, as measured above, are a strong force in our retention. Other factors, some under our control such as the way we think about first-year course choice and student life, may need revision. Yet we also know that there are some factors that are more difficult for us to address, and in fact, could run counter to our mission. We are committed to access, and many of our students are first-generation, very financially needy, and at high risk for getting into academic difficulty. Changing such practices as financial aid to more fully fund "safer bets" would, in fact, steer us in a direction that is antithetical to our mission of access and diversity.

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[1] 2007 Carnegie Peers and overall NSSE statistically significant for First Year, 2007 NSSE statistically significant for seniors, 2008 Carnegie Peers and NSSE statistically significant for first year and seniors)

[2] 2007 overall NSSE statistically significant for first year and seniors) (2007 and 2008 Carnegie Peers and overall NSSE statistically significant for first year and seniors).

[3] (2007 Carnegie Peers and overall NSSE statistically significant for First Year, 2007 and 2008 Carnegie Peers statistically significant for seniors).

[4] (2007 overall NSSE statistically significant for seniors, 2008 Carnegie Peers and overall NSSE statistically significant for First Year) (2007 Carnegie Peers and overall NSSE statistically significant for first year and seniors, 2008 overall NSSE statistically significant for First Year, 2008 Carnegie Peers and overall NSSE statistically significant for seniors) (2007 overall NSSE statistically significant for first year and seniors, 2008 Carnegie Peers and overall NSSE for seniors).

[5] Each year the freshman class is asked to participate in an in-house "First Year Community Survey" given to all first year students in their College Writing course. Participation rates are usually between 50 to 70% of the entire first year class. The survey is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative questions with a number of open ended questions that ask students to describe the mentor-student relationship. At the end of the academic year students are also invited to participate in a focus group where they discuss their first year experiences at Whittier College, including their relationships with faculty.

[6] With its 2006 freshman student cohort. This study asked students their perception of their education including academic challenge and faculty student relationships. Wabash's category for "Good Teaching and High-Quality Interactions with Faculty" includes: "Faculty interest in teaching and student development, prompt feedback, quality of non-classroom interactions with faculty, and teaching clarity and organization."

[7] Between 55-78% of first year students who completed the NSSE survey (2005-2008) reported that they "Often or Very Often" received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on academic performance.2008 NSSE and 2008 Carnegie Peers First Year.

[8] Significantly higher than the comparison groups. Other categories where freshman students scored their relationship with faculty to be significantly higher than comparison groups were, talking with faculty about career plan (2008 NSSE freshman) discussed readings or classes with faculty members outside of class (2007 and 2008 NSSE First Year) received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance (2008 NSSE and 2008 Carnegie Peers First Year), worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (2007 NSSE First Year).

[9] In the fall of 2010, a faculty survey was developed by the joint committees at Whittier College: Enrollment and Student Affairs Committee (ESAC), Assessment Committee, and Undergraduate Research, Scholarship and Creative Activities (URSCA).

[10] These scores were statistically significant for First Year Whittier Peers, and Carnegie Peers and Senior Year overall NSSE

[11] All scores were statistically significant (statistically significant for both First Year and Seniors overall NSSE). Additionally, students reported satisfied especially with respect to diversity, the advising they receive and they reported feeling they receive the support they need to deal with non-academic issues.

[12] (2007 NSSE Statistically significant for freshman and seniors, 2007 Whittier Peers and Carnegie Peers statistically significant for seniors). (2008 NSSE statistically significant for freshman and seniors,, 2008 Carnegie Peers statistically significant for seniors

[13] These numbers were statistically significant for seniors in both the 2007 and the 2008 NSSE surveys for both comparison groups.

[14] Our first year students gave an average rating of 2.99 (out of 4, where 1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, and 4=excellent) whereas our seniors gave an average rating of 3.05. This result opposes national trends: the two numbers were 2.82 and 2.61 for our Carnegie peer institutions and 2.70 and 2.50 for the overall NSSE cohort.

[15] (Astin, 1977, 1985; Chickering, 1969, 1974; Kuh, 1981.

[16] (Kuh, 1994, 2001).

[17] Using Ernest Boyer's theoretical framework of six principles of community in higher education, (purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring, and celebrative), we used a survey developed by Dr. Sarah Weber, consisting of 23 questions, each paired with one of Boyer's Six Principles of Community. As part of her dissertation, Dr. Webber sought to operationalize Boyer's theory of community by developing and validating a scale that could be used to assess the degree that the six principles are actualized on campus (Webber, 2003).

[18] Serious conversations with students from a different race/ethnicity than one's own: Whittier first-yr students 3.0 vs. 1st-yr peers 2.79; Whittier seniors 3.19 vs. senior peers 2.75; conversations with students of different religious, personal or political values or opinions: Whittier 1st yrs 3.09 vs. 1st yr peers 2.9; Whittier seniors 3.21 vs. senior peers 2.94; trying to understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looked from his/her perspective: Whittier 1st yrs 2.99 vs. 1st yr peers 2.85; Whittier seniors 3.10 vs. senior peers 2.90.

[19] On a scale of 1 (unsupportive) to 7 (supportive), first-year students rated the quality of relationships with people at Whittier as 5.42, while seniors rating was 5.32.

[20] Students reported joining clubs and organizations at about the same rate as students at other institutions (56.16%-National average and 56.68%-Whittier College) and responded that they were participating in intramurals at about half the rate as students at other institutions (33.56% versus 17.65%). NSSE data showed that when asked about participation in co-curricular activities such as organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity and sororities, intercollegiate or intramural sports, first-year students reported 3.02 involvement (Whittier peers 3.13) and 3.0 in the senior year (Whittier peers 2.95).   However, Whittier College students reported participation in intercollegiate athletics at 4 times the comparison group (8.30% versus 26.80%).

[21] 71.42%, fall 06 data; 58.45%, fall 07 data).

Reflective Essay 2: Diversity

Introduction

Fostering community requires an understanding of the people who constitute our community. Whittier was founded on a principle of inclusiveness and *diversity,* and currently almost half of our student body is made up of students of color. The current Strategic Plan notes that Whittier "chooses to subsidize less affluent students in order to foster and maintain a diverse and talented student body" (p.3).[1] The college is designated a Hispanic Serving Institution, with about thirty percent of all students reporting Latino/Latina heritage (see WASC Data Exhibit). It is recognized as one of the most diverse small liberal arts colleges in the country.

This richness of backgrounds, as well as the social diversity that comes from drawing community members from a variety of economic and geographic groups, matters to us partly because of our longstanding commitment to social justice. It also matters because we are committed to the belief that an education in a diverse setting best prepares students to comprehend and succeed in the world in which we live. Recent research shows that a diverse learning environment within the classroom leads to greater cognitive complexity for all students, and that prolonged contact, such as we have in our residential liberal arts community, may have a stronger effect on cognitive complexity than does singular or intermittent contact.

Thus, diversity at Whittier College represents more than a social obligation—it represents a deeply held intellectual commitment to student learning. Putting our commitments into practice requires attention to both curricular development and co-curricular programming, and our work also has significant implications for recruiting and retention. The Liberal Education Program, re-envisioned in 2005, has five primary learning goals, including one that explicitly

promotes students' knowledge of culture and diversity: Goal IV-*Students should develop an understanding of culture and the connections between themselves and others in relation to physical, historical, social, and global contexts* [2]

Our examination of *diversity as a theme for our reaccreditation overall effort* has three foci that derive from WASC's statement on the dimensions for diversity in higher education:

1. What is the experience of various student cohorts at Whittier (i.e., representation)?
2. What is the effect of our diversity on our campus culture (i.e. the nature of campus community)?
3. Are we successfully providing the cultural competence we want our students to acquire (i.e., the impact of group membership on both individual development and the content of academic scholarship and study)?

The Whittier College President, Deans, and members of the faculty were involved in reviewing the results included in this report. In addition, results were presented to students for discussion in focus groups.

For the CPR, our Research questions for Diversity involve determining our capacity:
   1. Does Whittier College provide a supportive campus climate for diversity?
   2. What is the quality of student interactions with diverse peers?
   3. Do students make gains in their social awareness? Understanding self? Understanding others? And their desire to contribute to community?

Our particular goal for Diversity for the EER will be:
   ▪ To determine the educational effectiveness of our courses for the Liberal Education Culture requirement.

We want to know if they are meeting the learning needs of a diverse student population.[3]

The college seeks to link life inside and outside the curriculum purposefully and systematically in a holistic manner "to create a dynamic living and learning environment for our students" [4] and all students must take a minimum of 12 credits (4 classes) in designated cultural perspective courses. Student Life Divisions and academic programs work together to provide co-curricular activities, programs and services that will support students in achieving their academic and life goals. Many of Whittier's students, as well as faculty, participate in co-curricular activities and take advantage of the opportunities and programs that "educate, celebrate, and honor diversity on campus". A summary description of some of these opportunities and programs is attached at the end of this report.

Membership in a diverse campus community has been shown to increase students' understanding of self and others and to promote students' social awareness and desire to contribute to their communities. Campus climate refers to the ways individual members and groups experience a campus community (Williams, 2010). This research shows the dimensions, definition, and potential data indicators that guided our exploration of specific aspects of campus climate   (see Theme Diversity Report).[5]

For the purposes of this report, we describe some of the structural characteristics of Whittier College and then present results from our existing data sources that provide information on students' perceptions about the campus in respect to diversity and their self-reports about interactions with diverse peers. In addition, and under the assumption that Whittier College is a diverse community, we examined existing data to explore students' self-reports of gains associated with attending a diverse campus.

Whittier College gathers annual or bi-annual survey data on its students through the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Higher Education Senior Survey (HEDS). In addition, the college has been a participant in the Wabash Study since 2006. These data sources allow for some comparison of our students to students from other similar institutions in the country. Though there are some issues with our data, by combining the results from several annual NSSE surveys we were able to look at some differences by gender and between Hispanic/Latino and Non-

Hispanic White students [6]. We use selected items from these three sources to explore the three research questions listed above.

Campus Structure
Table 2.1 gives a graphic representation of the diversity of the Whittier College student body. Among Whittier students reporting their race or ethnicity (88%), over half (52%) were members of an ethnic minority group.

Table 2.1. Whittier College First Year Student Profile

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Average
Total Undergraduate	**1325**	**1310**	**1257**	**1291**	**1367**	
Male	610 (46%)	603 (46%)	566 (45%)	594 (46%)	642 (47%)	46%
Female	715 (54%)	707 (54%)	691 (55%)	697 (54%)	725 (53%)	54%
Black/African American	53 (4%)	52 (4%)	38 (3%)	52 (4%)	82 (6%)	4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	106 (8%)	105 (8%)	101 (8%)	103 (8%)	123 (9%)	8%
Hispanic/Latino	358 (27%)	354 (27%)	377 (30%)	387 (30%)	396 (29%)	29%
Native American	26 (2%)	13 (1%)	13 (1%)	13 (1%)	14 (1%)	1%
White, Non-Hispanic	583 (44%)	616 (47%)	578 (46%)	555 (43%)	547 (40%)	44%
Other/Unknown	172 (13%)	131 (10%)	113 (9%)	194 (15%)	178 (13%)	12%
International	40 (3%)	26 (2%)	24(2%)	24(2%)	27 (2%)	2%

Additionally, our faculty is very diverse--in 2007, almost 26 percent of Whittier College faculty was members of a racial or ethnic minority group compared to 16.4 percent of faculty in all private four-year institutions in the country (see Table 2.2).[7]

Table 2.2. Race/Ethnicity of Faculty in 2007: Whittier College and Private
4-Year Institutions in the U.S.A

	Whittier College*		Private 4-Year†	
Race/Ethnicity	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Asian/Pacific Islander	6	6.7%	26,385	5.6%
Black/African American	3	3.4%	30,175	6.4%
Hispanic/Latino	13	14.6%	14,204	3.0%
Native American	1	1.1%	1,549	0.3%
White, Non Hispanic	65	73.1%	352,157	74.5%
Other/Unknown	1	1.1%	32,888	7.0%
Total	89	100%	472,628	96.8%[√]

*Excluding Whittier Law School Faculty
†SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2007 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Winter 2007-08.
[√]In 2007, 3.2 percent of Faculty members in private four-year institutions were categorized as "Non-resident Aliens

Question 1. *Does Whittier College provide a supportive campus climate for diversity?*
Psychological Dimension: Students' Perceptions

The NSSE Benchmark for *Supportive Campus Environments* aggregates survey responses from six items to develop a single average score for first year and senior students from participating institutions. These items include three questions that look at the campus environment (providing support to succeed academically, helping to cope with non-

academic responsibilities, and providing support to thrive socially) and three questions that address quality of relationships (with other students, with faculty members, and with administrative personnel and offices).

Results for Whittier College are presented in Table 2.3 (below) for 2006, 2007 and 2008 in comparison to its Carnegie peer group, to NSSE institutions as a whole, and to the NSSE top 50%and 10% institutions.   Overall, the data demonstrate that students' perceptions of Whittier as a supportive campus environment are at least equal to or greater than students' perceptions in other institutions.   While our first year students in 2006 reported significantly lower scores than their Carnegie Peers and students in the NSSE top 50 and 10 percent institutions, in all three years our seniors reported significantly more positive perceptions of the campus environment than NSSE as a whole. In 2007 and 2008, both our first year and senior scores compare well with all comparison groups and there is no significant difference between the scores for seniors and all other groups, including the NSSE top 10 percent for all three years.[8]

Table 2.3. NSSE Comparison Data: Supportive Campus Environment Benchmark (Means)

	Whittier College	Carnegie Peers	NSSE U.S.A.	Top 50% NSSE	Top 10% NSSE
NSSE 2006					
First-Year Students	59.0	64.0*	59.1	64.7*	69.7*
Seniors	62.8	61.8	56.6†	62.8	67.7
NSSE 2007					
First-Year Students	63.3	64.2	59.8†	65.2	68.2*
Seniors	64.9	62.1	56.9†	63.1	66.2
NSSE 2008					
First-Year Students	66.2	65.0	61.1†	65.8	68.5
Seniors	64.4	61.5	58.0†	63.5	66.7

*Comparison Groups that scored significantly higher than Whittier College.
†Comparison groups that scored significantly lower than Whittier College.

While the comparative results suggest that Whittier College is perceived overall as a *Supportive Campus Environment,*, the annual data for our first year students and seniors for each item in this Benchmark help us differentiate those areas of strength and improvement. Our strengths lie in the academic support we provide our students and in the quality of relationships among students themselves and between faculty and students.   Most students (75% or more) rated the quality of their relationships with other students as a 5 or above on a scale of 1 to 7. Relationships with faculty were rated even higher (see Theme 1 Community Report for detailed information on faculty-student relationships). The majority of both freshmen (83%) and seniors (89%) reported that Whittier provided the support they needed to succeed academically "quite a bit" and "very much" during the four years (2005-2008). In contrast, less than 40% of students perceived support for coping with non-academic responsibilities and less than 50% perceived the support they needed to "thrive socially". Quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices were rated somewhat higher by first year students than by seniors, with just under 60% giving a score of 5 or more (mean: 4.71). About half of our seniors gave a rating of 5 or higher (mean: 4.30).

Combining NSSE data for 2005-2008 gave us a large enough sample to disaggregate our results by race/ethnicity (Latino and Non-Hispanic White students) and gender to help us see whether groups on campus report different experiences in respect to aspects of campus climate (see Theme Diversity Report, Table 6). While these results only provide indicators, the data suggest that Latino students at Whittier College are somewhat more likely to see Whittier College as a *Supportive Campus Environment* than Non-Hispanic White students by their senior year.[9]   In respect to the three institutional support items, female students as a group gave somewhat higher ratings than male students, again specifically among the seniors. Results for the three "quality of relationships" items showed almost no differences between our male and female students.

To examine further whether students perceive Whittier as a supportive campus climate, we looked at selected responses from the HEDS Senior Survey for 2010.   Seniors' responses to items related to campus diversity and climate

showed that the majority of seniors report they were generally satisfied (56%) or very satisfied (31%) with the ethnic and racial diversity on campus. Similar numbers report satisfaction with the "climate for minority students on campus", though almost 19 percent reported this as "not relevant". In 2005, 2006, and 2007, Whittier seniors were more likely to report that they were "very satisfied" with the diversity on campus and with the climate for minority students than students in their HEDS comparison institutions.

In response to two of the supplemental questions that the college asked seniors on the 2010 HEDS survey, most students either "mostly agreed" (55%) or "strongly agreed" (27%) that the college has "practices that are fair and equal to all students". In addition, the majority mostly or strongly agreed that the college wants them to be successful and has their "best welfare in mind", 42% and 39% respectively. A somewhat larger number of students (15-20) indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with these statements. [10]

Question 2: *What is the quality of student interactions with diverse peers?*
Behavioral Dimension: Student Interactions

The NSSE Benchmark for *Enriching Educational Experiences* (EEE) aggregates survey responses from eleven items, including three items on student interactions with diverse peers, and thus provides one indirect measure of how our students compare to others in this area. The EER Benchmark also includes student responses on items related to co-curricular activities, use of technology, collaboration, internships, community service, and senior capstone experiences (see Theme Diversity Report).

The Benchmark results for 2006, 2007, and 2008 (Table 2.4) show that both Whittier first year and senior students compare very well to their peers in almost all other comparison groups. Our students were significantly more likely to report enriching educational experiences, including interaction with diverse peers, than all other groups in 2007 and most other comparison groups in 2008. On the item "Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own socially", 68 to 74 percent of first year students respond "often" or "very often" and 76 to 80 percent of seniors report similar responses. On the second item, "Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values socially", 70 to 74 percent of first year students and 75 to 83 percent of seniors reported "often" or "very often".[11]

Table 2.4. NSSE Comparison Data: Enriching Educational Experiences Benchmark (Means)					
	Whittier College	**Carnegie Peers**	**NSSE U.S.A.**	**Top 50% NSSE**	**Top 10% NSSE**
NSSE 2006					
First-Year Students	31.4	30.5	26.7†	30.0	34.4*
Seniors	57.2	52.3	39.9†	46.6†	57.9
NSSE 2007					
First-Year Students	35.3	30.0†	27.1†	29.5†	32.4†
Seniors	60.7	49.5†	39.9†	45.6†	50.3†
NSSE 2008					
First-Year Students	35.1	30.3†	27.5†	30.3†	33.0
Seniors	55.5	48.9†	40.4†	47.3†	54.3

*Comparison Groups that scored significantly higher than Whittier College.
†Comparison groups that scored significantly lower than Whittier College.

The combined NSSE results for years 2005 to 2008 suggest that differences by gender and between Latino and Non-Hispanic White students are relatively small, especially among seniors. Overall, Latino/as are less likely to report having "serious conversations" with students different from themselves "often" or "very often" than White students. When disaggregated further, the results show that first year Latina students are least likely to report having "serious conversations" with students different from themselves "often" and "very often" (65%); however by their senior year

this is less evident, with 73% of Latinas and 78% of White female students reporting "often" and "very often"(see Theme Diversity Report, Table 9.).

Two items on the HEDS Senior Survey provide additional information on student interaction with diverse peers. In 2010, over half the seniors (53%) reported that their capacity to relate well to "people of different nations, races, and religions" was greatly enhanced by their undergraduate experience and almost a third (32%) reported a "moderate" improvement. Most seniors also reported that they "often" (43%) or very often" (33%) had "discussions with students whose beliefs" differed from their own. We show similar results among seniors on the previous HEDS surveys for years 2005 to 2008. On average, about 85% of seniors report "moderately" or "greatly" enhancing their capacity to relate well to others and 70% report "often" or "very often" having had discussions with students with different beliefs.[12]

 Results from the Wabash Study provide further evidence of Whittier students' meaningful interactions with diverse peers. The study gathered information on "Diversity Experiences" from the 2006 cohort of students at the end of their first year (2007) and at the end of their senior year in 2010. The Diversity Experiences scales on the survey included two groups of questions aimed at eliciting specific responses about a variety of interactions with diverse students and the extent of participation in campus events that stressed diverse viewpoints. The results for Whittier's students compared to students from the other 19 small institutions in the study depicted in Table 2.5, demonstrating a significant positive outcome.

Table 2.5. Wabash Study: Diversity Experiences†

	Average Scores	
	Spring 2007*	Spring 2010
Whittier College	47.0	56.7
Other Small Institutions	42.9	47.9

†Items on Scales measuring "Meaningful Interactions with Diverse Peers"
*End of First Year (2007) and End of Senior Year (2010)

Question 3: *Do students make gains in: social awareness, understanding self, understanding others, and desire to contribute to community?*
Student Gains Associated with a Diverse Campus Experience
The Wabash study helps us explore whether our students report gains', between their first and senior years, in social awareness, understanding of themselves and others, and in their desire to contribute to community, while also showing us how we compare to other participating institutions. Whittier College student outcomes are compared to 10 other small institutions or to all 19 participating institutions.

Four of the measures used in the study examine student gains in the related areas noted below. The data analysis used in this study provides frequencies as well as effect size and standard deviations as measures of change. An effect size of 0.10 is small, 0.30 is medium, 0.50 is large, and 0.70 is very large, whereas a standard deviation of 0.3 is considered a "moderate change" and 0.5 a "large change.   The results are for the 2006 first-year cohort of Whittier students, demonstrating the changes they had made by the end of their senior year in 2010 (see Table 2.6).
- *Universality-Diversity Awareness*: Whittier College students grew to 0.34 standard deviations compared to other institutions which grew to 0.13 standard deviations. Over half of our students (55%) saw a moderate to high growth and 41% saw a decline or no growth. In the other institutions (scores were combined) 42% of students had a moderate to high growth and 46% showed a decline or no growth.[13]
- *Socially Responsible Leadership*: The results show that between first year and senior year, 58% of students saw moderate to high growth and 26% saw no change or a possible decline, similar to the comparison institutions.[14]
- *Political & Social Involvement:* Although a small growth, our students grew by 0.02 standard deviations compared to a decline of 0.12 among the other institutions. Just over a third (35%) of our students and the other students exhibited moderate to high growth on this scale over time and but 57% of our students exhibited decline or no growth compared to 58% in the other institutions.[15]

- *Openness to Diversity/Challenge***:** The values of the standard deviations show that Whittier College students' interest in exploring diversity in cultures, ethnicity, perspectives, values, and ideas had grown to 0.17, while the other colleges had a decline of 0.13. The data also indicate that 43% of our students grew over the four years, 12% more than the comparison institutions.[16]

Table 2.6. Wabash Study: Variability in Four-Year Student Change

	Moderate/High Growth		Decline/No Growth	
	Whittier College	All Institutions	Whittier College	All Institutions
Socially Responsible Leadership	58%	52%	26%	35%
Universality-Diversity Awareness	55%	42%*	41%	46%
Openness to Diversity/Challenge	43%	31%*	51%	61%*
Political and Social Involvement	35%	35%	57%	58%

*Significant difference.

The NSSE and HEDS surveys also provide some indicators that help us explore whether our students report gains, between their first and senior years, in social awareness, understanding themselves and others, and their desire to contribute to community (see Theme Diversity Report).

Social Awareness: In the HEDS Surveys (2006-2008, 2010) 82% to 87% of seniors reported that their experiences at Whittier College enhanced their ability to develop awareness of social problems "moderately" or "greatly". Most seniors also reported enhanced ability in placing "problems in historical perspective" (78-81%). About 19-20% of seniors reported participating in social change-related activities each year, either "organizing demonstrations" and/or membership in a "social action issue group". In the NSSE surveys (2005-2008), 65% to 75% of seniors indicated that their college experiences had contributed to their "knowledge, skills, and personal development " in solving real-world problems either "quite a bit" or "very much," compared to 42% to 65% of students at the end of their first year.

Understanding Self: In the HEDS Surveys (2006-2008, 2010) 89% to 95% of seniors reported that their experiences at the college enhanced their ability to understand themselves "moderately" or "greatly". A similar question on the NSSE survey shows that Whittier experiences contribute to students' understanding of self over time (see Table 2.7). Whittier students rate this contribution higher than NSSE institutions overall and higher than their Carnegie peers.

Table 2.7. NSSE 2005-2008 *Understanding Self*: Whittier College Compared to Carnegie Peers and All NSSE (means)

	2005		2006		2007		2008	
	Freshmen	Seniors	Freshmen	Seniors	Freshmen	Seniors	Freshmen	Seniors
Whittier	2.84	3.21	2.74	3.21	2.85	3.02	2.69	3.16
Carnegie Peers	2.88	3.10	2.84	3.06	2.86	3.04	2.88	3.00
All NSSE	2.77	2.88*	2.71	2.78*	2.73	2.78*	2.81	2.83*

Understanding Others: In the HEDS Surveys (2006-2008, 2010) 82% to 87% of seniors reported that their experiences at the college enhanced their ability to "relate to people of different races, nations, or religions" "moderately" or "greatly". Most seniors also reported "often" or "very often" having discussions with students of different beliefs (67-76%). About a quarter of Whittier students participate in a Cultural or Ethnic Group or Association each year. A supplemental question added to the 2010 HEDS survey asked seniors if their Whittier College liberal education had provided them with the beliefs and attitudes required to work in a cultural setting different than their own. Overall, the majority of seniors either strongly agreed (22%) or mostly agreed (45%). A somewhat higher percentage of Latino students (66%) than White students (62%) responded that they either "strongly agreed" or "mostly agreed" that their liberal education had impacted their beliefs and attitudes.

Relevant items in the NSSE survey show similar positive results. Both Whittier freshmen and seniors report that their college experiences contribute to their understanding of others significantly more than their Carnegie peers or NSSE

respondents as a whole. Seniors are significantly more likely than NSSE seniors as a whole to report having tried to "better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his/her perspective" (see Theme Diversity Report, Table 13).

Contribute to the Community: In the HEDS Surveys (2006-2008, 2010), when asked about career considerations, between 59% and 65% of seniors reported that "working for social change" was a "very important" or "essential" consideration. Each year, about a third of seniors report having participated in an "off-campus internship". In respect to volunteer service, in 2010, 56% of seniors report having participated in some form of volunteer service during college, the highest percentage among the years examined for this report. In 2006 and 2007, fewer Whittier seniors reported volunteer service than 5 of the 6 HEDS comparison institutions. On the NSSE surveys Whittier seniors were equally or more likely report that their college experiences had enhanced their "knowledge, skills, and personal development "with respect to contributing to the welfare of the community. Seniors scored significantly higher than other NSSE seniors in 2006, 2007, and 2008 (see Theme Diversity Report, Table 14).

For the data presented in this report, the NSSE and HEDS national data will continue to provide us with a means to assess achievement of our own benchmarks. For the two NSSE benchmark areas, *Supportive Campus Environment* and *Enriching Educational Experiences* discussed above, Whittier College aims to score higher than NSSE as a whole in a given year and to sustain or achieve parity with its Carnegie peers over the next eight years. With the new Center for Community Engagement, our goal is to score as well as our HEDS comparison group on all items related to student volunteerism and involvement in their communities.

Moving from the CPR to the EER:

As noted at the beginning of this report, diversity at Whittier College represents more than a social obligation—it represents a deeply held intellectual commitment to student learning. This Reflective Essay for our Capacity Report reflects our belief that we have the capacity to provide students with a diverse learning environment.

Putting our commitments into practice requires attention to both curricular development and co-curricular programming, and our work also has significant implications for recruiting and retention. Our Liberal Education curriculum has embodied these values; thus our goal for the EER is to measure culture knowledge and determine the educational effectiveness of the courses for our Liberal Education Culture requirement, which is one of the "Four C's" in our Liberal Education program. We want to know if they are meeting the learning needs of a diverse student population.

Our culture requirement focuses on developing students' Cultural Perspective. We believe that one of the marks of educated people is their thoughtful and informed awareness that not everyone thinks and feels as they do--that there is more than one way to think about the idea of the "self"; to build and sustain a family, a community, a society; to rear children; to teach values; to seek ultimate meaning--and that functioning effectively in an ever smaller world requires an ever deeper knowledge of the world others inhabit. Furthermore, understanding the present and future also requires an understanding of the past; thus understanding the *history* of various cultural perspectives is part of the job--as is the exploration of others' surviving artifacts and cultural products: their art, their literature, their music.

Our learning goals for this requirement require students to:
1. Develop the capacity to recognize and differentiate multiple perspectives and interpretations.
2. Develop an understanding of culture and of the connections between themselves and others in relation to physical, historical, social, and global contexts.
3. Apply theories, principles and practices to contemporary and/or historical cultures.
4. Analyze ways cultures influence each other.
5. Explain and challenge their own cultural narratives about the world.

To analyze cultural knowledge, we will focus our assessment specifically on our Cross-Cultural courses, that is, courses which explicitly compare two or more cultures, address global issues, or investigate transnational or trans-cultural currents. Our working definition encompasses those courses that examine two or more dimensions of human diversity and that consider these dimensions in terms of their social and/or cultural consequences. We want to analyze the extent to which students demonstrate an understanding of multiple perspectives and their gains in critical thinking from these important courses.

We have already begun to develop an analytical assessment tool. The Liberal Education Assessment sub-committee developed several vignettes and corresponding questions that might serve to assess students' learning in respect to one or more of the Cultural Perspectives learning objectives. The vignettes were pilot tested among small groups of students during the 2011 January Interim Term. A faculty member, at the request of the sub-committee, has developed a rubric that could be used to evaluate student responses. The sub-committee met in May of 2011 to apply the rubric and determine if the pilot vignettes and questions will serve their intended purpose. The revised Cultural Perspectives learning objectives have been submitted to our Education Policies Committee for approval in the fall of 2011.

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[1] Whittier College Strategic Plan, Executive Summary, 2001-2011, p. 3.

[2] (College Catalog, 2007-2009, p. 46).

[3] (Hurtado, et. al., 2003; Umbach and Kuh, 2003).

[4] Whittier College Strategic Plan, 2001, p. 5

[5] Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1999) developed a four-dimensional framework for examining a campus climate as it pertains to diversity. The framework includes structural, psychological, and behavioral dimensions as well as an institution's history of inclusion and exclusion (Table 1). The structural dimension of a campus climate involves the actual diversity on campus in terms of numbers and percentages of diverse groups. The psychological dimension pertains to individuals' perceptions about institutional support for diversity and their own sense of belonging. The behavioral dimension refers to the interactional aspects of campus life, including interactions with diverse groups.

[6] While research studies have shown variable perceptions of campus climates among students from different racial/ethnic groups (Engberg, Meader, and Hurtado, 2003), due to our relatively small enrollment and voluntary student participation in the NSSE and HEDS Surveys and Wabash study, it was not possible to disaggregate our student samples by diversity to compare possible differences in their experiences within the college.

[7] (U.S. Department of Education, 2008)

[8] Whittier College results on individual items for Supportive Campus Environment for years 2005 to 2008 are shown in Table 5 of Theme Diversity Report.

[9] For example, almost 95% of Latino seniors saw the institution as providing the support they needed to succeed academically "quite a bit" or "very much" compared to almost 89% of White seniors. Latino seniors gave marginally higher ratings on all six items in this NSSE Benchmark than White seniors.

[10] See Table 7 in Theme Community Report.

 [11] The range of responses is similar for the third item, the campus "Encourages contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds" additional results from the HEDS Senior Surveys are available at the colleges Moodle link site.

[12] Additional results from the HEDS Senior Surveys are available at the colleges Moodle link site.

 [13] Universality-Diversity Awareness Scale from Miville-Guzman (M-GUDS-S, short form): The M-GUDS-S looks at "interest in and commitment to participating in diverse, intentionally focused social and cultural activities … appreciation of both similarities and differences in people and the impact of these in one's self-understanding and personal growth and … the degree of comfort with diverse individuals."

[14] Socially Responsible Leadership Scale: This scale measures consciousness of self, congruency, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, citizenship, and change. A participant who scores high on this scale "demonstrates strong socially responsible leadership capabilities, is self-aware, acts in accordance with personal values and beliefs, invests time and energy in activities that he or she believes are important, works with diverse others to accomplish common goals, has a sense of civic and social responsibility, and desires to make the world a better place".

[15] Political & Social Involvement Scale: This scale measures the importance to students of being active participants, both politically and socially, in their communities.

[16] Openness to Diversity/Challenge: On this measure, students indicate their level of "openness to culture and racial diversity as well as the extent to which they enjoy being challenged by different perspectives, values, and ideas."

Reflective Essay 3: URSCA

CPR Theme 3—Connections at Whittier—Undergraduate Research
As other essays have enumerated, our Liberal Education program is built on the "Four C's"—Community, Communication, Cultural Perspectives, and Connections. This program is developmental—as we have noted earlier, our First Year students are introduced to Community. We see the 4th C—Connections, as a way that students again connect as a community, in the context of interdisciplinary courses and paired courses, and undergraduate research.[1] "*Connections,*" to Whittier has meant a long tradition of fostering interdisciplinary study. Interdisciplinary work reflects another aspect of the faceted and interconnected nature of reality. Interdisciplinary also incorporates the Quaker tradition of a practical education, a tradition reflected in the College's long history of service-oriented academic programs and in our majors and programs which connect academic work with the necessity of functioning in the world beyond the College. We educate through the particular, but we educate in, about, and for life in a much larger world, and our students need to learn this connection - praxis - through putting it into practice while they are students.
As our Proposal explained, the particular C*onnections* we are emphasizing during our Self-Study are those involved in undergraduate research, or as we have phrased it, URSCA - undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative activity. This emphasis represents a relatively new direction for the College, but it is also reflects a recent direction in undergraduate education. As Bauer and Bennett explain, before the late 1980s, only a few universities had committed significant resources to institution-wide undergraduate research programs that involved the institutions' faculty in regular research collaborations with undergraduates. But since the mid-to-late 1990s, the practice has become more widespread and other research shows that faculty participants in undergraduate research frequently report high levels of satisfaction with learning achieved by undergraduates through collaborative research with faculty.[2] Efforts at formal assessment of learning outcomes attained through the undergraduate research experience followed the implementation of the practice, and the literature is rich and growing with assessment data.[3]

We understand that a fruitful undergraduate research experience should allow students to see the connections between the theoretical and the practical and provide essential knowledge in choosing a career path. More specifically, the participation of undergraduate students in original research encourages them to pursue careers that address current complex scientific or societal problems.[4] The literature also documents important learning outcomes: students improve their oral and written communication skills, learn to be better scholars, and increase their self-confidence and ability to work independently.[5] These issues became the basis of our study for the WASC reaccreditation.

Implementation of Undergraduate Research at Whittier College—Identifying the Questions and Building Capacity.

Though faculty members in various disciplines have been doing research with undergraduates for some time at Whittier, the effort to institutionalize undergraduate research began in 2008 when four faculty members (one an associate dean), attended a CUR workshop, *Institutionalizing Undergraduate Research.* Upon their return, the dean summarized the action plan they had developed into three component parts that centered on resources: (1) things that could be done to instill a culture of undergraduate research that did not cost anything and that could be implemented in a relatively short amount of time; (2) those things that require some funding (less than $10,000) and could also be done relatively quickly; and (3) those items that require a larger outlay of expenditures and therefore are longer term in duration. Taken as a whole, these actions were expected to alter significantly the culture of undergraduate research on the campus. But we also concluded that simply by starting to do a few things differently it could raise interest in and commitment to undergraduate research. Working with the faculty, the defined goals were: (1) to insure that there is an opportunity for all undergraduate students across all disciplines to engage in collaborative research with faculty; and (2) to insure that all undergraduate research results in public dissemination. The group concluded that one of the critical elements of the action plan was to assess both faculty and administrative support for undergraduate research at Whittier. They felt that both faculty consensus about the role of undergraduate research across the curriculum and administrative support were necessary for undergraduate research to thrive at Whittier. It was understood that faculty consensus might require changing faculty culture or pre-conceived notions about what undergraduate research is and who can engage in it. Moreover, student culture might also need to change. In short, we concluded that if we are to be successful at

integrating undergraduate research across the curriculum, then we need to do so carefully and with a defined plan of action.[6]

By 2009, with additional faculty, we began with a focus on the public elements of URSCA, drawing faculty from the Educational Policies Committee who was interested in working specifically on an "Undergraduate Research Presentation Day." In addition, faculty from the humanities and the arts were included (one of our goals from the original CUR meeting). In meetings, we discussed the practical application of data on URSCA to be used for: eliminating obstacles to conducting URSCA at Whittier, encouraging new or more faculty members to engage in URSCA, and highlighting URSCA across campus and to the broader community. As part of our participation in CUR's *Institutionalizing Undergraduate Research* workshop (see Theme URSCA, Appendix D), the College invited Gerald R. Van Hecke to come in March of 2010 to serve as an outside evaluator of our URSCA program. He pointed out a number of existing obstacles to institutionalizing undergraduate research, and he gave us the following action items: (1)Define research across the campus [the pursuit of new knowledge]; (2)Seek to organize a common campus research/presentations day; (3) Increase the dialog between Advancement and the faculty; (4) Seek to expand research across the campus, define the scale of the desired effort; and (5) The Dean of Faculty should support regular meetings with department chairs.

We have had progress in three of these 5 areas. First, the Dean holds monthly department chair meetings, and assessment actions and URSCA activities have been highlighted for all chairs. Moreover, the Dean was persuaded to adopt an institutional CUR membership, allowing all faculty access to this organization's resources which have been shown to increase and broaden participation.

Second, we inaugurated a presentation day on campus for family weekend (April 8-9, 2011) where we highlighted undergraduate research for families as well as recruited and current students. These celebrations of research are important ways to highlight undergraduate research efforts, and the Council on Undergraduate Research lists 121 undergraduate institutions with "Research celebration days." More specifically, instituting the tradition of public presentation was important for two reasons (1) promoting URSCA to disciplines that have not seen research as a practice important to their students, and (2) encouraging graduate school and professional careers to under-represented groups given that 48% of Whittier students are non-white (31% Hispanic). Whittier's URSCA Day was a big success for a first-time event. There were 30 presentation sessions in three concurrent times, plus a poster session during the lunch period, and a Creative Arts Poetry reading at the end of the day. About 75 students participated, and their faculty mentors attended with them. In contrast to some colleges where science fields are the most popular ones represented, Whittier's first "Presentation Day" included students from almost every major in the college (with the exception of the performing arts.) Even more important, analysis of the student participants showed that over 29% of the participants for URSCA day were Hispanic students, a percentage that is similar to the percentage of undergraduate students.[7]

Third, in the last several years, Whittier College has also increased funding for undergraduate research. Much of this funding has been the result of a concerted effort to work with our Advancement Division to identify private donors and foundations who will fund undergraduate fellows (see WC Fellowships Created Since 2008).

One of the most important things that came out of the faculty planning and discussion was a broadened definition of "undergraduate research". Our expanded definition of undergraduate research reflects the different nature of and models for such work across the disciplines. We like the definition used by the Council on Undergraduate Research, "an inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate student that makes an original intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline," but we recognize the need for further discussion and definition across campus.[8]

Because Undergraduate Research is central to the learning outcomes identified by Whittier College, we can state on the one hand that all students in all disciplines engage in Undergraduate Research through the Whittier Scholars Program's Senior Project, the Senior Presentation in the Major, or outside of the curriculum. Undergraduate research culminates in a peer-reviewed paper, publication, or presentation. On the other hand, as will be shown below, students and faculty often do not identify what they have done as "undergraduate research/creative activity." This perceptual problem has

had a significant impact on advancing the ability to understand its impact.

Research Capacity Questions for the CPR:

> 1. How many of our Faculty conduct research with students?
> 2. How well is our faculty personnel process is integrated with URSCA?
> 3. How are we measuring student participation in URSCA?
> 4. Does the curriculum provide a developmental process for URSCA at Whittier College?
> 5. How are we providing resources for URSCA experiences?
> 6. Do URSCA experiences influence career practice

Educational Effective Measures for the EER:

> 1. Are students learning to think analytically and critically from participation in undergraduate research?
> 2. Do URSCA experiences at Whittier influence retention?

Question 1. How many of our Faculty conduct research with students?
To begin our study of undergraduate research activity, we began with the faculty and their understanding of the subject. The faculty was surveyed in fall 2010 (see Theme Community, Appendix B for more details). Of the 54 faculty who responded, 43% reported that they engage in research with students in class and 54% reported they did it outside of class. Faculty also reported engaging in scholarship inside (37%) and outside (33%) of class, creative activity in-class (32%) and outside-of-class (17%). The smallest category was "involving students in your own creative activity" (2%) but faculty reported students helped with their own scholarship (19%) and research (30%). Faculty reported undergraduate research occurring at higher rates than students reported.

Table 3.1 Faculty reporting URSCA Aspects: Aspects of URSCA do you engage in with students….	Yes	Percent who said yes
Research in class	23	42.6
Research out of class	29	53.7
Involve them in my own research	16	29.6
Scholarship in class	20	37.0
Scholarship out of class	18	33.3
Involve them in my own scholarship	10	18.5
Creative activity in class	17	31.5
Creative activity outside of class	9	16.7
Involve them in my own creative activity	1	1.9

Because much of the national research points to the prevalence of undergraduate research in the sciences but not in the humanities and social sciences, we will be doing further analysis to get some key data which will be discussed in the EER: (1) How many students does each faculty member work with? (i.e., a few selected students or with all students in their class?); (2) What type of research do faculty and students participate in together?; and (3) Are there fields that are much less represented than others?

Question 2. How well is URSCA integrated into our faculty personnel practice?
Faculty reward structures, including tenure and promotion, can encourage or discourage faculty participation in URSCA-type activities. Decisions on tenure and promotion at Whittier College are made by the Faculty Personnel Committee, who then provides recommendations through the Dean of Faculty to the President and ultimately the Board of Trustees.

The Faculty Handbook enumerates our policies. As Part III, Section 3, Standards for Evaluating Faculty Performance notes, our decisions weigh excellence in teaching, scholarship, advisement, and service. Effective teaching is the most important contribution a faculty member can make to the college. Scholarship is broadly defined, and the language notes that it "may take the form of any or all of the following: scholarship of discovery, of integration, of application, and

of teaching." [9] Since URSCA involves both teaching and research, we determined that URSCA is integrated well into our faculty personnel practices.

Question 3. How are we measuring student participation in URSCA?
In our broad view of undergraduate research, we want to encourage those in the humanities and the creative arts as well as the sciences and social sciences to actively identify various ways faculty and students can collaborate on intellectual activities. For this systematic effort to work, we needed data to identify students who participate in URSCA. During our data collection efforts, we realized that we had another problem—that some students did not recognize that that their work was indeed "URSCA."

To provide a systematic mechanism to track the number and demographics of students engaged in URSCA at Whittier College, we added several questions to our HEDS survey about URSCA in the spring of 2010. (See Theme URSCA, Appendix A for more details). The data points to a perceptual problem with how our students identified their participation. Out of 163 who answered the HEDS survey question "In which of the following activities did you engage in a scholarly inquiry, investigation, performance, or artistic creation that made an original intellectual or creative contribution to a discipline (check all that apply)" only 3% presented research at a conference off campus, 7% did independent research outside of class and 5% collaborated with faculty outside of class. NSSE data showed similar perceptual issues. According to our NSSE reports from 2005-2008 (see Table 3.2 below), an average of 41.75% of seniors reported that they have done "a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements." Another 15% of seniors reported that they plan to do these activities.

The NSSE numbers were particularly puzzling. On the one hand, the new Liberal Education Curriculum implemented in 2005 mandated senior presentations for the class that graduated in 2007-2008. Thus, we (faculty) know that all students complete URSCA as part of their senior presentations. On the other hand, the senior students were not reporting universally that they had completed URSCA. Clearly, the large majority of students do not themselves recognize and report engagement in URSCA outside of course requirements. Part of our problem was that NSSE does not have a comparable question for inside of course and program requirements. This perceptual problem made our data difficult to interpret.

Some of the NSSE results, however, may be part of a larger perceptual issue for undergraduates. A recent white paper published by the Teagle Foundation using the NSSE data from 209 four-year colleges and universities reported that one in five (19%) of senior students nationally had worked on research with faculty, but the same study also found similar problems to the ones we found: the overall number did not seem to truly reflect the number and percentages of students involved in URSCA-type activities. National evaluations show that between 25% - 39% of biology or physical science students participate in research, and that many non-science majors elected independent study courses that were actually research courses.[10] Moreover, the data could vary by area and by the type of conference. Our own data that compared participation in our on-campus research day with participation in a regional undergraduate research conference (SCCUR) showed similar differences-- the percentage of students from the humanities and sciences presenting their work was higher at SCCUR than on campus, and the percentage of students from the social sciences was lower at SCCUR when compared to the on-campus URSCA celebration.

Table 3.2. Students reporting work on a research project with a faculty outside of course/program requirements								
	NSSE 2005		NSSE 2006		NSSE 2007		NSSE 2008	
	Freshman	Senior	Freshman	Senior	Freshman	Senior	Freshman	Senior
Have not decided	51 (39%)	4 (6%)	25 (30%)	7 (9%)	61 (47%)	5 (6%)	27 (33%)	15 (12%)
Do not plan to do	15 (12%)	23 (%)	11 (13%)	36 (46%)	19 (15%)	30 (38%)	8 (10%)	54 (42%)
Plan to do	56 (43%)	10 (33%)	39 (47%)	6 (8%)	43 (33%)	8 (10%)	42 (51%)	11 (9%)
Done	8 (6%)	32 (46%)	8 (10%)	29 (37%)	6 (5%)	36 (46%)	6 (7%)	48 (38%)
Total	130	69	83	78	129	79	83	128

Question 4. Does the curriculum provide a developmental process for URSCA at Whittier College?

Recent scholarship on undergraduate research points to the enhancement of effects when undergraduate research is introduced in the first or second year of college. Early engagement is important for retention and there is more opportunity for students to become integrated into a community of interdisciplinary scholars. Early experiences in undergraduate research also seem to lead to more involvement of underrepresented groups in STEM fields.[11] Given our emphasis on retention, and our mission as a Hispanic-serving institution, we are eager to ensure that URSCA can benefit our students in this way. However, as Table 3.3 shows, undergraduate research efforts at Whittier are not formulated into a developmental process beginning in the first year. Instead, we find that most students do research with faculty in their junior or senior years. According to the HEDS 2010 report (see Theme Community, Appendix A for more details), of those who report having done faculty research, the majority of the students did so during their junior (17%) and senior (21%) year, only 12% of the combined freshmen and sophomores reported to have done URSCA activities.

Table 3.3 HEDS Data on When Students do URSCA

	1st Year Faculty Research	2nd Year Faculty Research	3rd Year Faculty Research	4th Year Faculty Research
No	156 (96%)	150 (92%)	136 (83%)	128 (79%)
yes	7 (4%)	13 (8%)	27 (17%)	35 (21%)
total	163	163	163	163

The HEDS results showed that 18% of students recognized that they had engaged in URSCA in senior presentations, paper in the major and senior project. 12% thought they did scholarship in their Writing Intensive Courses (WICS) and First Year Writing Seminar. Only 8% recognized it in their methods course (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4. Student reporting engagement in URSCA activity

In Which of the following activities did you engage in scholarly inquiry…

	Frequency	Percent
Presentation at an off Campus Conference	22	3
Collaborative Research with Faculty	33	5
Independent Research Outside of Class	43	7
Discipline Specific Research Methods Course	50	8
First Year Writing Seminar	77	12
Writing Intensive Course	80	12
Senior Project	113	18
Senior Presentation	113	18
Paper in Major	114	18

We understand the need for a developmental process for URSCA, and because our goal is to build capacity, we looked at courses that are intended to provide research skills. Many of our majors mandate methods courses, and so we focused on trying to ascertain how well URSCA is integrated into methods courses. The results confirmed the results we had found with other studies. An analysis of syllabi showed that 70% of those courses were at junior (300) and senior (400) level. On the other hand, 30% of the syllabi were sophomore (200) courses. This analysis suggests that most students are not exposed to URSCA through our regular curriculum (majors and WSP) until junior or senior year. One of our tasks for the EER will be to work with our curriculum committee and with departments to move the methods courses to the sophomore year.

While methods courses do not seem to provide an early exposure to URSCA, the Senior Capstone Courses provide every student with opportunities for URSCA experiences. An analysis of syllabi showed the richness of opportunities provided by faculty through these Senior Capstone Courses. While all of these "Capstone Courses" are designated as formal

courses, almost half our the departments we surveyed (7 of the 16 reporting) include faculty mentorship of senior projects outside of class instruction (in other words students may work with other faculty not teaching senior seminar or have a longer ongoing project with a faculty mentor besides an assignment for class). We were pleased to find that the final product was very much in line with what CUR has dictated as an appropriate result of undergraduate research--63 percent of papers presented original research compared to literature reviews (13%) or topic based projects (19%).
In sum, both the student reports and the analysis of syllabi suggest that we have not yet built capacity for in early introduction to URSCA in and outside of our curriculum. One of our tasks as we begin the work of the EER will be to go back to our departments and our faculty committee overseeing curriculum to develop a more developmental process for URSCA. Whittier College needs to develop benchmarks for the Developmental Process and Outcomes for URSCA. Currently there does not seem to be existing published benchmarks for undergraduate research, though there is a growing body of publications regarding assessment of outcomes. An important place for Whittier to start may be by setting benchmarks about prevalence in the variety of URSCA activities faculty offer and to determine how many students do we want engaged in URSCA? How many students can we support?

Question 5. How are we providing resources for URSCA experiences?
As we try to expand and broaden URSCA participation with faculty and students, available resources are an important issue for us. These resources include faculty time and compensation, funds for student materials, and administrative help. Additionally, summer research participation touches on such issues and available housing and summer stipends for students. As our consultant noted to us, we needed to align this priority to our work with our Advancement group to seek out more resources.

The college was already providing some resources for student research. The Dean of Faculty's office provides some support for student travel to conferences ($5000 total; students can receive up to $500). Moreover, the Dean of Faculty's office has been working with our Conference group to find summer housing for our research students. The effort so far has been modest—about 10 students were accommodated in the summer of 2010, and 20 were housed in 2011, but plans are being made to increase this number as the College has been expanding student housing.

The College took the advice to work with Advancement very seriously, and in the past three years, we have been quite successful in finding Foundation and other external grants to support URSCSA. In 2008, the College received a substantial (and renewable) grant from the Mellon Foundation to establish the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program. This program, which identifies talented sophomores from groups under-represented in the professoriate, has been an important symbol on our campus of our commitment both to improving opportunities for under-represented groups and for beginning URSCA activities early in the student's career (see WC Fellowships Created Since 2008). Other issues remain to be addressed, as the College can identify resources. We recognize the usefulness of a central office with administrative leadership who could champion our URSCA endeavors and help to advance them. Faculty compensation, especially for summer mentoring, is another issue. A survey of faculty showed that 94% of respondents said that faculty pay was important for their participation in summer programs. Other support for equipment/supplies and teaching credit were also mentioned as needed supports.

Question 6. Do URSCA experiences influence career practice?
The literature on undergraduate research shows that URSCA-type experiences "clarified [students'] career interests and increased their understanding and confidence in their major.[12] To gather data for Whittier students, in 2010, the HEDS survey included a list of career skills they may learn from URSCA. Students varied on the specific career skills they learned.

Viewing the data by type of URSCA the student completed, the findings revealed that those students who either collaborated with a faculty member or presented at a conference off campus were most likely to endorse learning direct job skills. This one result implies more individualized and labor intensive faculty mentoring of URSCA may have the most benefits for direct job skills. This information is important and our next step will be to help our students translate these skills into their resumes for employment after graduation as well as into their applications for graduate school. Our

experience with the structured program of Mellon Mays has shown us that this is very valuable for our students (see Theme URSCA Report, Question 2).

Summary and Directions for the EER
Beginning in 2005, with the adoption of the new Liberal Learning curriculum that mandated a Senior Capstone Experience, the College has set out to make Undergraduate Research a learning goal for all students. In the last three years, the faculty and administration have worked together to expand what was a "Capstone" experience into a developmental experience for all students and to expand resources to support this learning initiative. The Capacity and Preparatory Review has proven to be a very helpful assessment tool, and while we have found some real areas of strength—i.e., many of our faculty are mentoring undergraduate research students both inside and outside of class—we have not built total capacity in terms of making URSCA a developmental process. This necessitates some curricular revision by both departments and by our faculty curricular committee. Moreover, many of our students do not recognize that their work, even in the Senior Capstone experiences, constitutes true "undergraduate research." This perceptual problem can hurt our efforts to get students to realize the particular skills they are building for post-graduation plans. Clearly, the faculty and administration need to build awareness. Finally, we have begun to build capacity for URSCA through some extensive work with external foundations. The College understands that these funds will need permanent endowments, and these are priorities in the upcoming Capital Campaign.

For the EER, we will concentrate on two research questions.

Question1: Do URSCA experiences influence retention?
As we've noted in the essay on Community, retention is an issue we wish to address in multiple ways at the college. Research at other schools indicates URSCA can be a retention strategy especially for students of color.[13] Undergraduate research promotes academic and social integration in the college, and the literature has shown that students reported a greater satisfaction with their undergraduate experience and reported increases in intellectual curiosity, research skills, and communication skills. Students also reported better time management skills.[14]

We have some initial data that appears promising. As noted earlier in this essay, our research has found that Latino students participate in formally identified URSCA events to the same extent as they are represented in our student population. We believe that further study and intervention can help us with our sophomore retention issues. To address this issue, we will do a controlled cohort study of sophomores who take courses that involve research and assess students' satisfaction with their own learning, and then follow this cohort to the junior year. This cohort will be compared with a control group that does not take courses involving research. We can also use data derived from the fellowship opportunities enumerated above, many of which involve sophomore students.

Question 2: Are students learning to think analytically and critically from participation in undergraduate research?
While our overall desire for URSCA is to provide a developmental process throughout the time that students are at Whittier, we want to begin our study of educational effectiveness at Whittier by assessing our seniors. As noted earlier, the 2005 revision of our Liberal Education curriculum has mandated a Senior Capstone experience, and thus our seniors constitute a population where every student has done an URSCA-type project. We are anxious to know if the literature that touts URSCA activities as promoting analytical and critical thinking is working for our students. Our faculty group that works on URSCA has agreed to pilot a rubric to look at critical thinking in senior presentations of their senior papers (often URSCA activities). We chose a rubric for critical thinking from a group of AAC&U rubrics and other rubrics and have used it to rate the presentations at URSCA day on campus and perhaps in other senior presentation contexts. We will also obtain some reliability data by having multiple evaluators at the same presentations. This will give us a snapshot of some of the critical thinking displayed in some senior presentations. New directions and expansions of this assessment can be planned given these pilot data. The rubrics have been collected but will need to be entered into a database and analyzed. While this year will be a pilot year, we will be utilizing the support of the IR office with inputting the data and analyzing the findings over the summer. Once this is accomplished, faculty in the fall can discuss the findings with each other and focus groups of students. The ultimate idea for this project is to assess how well the

learning goals of our URSCA effort are meeting our expectations.

[1] See "Whittier's Four C's: A Curriculum in Context"—document and on website.

[2] (Hakim, 1998; Mabrouk & Peters, 2000; Manduca, 1997)

[3] See, for example, Russell SH, Hancock MP, McCullough J. Benefits of undergraduate research experiences. Science, 2007;316:548-549, NRC, 1999)

[4] (Russell, Hancock, McCullough, 2007).

[5] see, for example, Guterman, 2007; Lopatto, 2004; Russell, Hancock & McCullough, 2007; Seymour, Hunter, Laursen & DeAntoni, 2004; Wilson, 2006).

[6] Susan Gotsch memo "Cur Followup" March 18, 2008.

[7] currently 31% of our students are Hispanic, and much of the literature on undergraduate research points to the vital importance for students of color to be involved with undergraduate research activities.

[8] Council on Undergraduate Research, "Frequently Asked Questions," website: URL: http://www.cur.org/faq.html

[9] The language intentionally followed the recommendations of the four "Boyer categories" of faculty scholarship. See Ernest Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (New York: Jossey Bass, 1997).

[10] The Teagle Working Group on the Teacher-Scholar, 2007. (N= 65,633 randomly sampled senior students)

[11] On retention, see NRC, 1999; on integration, see Hoke and Gentile, CUR Quarterly, FALL 2008 - Volume 29, Number 1, pp. 18-22; on under-represented groups, see: Russell SH, Hancock MP, McCullough J. Benefits of undergraduate research experiences. Science, 2007; 316: 548-549.

[12] Russell SH, Hancock MP, McCullough J. Benefits of undergraduate research experiences. *Science*, 2007; 316:548-549

[13] (Nagda, et al., 1998). Also Russell, Hancock, and McCullough 2007.

[14] Bauer and Bennet (2003).

CPR CONCLUSION

Reflections on Our Efforts to Date and a Look Ahead to the Educational Effectiveness Review

Through the self-study described in the previous essays of this report, we have articulated a number of paths that we believe will lead to an improved understanding of the education we provide at Whittier College.   Here, we narrow our focus to the topics and inquiries that we believe are most important to our campus today, and that are achievable, at least in part, by the time of the next phase of our accreditation cycle, the Educational Effectiveness Review.

With our study of **Community,** we investigate how academic performance and relationships are related to retention in the First Year, and beyond the first year. As we review our data, we see that we are doing good work in engaging our students in academic endeavor and in relationships with faculty and their peers. Though we do not have direct measures of the connections between retention and academic performance, the literature shows that the sorts of activities discussed in the previous essays have a very positive effect on retention.

For **Diversity** we focus on our Cultural Perspective requirement. This core curriculum requirement reflects our belief that one of the marks of educated people is their thoughtful and informed awareness that not everyone thinks and feels as they do--that there is more than one way to think about the idea of the "self"; to build and sustain a family, a community, a society; to rear children; to teach values; to seek ultimate meaning--and that functioning effectively in an ever smaller world requires an ever deeper knowledge of the world others inhabit. Furthermore, understanding the present and future also requires an understanding of the past; thus understanding the *history* of various cultural perspectives is part of the job- as is the exploration of others' surviving artifacts and cultural products: their art, their literature, their music.

Finally, in our study of **Connections through Undergraduate Research**, we are asking whether URSCSA influences retention. Through an analysis of our Senior Presentations, we will examine the levels of critical thinking in senior presentations and senior papers.

The following is a summary of the activities Whittier College proposes to undertake for the **Educational Effectiveness Review.** These activities will be overseen by the WASC Steering Committee, the Office of Assessment and the Director of Institutional Research. It will be supported in important ways by the Faculty-led Committees on Assessment, the

Educational Policy Committee, and the Enrollment and Student Affairs Committee. The Faculty Executive Committee, the Office of Admissions, the Dean of Students' Office, and others will also play integral roles.

1. For the study of Community: We will investigate how academic performance and relationships are related to retention in the First Year, and beyond the first year. The College systematically collects data, such as an Exit Interview survey on the factors influencing a student's decision to choose Whittier College, how well their expectations were met in both curricular and co-curricular areas, and factors influencing their decision to leave. We know that students choose to leave for personal reasons (health of self or others, family obligations, distance from home), desire to major in an area that Whittier does not offer, or difficulty getting classes. Efforts to improve course selection have been implemented.

This spring we implemented an additional step and asked students leaving the College to complete of the Community Assessment Survey (CAS) to assess the level to which students withdrawing developed positive peer communities through peer relationships and institutional affiliation through the development of friendships, clubs, organizations, etc. This additional analysis, in addition to our NSSE, First Year Community Survey (FYCS), the Beginning Survey of Student Engagement (BSSE), Interviews and the Writing Program Rubric when complimented by the students who have persisted, will give us insight into the role that community development played or didn't play with these students and guide our efforts to more fully engage all students. We will move from indentifying trends in engagement, relationships, and institutional affiliation to relationships and academic performances of first year students.

With the help of the Wabash research team and Teagle Scholars we have developed a methodology for the EER that will allow us to answer our research question asking what specific practices improve retention. For this examination we plan to collect data from a sample of students using student identifiers to enable us to look at factors in relationship to each other. We plan to look at seven sections of our academic link groups, selecting approximately 120 students (25-30% of the entire first year class). We will examine the students' incoming attributes, academic experiences, attitudes and perceptions and then their academic performance including their performance in our first year writing program.

2. For the Study of Diversity: We will determine the educational effectiveness of our courses for our Liberal Education Culture requirement. To analyze culture, we have chosen to focus our assessment specifically on our Cross-Cultural courses, that is, courses which explicitly compare two or more cultures, address global issues, or investigate transnational or trans-cultural currents. Our working definition encompasses those courses that examine two or more dimensions of human diversity and that consider these dimensions in terms of their social and/or cultural consequences. We want to analyze the extent to which students demonstrate an understanding and value of multiple perspectives and the impact of group membership on learning outcomes from these important courses.
Our learning outcomes for this requirement are for students to: (1) Develop the capacity to recognize and differentiate multiple perspectives and interpretations; (2) Develop an understanding of culture and of the connections between themselves and others in relation to physical, historical, social, and global contexts; (3) Apply theories, principles and practices to contemporary and/or historical cultures; (4) Analyze ways cultures influence each other; and (5) Explain and challenge their own cultural narratives about the world

We have already begun to develop an analytical assessment tool. The Liberal Education Assessment sub-committee developed several vignettes and corresponding questions that might serve to assess students' learning in respect to one or more of the Cultural Perspectives learning objectives. The vignettes were pilot tested among small groups of students during the 2011 January Interim Term. A faculty member, at the request of the sub-committee, has developed a rubric that could be used to evaluate student responses. The sub-committee met in May of 2011 to apply the rubric and determine if the pilot vignettes and questions will serve their intended purpose. The revised Cultural Perspectives learning objectives were submitted to EPC for approval and will be considered during the fall of 2011.

3. For the Study of Connections through an analysis of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity (URSCA): The URSCA group has agreed to pilot a rubric to look at critical thinking in senior presentations of their senior papers (often URSCA activities). We chose a rubric for critical thinking from a group of AAC&U rubrics and other rubrics and have used

it to rate the presentations at URSCA day on campus and perhaps in other senior presentation contexts. We will also obtain some reliability data by having multiple evaluators at the same presentations. This will give us a snapshot of some of the critical thinking displayed in some senior presentations. New directions and expansions of this assessment can be planned given these pilot data. The rubrics have been collected but will need to be entered into a database and analyzed. While this year will be a pilot year, we will be utilizing the support of the IR office with inputting the data and analyzing the findings over the summer. Once this is accomplished, faculty in the fall can discuss the findings with each other and focus groups of students. There are many other available sources of data and information needed by the group.

To support further inquiry and improvement, we also want to develop benchmarks for the Developmental Process and Outcomes for URSCA. An important place for Whittier to start may be by setting benchmarks about prevalence in the variety of URSCA activities faculty offer: fellowship programs, faculty directed projects, independent studies, summer projects, off campus programs, and specific classes that encompass URSCA. How many students do we want engaged in URSCA? How many students can we support? While the senior presentation may involve every student in URSCA, the extent to which these projects are mentored by faculty, are peer reviewed, or are intended to contribute to academic discourse vary. Are we meeting our educational aspirations and goals for making the paper in the major and presentation a requirement? What are our comparison schools doing in these areas?

Finally:
As a reminder, we again remark that it is traditional in Capacity and preparatory Review reports to include in-line references to standards and criterion for review (CFR). We have not taken this approach. Because the standards and CFRs are meant to guide the comprehensive assessment of an institution, and we are undergoing a more narrow-them based review, we felt that merely in-line references would not allow us to address the scope of the standards. Instead, we have added Appendices I, where we address each standard on the CFR in detail.