

# WHITTIER COLLEGE THEMATIC PATHWAY FOR REAFFIRMATION



## INSTITUTIONAL REPORT

FEBRUARY 2022





# CABINET

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# Commonly Used Terms and Abbreviations at Whittier

**Cabinet:** Executive Leadership, Vice Presidents, Faculty Chair, Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

**AC:** Assessment Committee.

**BOT:** Board of Trustees

**CAAS:** Center for Advising and Academic Success

**CFLA:** Committee on the Future of the Liberal Arts

**EPC:** Educational Policies Committee. Major duties: create or change majors, courses, minors, etc. Staffing recommendations, educational policies

**ERC:** Educational Resources Committee. Major duties: sits on budget, technology, classroom resources.

**ESAC :** Enrollment and Student Affairs Committee

**FAC:** Faculty Affairs Committee

**FEC:** Faculty Executive Committee

**FPC:** Faculty Personnel Committee

**IDC:** Inclusions and Diversity Committee

**OIRA:** Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

**SDS:** Student Disability Services

**STF:** Strategic Task Force

**WSP / WSC :** Whittier Scholars Program (Council): Major duties: Admit students to the program, review and approve individualized curricula.



# Component 1

Whittier College is a highly diverse (HSI and MSI), primarily undergraduate liberal arts college with approximately 1323 undergraduate and 64 graduate students. We are [one of the most diverse small liberal arts schools](#) in the country and in the fall of 2021, our students of color (which includes all students who are not White, international, or unknown) made up 67.7% of our student population; an increase of almost 20% in the last ten years. As of fall 2021, Latinx students made up 49.5% of the student body, Asians, 6.8%, and Black/African Americans, 4.6%. At Whittier College, the percentage of first-year students from California in fall 2021 was 62%. Our most recent 6-year graduation rate was 63.9% overall.

Whittier College was founded by the Religious Society of Friends in 1887, chartered by the State of California in 1901, and first accredited by WSCUC in 1949. Named for a prominent Quaker, poet, and leader of the Abolitionist movement, John Greenleaf Whittier, Whittier College has been a secular institution since the 1940's, but remains proud of its Quaker heritage and how Quaker values are perpetuated in many of our practices and reflected in our values. Through its commitment to social justice, community service and diversity, Whittier provides opportunities, domestically and abroad, for students to become "active citizens and effective communicators who embrace diversity and act with integrity" ([Mission Statement](#)). Our largest program is our undergraduate traditional [4-C's liberal education](#) curriculum and the [Whittier Scholars Program](#), each of which serves our mission by providing students with the opportunity to grow through community, communication, cultural perspectives, and connections (the "Four C's").

We offer 30 majors in 23 disciplines, as well as the option through the Whittier Scholars Program to create integrative individualized curricula leading to the bachelor's degree. Additionally we offer a master's degree in education, which may be achieved with or without a teaching credential. We completed the successful teach-out of the Whittier College School of Law as of June 30, 2019.

The appointment of Dr. Linda Oubré in July 2018 as Whittier's 15th president, and the first African American and person of color to hold the position, marks a transformational moment for the institution. President Oubré diversified the senior leadership team and quickly delineated three **Strategic Imperatives** (see theme 2b) for the college:

- 1. Focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion in support of student success.**
- 2. Launch new revenue generating initiatives to generate a sustainable business model for the college.**
- 3. Work to align our resources with our mission.**

Combined, these priorities provide a clear north star. The institution must continue to evolve its transformative education in tandem with being transformed *for and by* our students, and to follow this path with integrity and clear purpose.

## Capacity, Infrastructure and Operations

Whittier College is a private, not-for-profit, tuition-driven, HSI, MSI, primarily undergraduate institution. In addition to the undergraduate liberal education programs, we have a master's/credential program in Education. The campus also houses [Broadoaks](#), a

private K-8 school that serves as a lab school for Whittier College undergraduates.

Whittier's annual operating budget in 2020-21 was approximately 57 million dollars and was supported by an endowment and quasi-endowment of 143 million dollars ([Factbook](#)), amounting to over \$108,000 of endowment per undergraduate student for 20-21. Though we have a growing endowment, Whittier College remains tuition-driven and highly dependent on its enrollment in its educational programs for annual revenues. The college has forecast a structural deficit for the current and next several years due to lower enrollment as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. In response to this and our planning efforts, the college is developing new strategic initiatives to address the current budget deficit and provide long-term stability for the college

Our [organizational structure](#) includes the President, who reports to the [Board of Trustees](#) [BOT], and eight high-level administrators who report directly to the President, including the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty, Vice President of Student Affairs, Vice President for Finance & Chief Financial Officer, Vice President of Enrollment, Vice President of Communications and Marketing, Vice President of Innovation and New Ventures, Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer, and the Executive Director of Athletics. These positions, as well as many Dean and Director-level positions, comprise a sufficient number of qualified administrators to provide effective leadership and management for the institution.

Academic Affairs is the largest sector of the college, with 87 tenure or tenure-track faculty, 19 lecturers, and approximately another 18 instructional FTE and 42 part-time instructional staff/faculty. The number of tenured and tenure-track faculty has remained relatively stable since our last report, though our temporary faculty and adjunct numbers

have varied ([Factbook p. 47-48](#)) in response to enrollments. In addition to serving as Dean of Faculty, the Vice President of Academic Affairs has direct reports from a multitude of areas, including: Broadoaks (our K-8 lab school), the [Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#), [Wardman Library](#), [IT](#), [Office of International Programs](#), [Center for Engagement with Communities](#), [Student Disability Services](#), [Center for Advising and Academic Success](#), [Office of Institutional Research and Assessment](#), the [Registrar](#), [graduate education](#), and [Whittier Scholars Program](#).

Other sectors of the college currently include approximately 175 full-time employees. This represents an overall drop in total employees largely due to the voluntary closure of the Whittier College Law School [WLS], which admitted its last student in 2017 and closed in 2020, after successfully graduating or securing the transfer of all remaining law students ([Factbook](#)).

## Response to COVID

Little did we know when we wrote our TPR that a pandemic would grip the entire globe, drive our in-person education online in a matter of days, and put unprecedented demands on students, staff and faculty. Unsurprisingly, the pandemic negatively impacted our enrollment and operating expenses, thus extremely difficult decisions had to be made. President Oubré addressed the financial impacts of the pandemic quickly, instituting a hiring freeze, evaluating staffing and eliminating some positions, initiating a (now resolved) 10% staff and senior administrator pay cut. For faculty, the impact has largely been a pause in tenure-track hiring. In spite of the challenges, and as a testament to the dedication of staff, faculty and administrators, Whittier is weathering the storm.

Faculty and staff must be commended for the agility they demonstrated in the pivot to remote instruction: until the pandemic, fully online instruction was limited to very small summer offerings that allowed students to complete a requirement or take an extra course. Thanks to laudable support from the Library staff and from IT, we moved quickly to provide technological support and resources for instruction, and moved student academic and affective support online. In preparation for the 2020-2021 academic year, faculty leadership organized summer [working groups](#) focused on pedagogical best practices for online courses; to address “Zoom overload,” we altered the academic calendar by moving to a modular schedule and intensively advised students during the summer and adjusted hundreds of schedules to ensure on-time completion; we [analyzed student engagement](#) on our learning platform (Moodle) and looked for disparities across multiple categories; [we conducted technology surveys](#) of students, conducted intense advising for students, loaned laptops and hotspots, and, of course, built out the public health policies and infrastructure necessary to manage COVID-19. At the administrative level, daily meetings about safety and logistics would inform our frequent communications to students and faculty.

Through it all, however, Whittier’s commitment to equity and inclusion for our students drove our decision making. Federal relief funds were an important lifeline for many of our students. The President allocated half of the McKenzie Scott gift toward direct student aid in alignment with our commitment to improving affordability. Though difficult, these efforts—administratively, budgetarily, and pedagogically—led to a first-year retention rate of 82.8% for returning students in fall 2021. This was the best retention rate for first-time-first-year students for the last five years.

The crisis necessitated strategic actions in order to serve our students and the long-term interests of the College. President Oubré named a Vice President for Innovation and New Ventures, and sal johnston named a new Associate Dean of Diversity Equity and Inclusion. Meanwhile, as we hope you will see in this report, Whittier College never stopped training, discussion, policy development and long-term planning focused on our mission and our commitment to DEI.

## Response to Last Reaffirmation

After Whittier's reaffirmation in 2013, three recommendations were made by WSCUC to Whittier College. Progress on each of WASC's recommendations can be found in this section and evidence in the appendices from our mid-cycle report. Specifically, the WASC recommendations were:

1. **“Positioning Plan:** For Fall 2015 Plan: Status of the “Hallmarks of Success” and the achievement of the plan’s goals; description of faculty involvement in implementing and assessing the plan; and changes in the institution as a result of the plan. For the subsequent plan: process for engaging campus stakeholders in the development of the plan; findings of the Board’s “Scanning Group;” and the institution’s response to the changing higher education landscape.”
2. **“Undergraduate research, scholarly and creative activity (URSCA):** Progress in integrating URSCA into the curriculum; expanding opportunities for students; engaging faculty and departments; managing the process; and assessing the impact on students.”

3. **“Student Success:** Aggregated and disaggregated data on undergraduate retention and graduation, using WASC templates; and a website where the public posting of undergraduate retention and graduation data can be located.”

Our [2016 interim report](#) provides details of our work between 2013 and 2016. Currently we are happy to note that Whittier continues to support institutional growth and learning in the above areas. Indeed, for #1, the “positioning plan” process has changed significantly (this will be discussed in detail under the TPR theme 2b “Strategic Planning”). Planning and action are of highest importance at Whittier and have been transformed by the creation of a new vice presidency and a more inclusive set of processes as well as strategically focused budgeting such as [DEI innovations grants](#) and using [Mackenzie Scott Funds](#) aligned with our initiatives and student well being, all discussed in themes 1 and 2 of this document.

For #2) [URSCA](#), undergraduate research was not a specific focus of this TPR, however, we note that student research continues to attract students and faculty to our annual URSCA conference and we continue to use our [student learning rubric](#). In addition, senior projects are advertised by all departments and are open to the campus. Similarly, some departments organize [conferences](#) for students, parents and the community. The [Poet Commons](#), an online repository developed by our library, is a recent but exciting effort to showcase student research, with some student work getting thousands of downloads from all over the world. URSCA has been further institutionalized [with training for moderators and proposal evaluators and online submission of proposals](#). Our participation rate (pre-covid), had risen to 9%, ahead of a number of prestigious schools ([URSCA Report 2019](#)). Finally, partial release time has been granted to a faculty member to organize and lead URSCA efforts at the college since 2014.

For #3) Overall transparency and availability of data both internally and publicly are a major accomplishment over the last 10 years. Whittier College [shares student retention data on its public website](#) and has developed a multitude of tools and datasets (in Moodle) for departments and administrators to use to better understand student trends. Live datasets include: [Enrollment Demographics](#), [Department Report: Course Enrollments](#), [Majors and Minors](#), [First Destination Survey Dashboard](#), [Fall 2020 Admitted Not Enrolled Applicants](#), [Fall 2019 Admitted Not Enrolled Applicants](#). Whittier is proud to be an extremely student-focused campus with multiple offices across campus dedicated to student support, and to understanding student needs. Student success remains an area of intense focus at the college and numerous examples of data, data disaggregation, and data sharing can be found, in particular in component 8 (Theme 1) of this TPR.



## Component 2: Compliance with Standards.

“Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements.” (Component 2 is described on page 28 of the *Handbook of Accreditation*.)

[FEDERAL WORKSHEET](#)

[COMPLIANCE WITH THE STANDARDS WORKSHEET](#)

### Preparation for Institutional Report and About the Reaffirmation Committees

Preparation for this report began in 2019 with the creation of WSCUC steering committee that included the VPAA, ALO, VP of Student Affairs, the director and assistant director of Institutional Research, and the chair of the Assessment Committee. The committee met several times in person during 2019 and 2020 and collaborated by email and Zoom since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. During 2019, 2020 and 2021, the Board of Trustees received regular updates on strategic planning and WSCUC accreditation timelines and activities. The ALO and the Assistant Director of Institutional Research coordinated and developed initial drafts of the report and the Compliance Worksheet, which was then reviewed by Zoom with the steering committee, and then circulated to faculty committee chairs, and others, including the President, during fall 2021, undergoing its finalization during January.

President Oubré, the VPAA and the VP of Student Affairs, as well as a wide range of campus committee chairs were intimately involved in our themes and contributed to the report representing faculty, staff, and student interests. In early December 2021 and again before submission, the WSCUC Steering Committee also reviewed the timeline for reaffirmation

and all evidence and reflections for Component 2. Overall, through the process, we were able to better grasp our understanding of the institution through the lens of the standards, uncover strengths and weaknesses, and ensure that the information submitted for the institutional report accurately represented the college's efforts for compliance, goal-setting, and continuous improvement.

### **WSCUC Standards Worksheet**

During academic year 2019-21, the Office of Institutional Research and the ALO gathered and organized evidence for compliance with the WSCUC Standards Worksheet and Federal Compliance Forms. Starting in January of 2021, Whittier College's WSCUC Steering Committee conducted a comprehensive study of the Standards and Criteria for Review defined by WSCUC, and identified institutional data, reports and studies that demonstrate our achievement of these benchmarks. The attached [Standards Worksheet](#) and [Federal Compliance Form](#) provides detailed evidence in support of the College's achievement of the standards, CFRs, and Federal Requirements. Below we briefly review the strengths, achievements and challenges under the standards.

## **Reflection on Strengths and Areas for Improvement**

The following discussions elaborate on the College's strengths and areas for improvement that have emerged from completing the worksheets and TPR process.

### ***Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives***

*The institution defines its purposes and establishes educational objectives aligned with those purposes. The institution has a clear and explicit sense of its essential values and character, its distinctive elements, its place in*

*both the higher education community and society, and its contribution to the public good. It functions with integrity, transparency, and autonomy.*

### **Strengths:**

Whittier's primary strength and uniqueness is that we are a small, private, liberal arts college that successfully educates a highly diverse student populace. Our student demographics reflect the future of higher education. A 2019 [American Council on Education \(ACE\)](#) study on the changing demographics of college students reports that 45% of today's students are non-white and 43% are low-income. In line with our Quaker, Abolitionist heritage, Whittier College embraces the diversity of our student population and strives to create a college that is for them. As President Oubré stated, when interviewed for the Harvard Business School's case study on her tenure as President of Whittier College, "*At Whittier, we are intentionally seeking to create an environment that allows for the diverse voices that we need to sustain our future. Whether it's our faculty, administrative leaders, staff, students, or external stakeholders, 'Who's in the room' matters.*"

This environment is reflected in our [mission statement](#): "Whittier College is a residential four-year liberal arts institution that prepares students from diverse backgrounds to excel in a complex global society." We strive to fulfill this mission every day at the undergraduate level and as a college, and we believe that this passion is reflected by our dedicated faculty and staff, many of whom are solely dedicated to the undergraduate program at Whittier. Yet our mission statement is exclusive of a number of important activities (our graduate program, our K-8 school) and for this reason alone should probably be revisited. Moreover, the TPR process, strategic planning and curricular work across the college has laid the groundwork for reflection and revisiting this statement in an inclusive and forward-

thinking manner. While it still holds true for much of what we do, and while we do not in any way contradict its values, our mission statement is not as representative or as inclusive as it could be for *all* that we do and contribute.

Whittier College ensures that academic departments' purposes and objectives remain appropriate to the students whom we serve. Student achievement is regularly assessed through a departmental/program review cycle ([Assessment Handbook p. 5](#)), senior capstone experiences, including research, creative activity, and senior seminar courses. At the departmental level, Social Work, Education, and Chemistry regularly engage in an external accreditation and review of their programs. As discussed under theme 2b, the College has also started a review cycle for Academic Offices outside of academic disciplines. For example, in 2019 our Office of Student Disabilities Services ([SDS](#)) and Center for Advising and Academic Success ([CAAS](#)) submitted a self-study and encompassed the input of external reviewers.

Another area of strength is that we have a long history of supporting academic freedom for all members of the community through research, extra-curricular activities, on-going discussions, gatherings, scholarly and student publications, and other venues that facilitate freedom of inquiry and expression.

Further, the College is committed to providing a [co-curricular environment](#) that enhances and enriches the academic program and provides students with opportunities for personal and social growth, self-discovery, and an appreciation of one's responsibilities to self and others.

**Standard 1 Areas for improvement:** Whittier College’s mission statement is uniquely focused on the undergraduate program, and this is in spite of having a long history of graduate degrees in education and also a K-8 school (Broadoaks). Whittier College is actively strategizing about its future direction and vision for the future. It is expected that this will lead to a new, more comprehensive mission statement based on its long-standing dedication and delivery of a range of academic programs in service of the public good. This exercise is also a natural outcome of the core values and commitments developed through our strategic planning work.

## Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

*The institution achieves its purposes and attains its educational objectives at the institutional and program level through the core functions of teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, and support for student learning and success. The institution demonstrates that these core functions are performed effectively by evaluating valid and reliable evidence of learning and by supporting the success of every student.*

**Strengths:** Since its founding in 1887, the College has supported academic innovation and educating a diverse student body. Our mission has meant that the College develops and sustains programs that are rigorous, inspire study in all academic disciplines, and prepare students to meet new challenges throughout their careers. As such, the institution has established academic requirements for all students as described in the College Catalog, website, and defined by the elements of Whittier College’s curriculum: [Liberal Education Program](#), [Whittier Scholars Program](#), [Writing Program](#), [URSCA](#), and the major requirements across disciplines. Our undergraduate program is complemented by our other institutional efforts. The college has start-up funds for new faculty, a [sponsored research program](#) and grant officers housed in development offices, and smaller course-development grants that are a line item in our annual budget.

In order to ensure students successfully navigate our requirements and complete their undergraduate degree in a timely manner, all students in their first year at Whittier College are assigned a full-time faculty member ("mentor") who provides academic support and direction through the first year. Further, students use Degreeworks to see real-time progress to degree during their academic journey. When students decide on a major they will then change to an advisor in their major. In addition to traditional first-year UG students, Whittier currently admits around 70-80 transfer students and the total enrollment for international students has nearly doubled since 2015, going from 48 to 89. Transfer students are important to Whittier College and we provide them with [resources](#) and advising to ease their transition.

The institution's [graduate program in Education](#), accredited through the [CTC](#), establishes clearly stated objectives differentiated from and more advanced than undergraduate programs in terms of admissions, curricula, standards of performance, and student learning outcomes. Our graduate programs foster students' active engagement with the literature of the field and create a culture that promotes the importance of scholarship and/or professional practice. Another area of growing strength for the institution is our revised program for analyzing the effectiveness of the academic programs through a comprehensive self-study and more regular communication around assessment and program review. While our closing the loop process needs work, and while COVID has brought some delays in finding external evaluators willing to come to campus, or even work online through Zoom. In spite of some delays, our work has also spurred significant progress and momentum. This is discussed more extensively in component 8 under theme 2a.

**Standard 2 Areas for improvement:** Whittier still has work to do and discussions to have about assessment and “program review” for non-academic departments both to understand our objectives and to build the broadest possible community buy-in for continuous improvement. Questions arise such as “Do we need parallel processes?” “What can we learn from this?” “Is it more efficient than other forms of self-reflection?” This is discussed later in the document. Another area in standard 2 that is getting a lot of attention now is improving our workflow for transfer students. While we bring much caring, online tools, and advising prowess, the college has yet to settle on a system for moving transfer students as smoothly as possible through advising and registration. We are working hard on this, but the growth in international and transfer students is spurring new conversations.

### ***Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability***

*The institution sustains its operations and supports the achievement of its educational objectives through investments in human, physical, fiscal, technological, and information resources and through an appropriate and effective set of organizational and decision-making structures. These key resources and organizational structures promote the achievement of institutional purposes and educational objectives and create a high-quality environment for learning.*

**Strengths:** The President and Chief Executive Officer of the College represents Whittier College and its interests full time (see [WC Organizational Chart](#)). The administrative organization chart for the College demonstrates that the institution has a sufficient number of administrators and staff required to carry out the administrative functions of the College. Additionally, the Board of Trustees is the ultimate governing body of Whittier College (see [WC By-Laws](#)).

Organizational charts for all primary operating divisions at Whittier College reflect a carefully constructed management structure that is conducive to the College's key administrative and academic departments. The structure also provides for the adaptability and flexibility needed for Whittier to be agile as new opportunities and challenges become apparent. Whittier College has in place a network of policies and practices that align the activities of faculty and staff to the purposes and educational objectives of the institution ([Employee Handbook](#) and [Faculty Handbook](#)).

Faculty members at Whittier College take a strong role in guiding the institution towards its academic goals. The prime example of this leadership is Whittier College's active and engaged committee culture (see [Faculty Handbook](#)). The Faculty Executive Committee (FEC), as the committee on committees, organizes all standing and ad hoc faculty committees and charges them with their duties. FEC not only creates new committees, but also reorganizes the existing committee structure so as to eliminate or consolidate less effective committees. The FEC is broadly representative of the faculty, including members from the divisions of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences, elected by the membership of their respective divisions, and a member-at-large, chair, vice-chair, and secretary treasurer elected by the faculty as a whole. The FEC also meets regularly to discuss and act on general issues facing Whittier and its faculty. The FEC distributes its meeting minutes publicly, and these minutes serve to inform the full faculty about the FEC's actions and discussions. In addition, the Educational Policies Committee (EPC) meets weekly to approve new courses, changes to majors and minors, and to develop, review and revise policy related to courses of study, scheduling, and more. EPC and the Assessment Committee interact frequently on matters related to quality assurance, and EPC also works



with the VPAA to consider and make recommendations related to filling vacated positions and or creating new ones.

It is important to note, too, that shared governance principles and best practices help shape the membership of our faculty-chaired committees. For example: The VPAA/Dean of Faculty sits on the personnel committee (FPC) and is *ex officio* on any number of committees. The VPAA is likewise invited to the FEC meetings on a standing basis. The Vice President of Enrollment also sits on Enrollment and Student Affairs. In a similar fashion, faculty also sit on administrative and board committees: The Chair of Faculty sits on Cabinet and represents faculty at board meetings. The New Revenue Initiatives committee has six faculty members alongside senior administrators, and two and sometimes more faculty participated in the BOT Futures Task Force meetings when it was in session.

We support our systems with Banner, Moodle and other centralized platforms and all employees receive technologically-mediated instructional development via online webinars, online training programs and online communication portals. Department/Program/Office Heads assess what is needed for each employee and might have an employee attend a seminar, paid for by their department. The college recently purchased a two-year contract with [Go2Knowledge](#) that gives access to hundreds of higher education-focused webinars. This membership will provide faculty and staff access to both pre-recorded and live webinars. Some examples of the webinars include: Designing Successful Online Classes: An Overview of Best Practices; The Happiness Trifecta: What Covid19 Can Teach Us About Happiness and Mindfulness; Dealing With Difficult & Disruptive Students In Online Classes; and Building Student Support Resources for Online Learners.

**Standard 3 Areas for improvement:** Whittier has a strong committee structure and is engaging in strategic planning and strategic action through a number of joint committees; however, our committee design and faculty governance structures are sometimes extremely labor intensive and require lengthy weekly meetings for many—if not most—committees. A review of committee labor and faculty labor outside of the classroom is under discussion and clearly represents an area of concern. Our campus’ technical infrastructure, as mentioned elsewhere, is also being assessed by Signature Analytics to help support our planning and decision-making around future technology needs.

***Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement***

**Strengths:**

The College continues to be committed to improving the academic and administrative enterprise at Whittier College that help shape its educational objectives and programs. Since her arrival, President Linda Oubré evolved away from the last Positioning Plan and aligned the college around three strategic initiatives of diversity, equity and inclusion in support of student success, diversifying revenue, and aligning our resources to our mission. She also created vice-presidential-level positions and future-oriented task forces to support this college-wide effort. Specifically, these efforts include traditional and values-driven initiatives and coordinated work through the Board’s Futures Task Force, our New Programs and Innovations committee, and our Strategic Planning Task Force. We discuss these further in our themes. We discuss strategic planning, decision-making and action in Component 8, theme 2b.

Another prime example of the college examining the alignment of its purpose and defining the future direction of the institution, is the commitment Whittier is making to revise the Liberal Education Program both in terms of its content, but also in its ability to serve students, meet them where they are, and better understand their achievement. To do this, the College not only engaged standing committees, it released faculty leaders from course time and/or compensated faculty for time in order to align resources and offer the highest probability of an orderly and inclusive process for revisiting our curriculum. This has meant 6-10 dedicated faculty working on curricular research and proposals and attending workshops during the academic year as well as work distributed to standing committees through committee charges. Specialized working groups met regularly, researched, and developed proposals, including summer work.

Aided by our small size, curricular discussions were (and are) happening in concert with discussions to address DEI through equitable admissions and financial aid practices and coordinated overlaps between board-level, institutional, and faculty-chaired committees: College Affordability and Enrollment Task Force, Strategic Planning Task Force, and Enrollment and Student Affairs Committee. This is discussed further in Component 8, Theme 1.

After our WSCUC accreditation in 2013, the college established the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (OIRA) and created two full-time administrative positions, of which both positions are currently vacant. Whittier College has tasked experienced members to oversee critical data at the college on an interim basis with the goal of making new IR hires in a timely manner. The office developed more efficient means for data collection (e.g., Qualtrics) and revised Department Reviews. As noted in our response to the last WASC

visit, Whittier created an IR office (OIRA), which developed [multiple dashboards](#) for enrollment, departments, majors and minors, first destination for our graduates, and more.

**Standard 4 Areas for improvement:** While Faculty, Staff and Students have played a key role in this process of developing a new curriculum, and while we have consistently looked at learning in our Writing Program, DFW rates in Math, and other curricular issues, the college has not been as effective as it would like in assessing all aspects of the liberal education program. *Increased “assessability” and meaningful assessment* have been goalposts of the ongoing curricular effort. Finally, while OIRA were extremely active in developing dashboards and KPIs, much work remains in the domain of “business intelligence” and real-time reporting. With the recent [naming of a new associate dean](#) position for diversity and inclusion, a dedicated Rustin Research Fellow (see Theme 1b), as well as the Signature Analytics assessment, we will have a strong basis to build tools and expertise to meet the growing needs for real-time data that are both precipitating strategic and thoughtful discussions around our data platforms, our dashboards, and data dissemination.

## Component 8: Institution-Specific Themes.

Whittier’s TPR represented an ambitious proposal that was meant to capture the energy of a new administration as well as bring focus to long-standing goals and needs through *interrelated* and *complementary themes*. Whittier, with its Quaker and Abolitionist heritage, and seizing upon the vision of a new president, was eager to set goals that embodied these values while acknowledging the need to address organizational challenges and adapt to a rapidly changing environment both in and outside of higher education.

The proposal included two primary themes comprising five related sub-themes:

Theme	Areas of Analysis and Action
1. Equity and Inclusion	<p>1. Equity and inclusion reflect Whittier’s founding Abolitionist principles and they are as vital and needed today as they ever were. <b><i>In order to build student success and institutional excellence on a foundation of equity and inclusion</i></b>, we will strategically examine outcomes and track progress in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Analyze <b>student admissions, retention and success data</b>, and adapt processes, if needed, based on the findings. (CFRs: 1.2, 1.4, 2.6, 2.10)</li> <li>b. Analyze employee data and promote equity and inclusion in <b>recruitment and hiring, particularly of faculty</b>, adapting processes based on findings. (CFRs: 3.1, 3.3)</li> <li>c. Meaningfully inject <b>equity and inclusion</b> as guideposts in curricular and co-curricular discussions with an eye towards holistic student development and curricular/institutional outcomes. (CFRs: 2.10, 4.4)</li> </ul>
2. Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Strengthen <b>program review</b> processes and expand their use across campus to non-academic departments.(CFRs:1.4, 2.1, 2.3, 2.7, 2.10, 2.11, 3.7, 4.1, 4.5)</li> <li>b. Work to develop a 5-7 year <b>strategic plan</b> that integrates goals stated above alongside measurable benchmarks that are distributed across the institution.(CFRs: 1.4, 3.7, 4.5, 4.6)</li> </ul>

In spite of the disruption caused by COVID, resulting in some unavoidable delays, changes of plan and adaptation, we remained committed to pursuing and making progress on our primary mission and assessment themes: equity and inclusion, and our continual drive towards excellence.

## **Theme 1a: Equity and Inclusion--admissions, retention and success**

Since our last accreditation visit, Whittier has continued to take steps at both the administrative and faculty levels to foster student growth and persistence. Whittier has made some prominent changes such as: removing the requirement for the SAT, experimenting with a pilot to enhance student success in their first year (INTD 101), frozen tuition, adjusted its aid model, as well as monitored student success and equity and electronic access during COVID.

A critical step in setting the tone for addressing equity and inclusion was the appointment of the Affordability and Enrollment Task Force, initiated by the President and chaired by a board member. The task force met multiple times during 2019 and 2020, with agendas that focused on budget and prioritizing equity and inclusion in the allocation of aid. The Affordability Task Force coordinated with the Strategic Planning Task Force and its membership allowed it to bring changes and ideas to the campus finance and accounting organization, and back to committees such as Enrollment and Student Affairs.

As a DEI-driven institution, Whittier recognizes that affordability and financial stress are retention and student success issues and we explore these topics through data and through

multiple offices and committees. On campus, the amount and quality of feedback and interaction between Academic Affairs, Student Life and Enrollment Management has continued to grow. Examples of this can be found in committee and college-wide discussions and decisions. One example is the Enrollment and Student Affairs Committee [ESAC] work, which, as part of its normal course of operations, looks at [disaggregated student data](#), and standardized surveys such as [NSSE](#) and [BSSCE](#) data. ESAC's "[Who are Our Students](#)" analysis in 2019 was discussed with faculty and ultimately drove conversations about student success. Importantly, this committee includes faculty and also the VPs of Enrollment and Student Life. The discussion and data were broad-ranging and covered traditional undergrads, athletes, transfer students, etc. The key recommendations and outcomes were:

- Enrollment Management adopted a minimum High School GPA of 2.5 for first-year students beginning in Fall 2020.
- Enrollment Management agreed to this newly proposed criteria. Students with less than a 2.5 HS GPA could still be admitted either on a provisional basis with approval from the Director of Admission, or as transfer students after demonstrating success at a community college.
- Related discussions regarding transfer students continue. Transfer students come in with an average college GPA of 3.0 and experience a 0.2 point drop in GPA on average at Whittier College. (ESAC 2019)

Based on the above data, ESAC recommended that, beginning in Spring 2020, Enrollment Management adopt a minimum college GPA of 2.2 for transfer students, with admission of students with lower than a 2.2 college GPA only in unusual circumstances that are approved

by the Dean of Faculty and/or one of the Associate Deans in the division of Academic Affairs. Enrollment Management has also taken important steps to increase access. This includes establishing the California Community College Advantage (CCCA) program, which offers applicants from any of the 113 community colleges in California guaranteed admission if they have completed at least 30 units and have a minimum 2.9 cumulative GPA. Students admitted through the CCCA are also guaranteed a special tuition rate of \$28,000 a year.

The College has strategically refocused our fundraising to make student success and academic support a priority for donor investment. Thanks to this new vision, in December 2020, we were awarded the largest gift in Whittier history, a [\\$12 million donation from philanthropist and author MacKenzie Scott](#). Although technically “unrestricted,” Whittier made the decision to align the gift with our values. We allocated the Mackenzie Scott funds strategically to affordability, student success and diversity, equity and inclusion. Over a million dollars per year have been allocated to funding the Success Scholarship for third and fourth-year students from families with an annual Family Adjusted Gross Income of \$100,000 or less. Qualifying juniors are eligible to receive up to \$2,000 and qualifying seniors are eligible to receive up to \$4,000. Whittier’s reallocation of aid to students represents a *major* investment for the college and these actions, we believe, are having an important compounding effect. Along with our faculty’s dedication in the classroom and the College’s many co-curricular programs offering affective support for students, the Scott funds, we believe, helped us move our 1st-year retention rate to 82.8% for fall 2021. The Scott funds are part of an institutional trend. Whittier’s focus on DEI has attracted new



donors beyond MacKenzie Scott including the ECMC Foundation, Annenberg scholarship for Black Students, LGBTQ scholarship, and Black Alumni Scholarships.

Our curricular and co-curricular work is not only inspired by our data analysis, but also by our student voices. In the fall of 2020 as a response to student concerns, listening sessions and a focus group were facilitated by the Office of Equity and Inclusion and Dean of Students to identify what additional support was needed for Black students and Black males on campus. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment showed Fall 2019-2020 retention of Black males was part of a declining and disturbing trend.

[Enrollments](#) and this [ESAC Presentation](#) pointed to equity issues that needed to be addressed for ethical and institutional reasons. In the spring of 2020 the retention of continuing Black males dipped to 30%. Feedback shared by students included Whittier College feeling like a predominately white institution, lack of Black male representation among faculty and staff, and lack of community among current Black males.

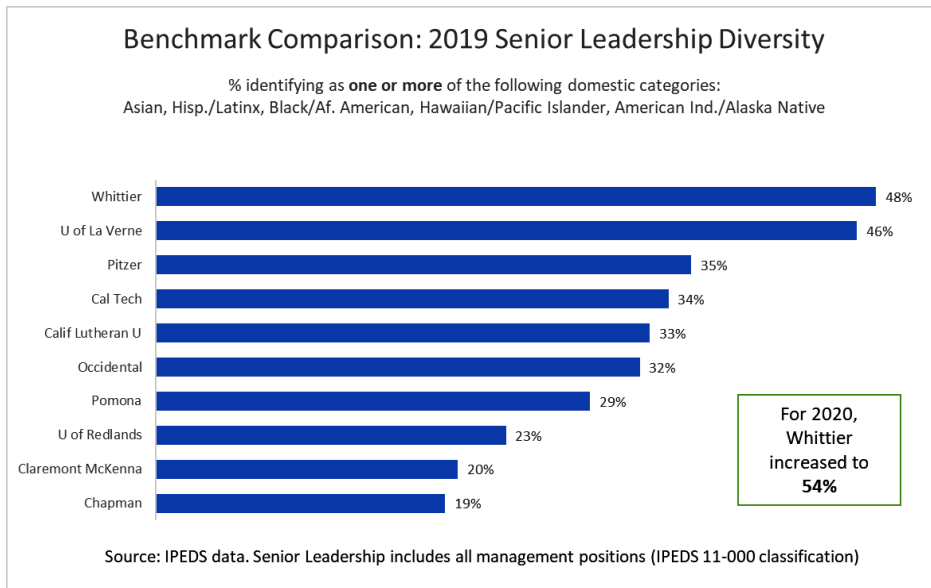
Recognizing this as a high priority concern, a proposal was developed to apply Scott Funds to a position within the Office of Equity and Inclusion that would provide programming and support for the Black Male Initiative. Additionally, programmatic funds would be earmarked to provide pre-orientation and extended orientation support, along with programmatic support for Black males on campus. Understanding one of the needs for Black males was community, a Black Male Initiative committee composed of Black faculty and staff was developed to connect and meet one on one with Black males entering Whittier College for the fall 2021 semester. Additionally, a strong partnership was developed with the newly formed Whittier College [Black Alumni Association](#) to connect alumni with our Black students and Black males specifically.

The following initiatives were implemented for fall 2021 to strengthen academic and personal support. These initiatives were led by the Dean of Students and Office of Equity and Inclusion in partnership with Athletics and the Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The Associate Director for Office of Equity and Inclusion focused on the Brotherhood [Leadership Program](#) and, in 2021, Whittier initiated the hiring of two peer coaches focused on supporting Black males. A pre and post-orientation was facilitated to connect incoming students with their Black peers; Black male students received a personal phone call and email from the Office of Equity and Inclusion and Interim Vice President/Dean of Students; the Black Male Initiative Committee met monthly to develop programming and support and to meet one-on-one with each student who identified as a Black male on campus; the Whittier College Black Alumni Association hosted monthly professional and personal development workshops that focused on career preparation, financial literacy, and mentoring; and our Director of CARE and Case Management identified additional support for mental health and resources to support the basic needs of our Black males. For fall 2021 we had a total of 29 Black males on campus; 7 first-time freshman; 2 undergraduate transfers; and 20 continuing undergraduates. Of the 29 Black males, 17 identify as athletes participating in the Division III sports on campus and 12 are not participating in the Division III sports on campus. Preliminary data (January 2022) indicate an increase in retention to 79% for Black males from fall to spring. An analysis of this retention number has identified that financial reasons is one of the number one factors for Black males not enrolling for the subsequent semester, and early numbers appear to indicate that our coordinated efforts are having a positive effect.

Next steps for the Black Male Initiative include continuing to track retention, persistence, and graduation rates while seeking to assess through focus groups and surveys potential additional factors that prevent retention of our students. Our analysis will inform the Black Male Initiative Committee continuing efforts to identify trends, challenges, and opportunities in strengthening wrap-around support and sense of belonging for Black males.

**Theme 1b: Analyze employee data and promote equity and inclusion in recruitment and hiring, particularly of faculty, adapting processes based on findings. (CFRs: 3.1, 3.3)**

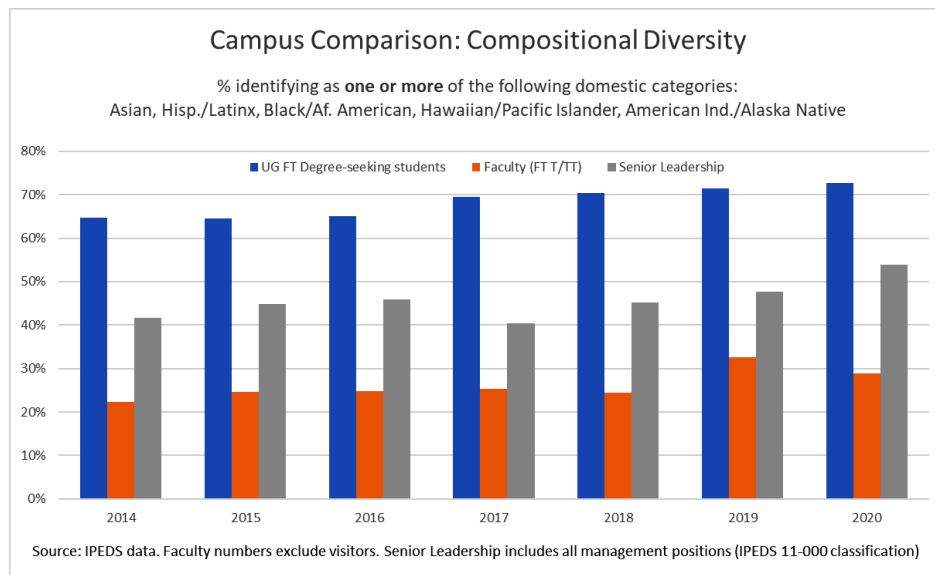
Whittier College continues to be a national leader among small liberal arts colleges in the region when it comes to URM within its student and administrative divisions. Between 2014 and 2020, evidence gathered by OIRA demonstrates a steady upward trend towards increasing racial/ethnic diversity in our student population and, in particular, in senior leadership. Compared to our SCIAC peers, diversity among our leadership is conference-leading:



The significant increase in racial/ethnic diversity of senior leadership was not happenstance. The diversification is the result of the focused efforts by President Linda Oubré to ensure that the individuals who work at the College, at the highest levels, reflect the diversity of our region and our students. This commitment also includes the diversification of the Board of Trustees: twelve of the twenty-six members of the Board identify as People of Color and seven of them joined the Board within the last three years. The commitment to creating a racially & ethnically diverse campus by the College is not only reflected in our strategic imperatives, but also, highlighted in the [Racial Justice and Equity Action Plan \(RJ&EAP\)](#) that Senior Leadership collaboratively created in August, 2020 in response to the racial unrest experienced nationally and the Black Lives Matter Movements. The changes reflected in senior leadership and the Board of Trustees underscores Whittier's commitment toward diversity and inclusion and our awareness that such diversification is a necessary factor in student success.

Efforts to socialize diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels of the College have included ongoing DEI training and membership in the Liberal Arts Racial Equity Alliance led by Dr.

Shaun Harper of the USC Race and Equity Center. In May of 2021, the Board of Trustees also adopted a three part action plan centered on ensuring a safe and equitable environment for all: 1) A Code of Conduct, 2) Diversity, equity, and inclusion training across the institution, and 3) A requirement that all performance evaluations for employees, including the President, include a provision for DEI.



Faculty racial/ethnic diversity does not have as strong an upward trend as Whittier College’s student population, Board of Trustees, and senior leadership. As shown in the graph, *Campus Comparison: Compositional Diversity*, faculty racial/ethnic diversity trends are holding steady overall rather than increasing significantly. The VPAA made two foundational commitments in the Racial Justice and Equity Plan: to immediately appoint an Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and to develop targeted hiring and retention initiatives to attract and retain a more racially & ethnically diverse faculty body (the [Bayard Rustin Fellows Program](#)--hires completed in 2021).

Dr. Kay Sanders was appointed as the inaugural Associate Dean DEI in October of 2020 and assumed the post full-time in January 2021. One of her first priorities was to review and update the existing "[Hiring and Recruitment Guide](#)" (updated in 2019). The 2019 guide was used in training sessions with department chairs and serves both administrators and faculty hiring committees by including helpful language and practices with an aim of increasing applicant pools and maximizing anti-bias practices in advertising, interviewing and recruiting faculty. Complementing this policy development, Academic Affairs invested in the [Interfolio](#) platform, which allows the college to cast a wider net, reduce the potential for unintentional bias through standardized practices, and to monitor searches in real time. While the Hiring Guide and the use of Interfolio were important steps toward helping Whittier College increase its faculty diversity by using systematic procedures that mitigate bias from entering the selection process, what was also clear, after a review of hiring procedures by the inaugural Associate Dean, DEI, was that the College needed to do more to both attract and retain BIPOC faculty. Research on the recruitment and retention of BIPOC faculty finds that the racism and sexism embedded in traditional practices and assumptions of the academy create barriers that impact the satisfaction, progress, and desire to enter and/or remain in an academic career (Griffin, 2020). Further, having a diverse faculty supports the success and trajectory of BIPOC students in college.

The Vice-President of Academic Affairs and the Associate Dean, DEI created the Bayard Rustin Program to attract and retain racially and ethnically diverse faculty. At the core of this initiative, funded by the MacKenzie Scott donation, are processes to change institutional culture. The Rustin Program is a unique, racial justice and equity-based, 2-year program that has the potential to increase faculty racial/ethnic diversity because it engages

departments in structural reforms that support the development of an inclusive and equitable experience for faculty and our students. The Rustin Program ties student success to diversity by incorporating procedures that allow departments to both work toward a more equitable workplace culture while also engaging in department data on student outcomes to reveal practices and policies that may inhibit student success. The Rustin Program, therefore, has three main goals that connect students' academic success to departmental diversity reforms:

1. Diversify faculty through the hiring of BIPOC faculty to 2-year fellowship positions (with option to transition to tenure-track post-fellowship, pending budget approvals) and foster equity across the workplace culture to support the retention of BIPOC faculty.
2. Use student and faculty data to engage in collaborative problem solving with department faculty on equity gaps in student outcomes.
3. Remedy those gaps to create an equitable experience in students' progress through the major.

The Associate Dean DEI is essential to the functioning and viability of this program: the position provides a consistent point of contact and support for the Fellows and they guide the departments through all stages of the program. Departments must commit to engage in racial justice equity work across the two-year fellowship period. This commitment by full-time faculty is followed by a holistic search process that centers equity and inclusion in both the selection of members of the search, agreements by its members as to how to work together, and in the collaborative crafting of the position announcement. Departments also engage in a 5-phase training process (currently in the piloting phase with the English

Department). This 5-phase professional development initiative supports the work of full-time faculty to move from an awareness of how racist and sexist assumptions influence academic practices and policies to engagement in department-level data inquiry, reform, and strategic planning that are equity-based.

The first round of hiring for the Rustin Fellowships was highly successful and resulted in two Rustin Fellows joining the Whittier faculty in fall, 2021. The English Department hired a Teaching Fellow, specializing in African American literature and poetry. Academic Affairs welcomed an Institutional Research Fellow who works on equity-focused data analysis of student outcomes. Review of the mid-year evaluations of the 5-phase department training pilot underscores the need for more time in each session for faculty to engage fully in the content. The facilitators will extend the department sessions from one hour to one-and-half hours beginning Spring 2022.

As exemplified by the Rustin Program, Academic Affairs perceives the goal to diversify faculty not purely as an increase in demographic counts but an opportunity to create a deeper shift in institutional culture that contributes to greater inclusion and equity for our student population. The VPAA, therefore, allocated significant resources towards supporting the strategic imperative to make diversity, equity, & inclusion central to student success. With the realignment of resources and in collaboration with the Dean of Faculty, the Associate Dean, DEI developed a DEI-centered professional development program; redesigned [faculty innovation development grants](#) to target innovative DEI curricular/ pedagogical projects created by new faculty and/or departments; and established an equity-centered institutional research program to support the necessary cultural shift toward equity.



Faculty endorsed a strong emphasis on DEI work for the College with the creation of the Inclusion & Diversity Committee (IDC). IDC evolved from on-going HSI/MSI efforts at the college. The official committee was established in Spring 2017 to develop policy that contributes to a sense of belonging and entitlement for all members of the Whittier College community (students, staff, and faculty), while identifying and removing the barriers (structural, material, and cognitive) that impede our efforts to forge a community that understands and enacts belonging as a mutually constitutive relationship based on equity-minded practices. An important focus of the committee is the ongoing development of the [Strategic Plan for Equity and Inclusion](#). Although the plan is still in draft form, it articulates the committee's recommendations to help our community enact a philosophy that embraces the diverse stories, cultures, talents and needs that students, staff and faculty bring to this community. With the establishment of the Associate Dean DEI position, greater synergy between College-wide equity endeavors and faculty has occurred due to the Associate Dean, DEI serving as the co-chair of this committee.

With the realignment of resources that supports the equity & inclusion-focused Strategic Imperative, Whittier College has aligned resources to [develop initiatives](#) aimed at enhancing student outcomes by investing in and supporting the diversity of our community at all levels.

Whittier College is building a strong foundation in terms of policy, personnel and values as a national leader among small liberal arts colleges in the region when it comes to under-represented minorities within its student, faculty and administrative divisions. Though the appointment of Dr. Sanders and the creation of Bayard Fellows are relatively new, and though many committees are still working on these issues, we believe we are in a strong

place to achieve a national voice and national recognition for where we are and where we are going.

**Theme 1c. Meaningfully inject **equity and inclusion** as guideposts in curricular and co-curricular discussions with an eye towards holistic student development and curricular/institutional outcomes.(CFRs: 2.10, 4.4)**

Starting in the spring of 2019 the Curriculum Committee and FEC brought faculty and staff together in regular meetings to discuss the shape that a new Liberal Education curriculum at Whittier College might take. During summer 2019 the Committee drafted three different curriculum models that were presented at the Faculty Retreat, which focused entirely on the evaluation of the elements included in the models. Conversations almost every week in the fall of 2019 brought the college community together in a common endeavor that energized all of us. We debated the “big ideas” of meaning and purpose, social justice, equity and inclusion and agreed that we could use those to set the stage or frame a new curriculum with two large [institutional aims](#): *belonging and flourishing*. These aims stem from a deep understanding that our curriculum must meet the needs of students of color and first generation college attendees because this is who our students are. As such, our definitions of belonging and flourishing and the curricular themes discussed below derive from a close examination of the equity gaps in students’ experiences of the curriculum.

Through the collection of data about [who our students](#) are, their college goals and orientation ([Survey 1](#), [Survey 2](#)) as well as faculty feedback ([Themes Survey](#), [Quantitative Reasoning Feedback](#), [Writing Proposal Feedback](#)), student and [alumni feedback](#), provided

the foundation for weekly conversations on the curricular components. A broad model emerged around the curricular themes of Discovery/Inquiry, Global & Local Community, and Social Justice. In spring 2019 and again in 2020 four new cross-disciplinary [working groups](#) met weekly to broaden and deepen the Curriculum Committee's work in key overlapping areas of curriculum development: Quantitative Reasoning, Writing, Integrative and Applied Learning, and Professional Development. In addition to meeting every week with their working groups, committee members also met twice a week (sometimes more often) as a committee in open meetings.

To continue the curricular work over the summer of 2021, a team of faculty that included the Associate Dean, DEI and the Senior Faculty Fellow of the Center for Engagement with Communities attended the Worcester Polytechnic Institute Project Based Learning Summer Institute. High impact practices, such as project based learning (PBL), are connected to equity and access. PBL is strongly correlated with learning gains among Black and Latinx students in research studies that were careful to control for several possible confounding factors, including performance level and socioeconomic status. Attendance at this conference allowed information on such an inclusive pedagogical approach to be shared with the curriculum committee. Discussion about project-based learning occurred in several fora, including a Whittier-specific PBL [action plan workshop](#) to help departments think through PBL in their area.

Using belonging and flourishing as guideposts, and basing its work on two years of thematic working groups and the PBL workshops, a curricular model began coming together. [The current model](#) includes a robust applied learning based first year experience,

a topic based Liberal Education pathway, a writing program that is integrated across majors, and a quantitative reasoning requirement that provides students with many options to complete. All minutes, notes, rough drafts, and research documents are housed on the curriculum committee's Moodle page and are accessible to all faculty.

In the Fall of 2021 the curriculum committee was tasked with the next phase which includes taking faculty feedback and further refining the curricular model. Part of this task includes taking the curricular components and framing them as specific graduation requirements that will be easy for faculty, students, and parents to understand. As this work progresses, we hope that a final version of the model will be presented to faculty at the end of Spring 2022 and that conversations toward building consensus of the model can begin in Fall of 2022.

Many faculty, staff, and administrators have shared their ideas and experiences in an open and transparent process that we are hopeful has raised expectations for equity and inclusion in all that we do at Whittier. Moreover, we are hopeful that this process will strengthen our commitment to consensus when the time comes to decide the best Liberal Education curriculum for the college as well as use *belonging and flourishing* as values that promote diversity, equity and inclusion as an integral part of the overall Whittier experience.

Parallel to the academic work building upon equity, and inclusion, belonging and flourishing, the Division of Student Life (Interim Dean of Student Life, Interim Associate Dean of Student Life, and the Director of Institutional Research & Assessment) attended the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) Curriculum Conference in December 2020.

There the team formalized the [Student Life Curriculum](#) and identified next steps for Spring and Summer of 2021. The three themes of the Student Life Curriculum are:

- Theme 1: Student Engagement
- Theme 2: Student Wellness
- Theme 3: Equity, Justice, and Inclusion

By summer of 2021 the team hired consultant Dr. Kandy Mink Salas (Assistant Professor, Department of Higher Education, Director of EdD in Higher Education Leadership at Azusa Pacific University). Together the team and Dr. Salas refined and finalized the curriculum to launch in pilot form in Fall 2021. The team has begun assessment of the [2021 Core Summer Leadership Series](#), and the [2021 Student Wellness Survey](#).

An important piece emerging from the curricular/co-curricular and student engagement conversations is the new [First Six Weeks Initiative](#). The initiative combines student engagement metrics with programmatic education about opportunities on campus, community, student well-being and student success. The program serves as a template to help students succeed *and* to help the college adapt to student needs and understand and refine its own efforts. The first-six weeks curriculum will continue to be piloted during the Spring 2022 semester. During the summer of 2022, pilot data will be reviewed and a full implementation plan will be developed for the 2022-2023 academic year.

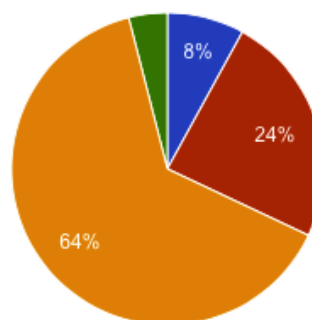
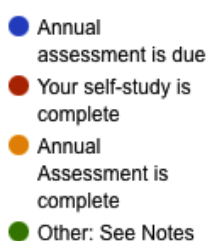
**Reflection on Theme 1:** While work remains on the new liberal education design, Whittier is investing and making concerted efforts to “connect the dots” between our history and values of diversity, equity and inclusion and our campus programming. The TPR process helps bring into greater focus the breadth of and depth of all the work happening to

embrace—and intellectually, affectively, and effectively deliver our education. It also reminds us that coordination across our divisions is absolutely essential if we are to recruit, admit, educate, and offer an overall experience that creates value and return on students' time and investment long into the future.

## Theme 2a. Program Review

Program review has been an important part of Whittier College for more than two decades, going through a number of changes during that time. From 2011-12 to the present, Whittier has had an average review cycle of approximately 6.5 years and 95% of our academic departments have completed a self-study since the 2011-12 academic year, and many have been through the process twice. Some external reviews have been delayed due to COVID, but we continue to follow-up and make progress in this area.

19-20 Status



Since 2018 and thanks to a focused effort and goal-setting, a number of notable changes have occurred to reinforce the importance of annual assessment, accountability and an environment that actively encourages continuous improvement. Notably:

- 2017-2018: The Assessment Committee streamlined the review process for self-studies by cutting redundant and repetitive data requests, and created a worksheet to help the committee norm and evaluate departmental submissions. The Assessment Committee also moved to a [new system for gathering](#), organizing and understanding assessment and program review. While the system continues to evolve, frequent communications ([example 1](#), [example 2](#), [example 3](#)) to all department members (not just chairs), [monthly updates to administrators](#), real-time tracking, and increased administrative coordination between OIRA, the ALO and the

VPAA, have enhanced accountability and improved communications surrounding assessment and program review requirements.

- 2018-2019: The Assessment Committee moved from a blanket five-year program review cycle for departments to a [3-5-7 cycle](#) based on a rubric that evaluated departments across multiple areas such as annual assessment, their most recent self-study, hiring cycles, etc. The VPAA also began enforcing a policy of restricted resources (conference travel, etc.) for departments out of compliance with program review.
- 2019-2020: Academic Affairs began rolling out a modified version of program review for non-degree-granting departments and began with Student Disability Services and the Center for Advisement and Academic Success. This was intended to be a test run for developing a process of self-reflection and planning and two departments successfully completed this in 2019-20. [The CAAS external review provides an example of how this process worked](#) during the pilot. Unfortunately, COVID-19 interrupted this process but we are looking to re-implement this and build a community of practice with increased participation and continuous improvement in non-degree programs.
- 2019-2021: Departments submitting annual assessments were given the opportunity to submit [alternate activities](#) for both the 19-20 and 20-21 academic years. Due to the state of the emergency and the unusual nature of both academic years, the Assessment Committee allowed departments to reflect on the move to 100% distance education in the spirit of “lessons learned.” While almost all departments completed the indirect reflection exercise for 2019-20, 2020-21 saw



the return of annual assessment submission for most departments ([English](#), [Environmental Science](#)). Annual assessment expectations fully return to normal in 2021-22.

- 2020-21: The Assessment Committee, led by Jonathan Burton, also made important changes to our policy and processes in order to bring even greater clarity and better feedback to departments on their work. Major changes include: requiring annual assessment submissions by June 30 of the current academic year (instead of fall of the subsequent year), overhaul and clarification of the whole assessment handbook, closer review of annual assessment and creation of a qualitative feedback option to departments about their submission, a thoughtful reorganization of the timeline and logic of program review at the end-of-cycle and departmental planning stage.
- Closing the loop is a critical phase of the self-study process and the College has been challenged in this area with inconsistent follow-through. In 2020-21, the Assessment Committee took steps to tighten this process and to provide additional clarity and coaching for this crucial stage. This meant rebuilding a number of processes and making them more logical and in keeping with other review processes on campus. Specifically, the committee included a post-external review and an official Assessment Committee recommendation to the VPAA. The committee shifted language “MOU,” which no one embraced, to “Action Plan.” The ALO, OIRA and the Assessment Committee are working with the VPAA during spring 2022 to reconfigure the communication and workflow for external review and closing the loop. Because this involves budget and administrative time, the decision process is

slower than decisions solely dependent on the Assessment Committee. However, we expect to finalize and clarify this process by the end of 2021-22.

**Theme 2b Lessons Learned:** While creating new tools and honing our processes has not solved every issue (delays, etc), especially in light of COVID, the ability to see across departments, analyze trends from an institutional perspective, and offer more frequent and data-centered communications is a major improvement over prior years. Whittier has made tremendous progress in looking across departments and seeing trends at the program review level while simultaneously bringing program review into greater alignment with other workflows on campus. That is, program review seems more “native” to our campus after several years of revamping our systems, our Assessment handbook and our communications. Looking at the improvement in annual assessment for a number of departments tells the story of a developing “culture of assessment” of SLOs at the departmental level. Alignment between Assessment, OIRA, administrative budgets and support is our next step to remove delays, bureaucracy and potential miscommunications so that we can focus on quality assurance and action plans.

Theme 2b: Work to develop a 5-7 year **strategic plan** that integrates goals stated above alongside measurable benchmarks that are distributed across the institution.(CFRs: 1.4, 3.7, 4.5, 4.6)

Strategic planning is by necessity an iterative process: changes in demographics, the lack of affordability, and a business model that is overly dependent on student tuition were challenges even before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. At Whittier, we have approached strategic planning as an ongoing, inclusive process to continually work toward reinventing ourselves. More importantly, strategic planning and action has been a multi-pronged effort with important values, goals and background work done by the Strategic Planning Task Force, an academic and co-curricular team ([IDC strategic plan](#)), and a [2020 Racial Justice Action Plan](#) where [funding is allocated](#) to strategic DEI action.

Administratively, a new vice presidency of innovation and new ventures was created to bring strategic action in diversifying Whittier College's revenue sources.

Critically, strategic planning took on a new form at Whittier College with the inauguration of President Oubré. We moved away from the identification of specific internally focused metrics developed in a vacuum, i.e., the "Positioning Plan," in favor of more varied and robust processes helping promote greater engagement with all campus stakeholders to ensure all voices are included in developing a collective vision about the future of the institution.

Upon her arrival in July 2018, President Oubré decided to immediately launch the identification of strategic initiatives that would guide the work of the College for the near term, while providing some "runway" for the institution to launch a more formal strategic planning process. During the first several months of her tenure, before the start of the

academic year, President Oubré embarked on a listening tour, meeting one-on-one with over 200 campus stakeholders, including more than 80% of the faculty. She also traveled more than 20,000 miles during those first few months, meeting with alumni, donors, parents, and friends of the College close to home, and also in locales from Hong Kong and Gifu, Japan, to New York and Washington, D.C. The learning from this listening process informed the initial **Three Strategic Imperatives** for Whittier College:

- 1. Focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion in support of student success.**
- 2. Launch new revenue generating initiatives to generate a sustainable business model for the college.**
- 3. Work to align our resources with our mission**

These Three Strategic Imperatives have guided our collective work since 2018.

Background: With the Strategic Imperatives in mind, in Spring 2019, toward the end of the first year of tenure, President Oubré launched the first inclusive, comprehensive, strategic planning process that Whittier College has ever undergone. The process started with the creation of a new role, Director of Strategic Initiatives (since eliminated due to the pandemic; key strategic visioning has since been incorporated as part of the work of the Innovation and New Ventures division). A Strategic Planning Task Force was appointed in the Summer of 2019.

Key steps (values, an environmental scan, strategic commitments—all detailed later) in the Strategic Planning Task Force process were completed or near completion. Subsequently, the work that began before the onset of the pandemic was adjusted as the impact of the new COVID-19 world took hold. Driven by both our ambitions and by the pressing needs

exacerbated by the pandemic, we decided to use the context of the disruption to develop paths of opportunity, to “build our own future.”

With the onset of the pandemic, the Board of Trustees appointed a “Futures Task Force” with individuals representing faculty, staff, and trustees. The charge of this Task Force was to build on the environmental scanning, visioning, and values development work of the Strategic Planning Task Force to develop a vision for the institution in a post-Covid world. The Futures group presented a business plan for the future in February 2021 that received full buy-in and start-up funding from the Board. The Board also used the value commitments work of the Strategic Planning Task Force to develop a Code of Conduct for the institution that was fully adopted in May 2021.

#### Strategic Planning Task Force (2019-2021)

Early in her tenure President Oubré named a Strategic Planning Task Force in the summer of 2019 to ensure that we built community values and input as well as alignment and communication into our strategic efforts.

Co-Chaired by the Director of Strategic Initiatives and the ALO, work began immediately on gathering broad support and broad understanding.

- Fall 2019: Campus-wide listening sessions were held with Trustees, Faculty, Staff and Students regarding shared values; STF conducted values surveys and analyzed results. STF also developed—in collaboration with the community—a “Values Statement” (available in the next section) which reflects what we heard. Though not

a mission statement *per se*, these values represent community ideals towards which we should aspire:

- Embrace diversity in its many forms and seek to understand the experience of others.
  - Promote justice for all and an equity-centered approach.
  - Foster community and belonging.
  - Stimulate discovery and innovation.
  - Act with integrity and demonstrate respect.
- Fall 2019 and spring 2020: Strength, weakness and opportunity (SWO) workshops were conducted among a broad group of faculty, staff and leadership. SPTF co-chairs met with the Cabinet and discussed the results.
  - Following the SWO workshops, the committee turned to identifying threats and establishing a macro-focus on the College's position within the context of higher education and society in general. During the first three months of 2020, members of the strategic task force were assigned work groups across categories (demographics, K-12 education, policy, economy, liberal education and higher ed). The research and findings of these sub-groups became the [Environmental Scan](#) report that was drafted just prior to the start of the pandemic. The scan details numerous trends, challenges and opportunities facing our sector (pre-COVID). The Environmental Scan was subsequently revisited during the early months of the pandemic.

The work for the Environmental Scan as well as the various task forces informed Whittier's 7 Value-Driven Commitments and the creation of strategic positions of Vice President of Innovation and New Ventures, and the Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

As stated in Component 1, the pandemic accelerated our need not just to plan strategically, but to act. With a completed Environmental Scan and the establishment of two board-level task forces (the Affordability Task Force and Futures Task Force), the Strategic Planning Task Force was asked to culminate its work and develop guiding commitments. In the summer of 2020, based on its community values and in response to the challenges and opportunities ahead, the Strategic Planning Task Force laid out a series of commitments to help organize strategic conversations at the college.

- 1. Whittier will build on its strengths and become a national leader in diversity, equity, and inclusion.**
- 2. Whittier will support a broad range of academic programs aimed at the needs of society, from K-12 through higher education, including in traditional and non-traditional aged students.**
- 3. Whittier will partner with surrounding communities and build effective, lasting collaborations that complement and enhance its educational offerings.**
- 4. Whittier will offer tremendous value for its education through transformative, high-impact opportunities that encourage and accelerate student development and opportunities.**
- 5. Whittier will make its value clear to internal and external audiences.**

6. **Whittier will support all students in developing strategies and skills to manage wellness and mental health.**
7. **Whittier will build operational infrastructure and support the ongoing professional development and well-being of its employees, including staff and faculty.**

These value commitments, along with our values, are intended to help drive and help align operational activities and have been integrated into our [KPI worksheet pilot](#) and frequently communicated and discussed with the board and faculty leadership.

COVID has meant embracing the iterative nature of planning and alignment, especially since we have necessarily prioritized operational and academic program needs in the midst of disruption. That said, we are diligently working together to reposition the college: evidenced by collaborative composition of our task forces that include accomplished and motivated board members working with faculty and administrators to explore and vet proposals, as well as cross-divisional committees on campus where the VP of Innovation and New Ventures works closely with the VPAA, faculty and staff.

Upon reflection, our work, collaboratively and in parallel, has expanded and brought understanding and local meaning to our Strategic Imperatives (equity and inclusion, new revenue streams, and alignment resources) in many conversations around campus. In spite of COVID, we moved quickly and collaboratively, but we are obviously not done. The upcoming February 2022 Board Retreat will build on the shared data, committee work, values and commitments we have developed, and it will be intensely future-oriented. This will be an in-depth discussion among Trustees and campus administrative and faculty



leadership. Without a doubt we are challenging ourselves to engage with the issues we face and embrace change as we adapt to a new world. Detailed initiative development and action planning that aligns with our mission, values, and vision must follow from the decisions made at this pivotal moment for the future of Whittier College. The work will continue.

## Component 9: Conclusion

### Successes, Challenges, and Moving Ahead

In addition to continued growth and development spurred by WSCUC's 2013 recommendations, Whittier's TPR themes express important and ambitious goals in alignment with the community's values and President Oubré's vision for the College. And—in spite of a pandemic that has brought about rapid change, and unexpected challenges to budget and operations—the TPR process worked in concert with motivated faculty, staff and administration and helped us to revisit and renew our values, and reaffirm and articulate our commitments to a diverse, equitable and inclusive community.

Challenges remain, no doubt. A high-level review of our work by all involved reveals the following:

1. We intentionally froze tuition and implemented adjusted financial aid models designed to improve access and equity for our students, helping achieve an 82.8% FY-FY retention rate from fall 2020 through fall 2021. This was the right thing to do and brought success, as did Mackenzie Scott funds directed towards aid for juniors and seniors. But, COVID-19 has increased our discount rate and had a severe impact

on our recruitment efforts. This challenge continues but is also an opportunity to adapt in an equitable and inclusive way that will, in the long term, help retain our trust with parents, students and the public. (Theme 1.A)

2. Whittier made positive procedural and administrative steps in improving hiring and recruitment of faculty with the creation and refinement of a recruitment handbook and used data to track progress in its goals around hiring and leadership. The appointment of an associate dean dedicated to DEI, and the hiring of Rustin fellows in English and for DEI focused institutional research are helping institutionalize our values and our processes. These successes were mitigated, unfortunately, by COVID-related operational challenges and budget constraints, both of which severely limited efforts to replace retiring faculty. However, we remain extremely positive and excited about building a diverse faculty and institution that, *national research and our core values* show, will help create an education that motivates and mentors leaders of the future (Theme 1.B)
3. Curriculum renewal received resources and attention and successfully brought equity and inclusion into the conversations, and those conversations have been frequent and widespread, including weekly or bi-weekly meetings of the faculty throughout much of 2018-19 and 2019-20. Through 2021, too, work on renewing our curriculum has been intense and ongoing. Most importantly, however, this work has happened in parallel with processes in student life, strategic planning, and committees such as FEC, CFLA, IDC, ESAC and EPC. We are not done with this work yet, but our goal is to send a formal proposal to the faculty this spring. (Theme 1.C)

4. Program review and assessment continued to become part of our institutional culture but external visits and scheduling of evaluators became a major challenge during COVID. The Assessment Committee has become increasingly communicative and involved in the program review process, reviewing what was working and what was not, leading to a number of changes in practice, and increased awareness and compliance. Whittier's closing the loop process still needs work, however, and liberal education assessment remains a real challenge with our old curriculum. We are addressing closing the loop with budget and alignment during 21-22, and we fully expect to reform our liberal education assessment with our new curriculum. (Theme 2.A)
5. Thanks to the overarching Strategic Imperatives outlined early on by President Oubré, strategic planning became more inclusive and moved beyond the admin-only "positioning plan." We accomplished critical community work on values and commitments, and implemented new campus positions and board committees with future-oriented charges. In light of COVID, we have opted to forego a traditional plan and to communicate and engage with broad-based strategic conversations and decision making. As noted in Theme 1b and 2b, the college has developed both overarching visions for alignment as well as detailed plans working through committees and administrative structures. We remain committed to our goals and to campus alignment in parallel with our mission and with the contingencies of the higher education environment. (Theme 2.B)

## **Maintaining Momentum**

Whittier is fortunate to have an environment where dedication to students and a respect for their diverse identities and backgrounds plays a central role in our decision-making and planning. Teamwork and accountability to one another is part of our institutional culture. In addition, the President, leadership, and the Board of Trustees are highly invested in the success of our programs, both existing and emerging. This is evidenced in the new structures created to speed program development, as well as the frequent work done by joint faculty-admin-BOT committees. At the faculty-governance level, we maintain momentum by coordinating and communicating committee charges each year, and using the first meetings of the year to set timelines and hone objectives for the year. Our committees on all levels create agendas, take minutes, archive documents, assign tasks, meet regularly, issue reports, and communicate how the committee's work is important to the mission and vision of the college. Fortunately, these are common practices at Whittier and have helped see us through COVID-19 while making progress in all of our TPR goals.

In conclusion and directly related to Themes A and B, Whittier will continue to work and actively pursue progress for our admissions strategies (1a), our commitment to analyzing and promoting equity and inclusion for faculty and staff (1b), and pursuing curricular revision in a way that reflects the values and commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion on our campus (1c). Similarly, program review (2a) and strategic planning and a new strategic vice presidency (2b) represent our commitment to creating the conditions for implementing forward-looking and sustainable change at the institution while—first and foremost—serving our incredible students from all walks of life.