

## Chapter 2: Concerns of the 1994 Evaluation Team

During the ten years since the 1994 NCA evaluation team submitted its report, the College has taken a number of steps to address the concerns the team raised. All ten of these concerns are addressed thoroughly in Chapters 3 through 7 of the self-study. In addition, responses to the concerns are summarized below. Because the College deemed some concerns more critical than others, the responses vary in length.

### Concerns of the Evaluation Team

*1. Student social life is dominated by a Greek system some of whose features contribute to problems in retention of students, alcohol abuse, and an atmosphere that is not conducive to the intellectual and personal development of women students.*

Westminster College has drastically changed and significantly progressed since the mid 1990s and the last NCA assessment. Although the Greek system on this campus still involves a large number of our students, the overall percentage of students electing to affiliate with a Greek organization has steadily declined over the past ten years from a high of 74% (1994-1995) to just over 55% (2004-2005). This change has occurred as our enrollment has grown, giving non-affiliated students a much larger voice and “critical mass” that offer more balance and a myriad of alternatives to Greek life.

The College provides a dedicated Independent House where any unaffiliated students can meet, assemble, plan projects or just relax with others. We provide extensive support for the Independents and have amended our Student Government Association constitution to allow for funding of a wide array of clubs and organizations that offer alternatives to Greek life. The Finance Committee of the SGA frequently approves funding for numerous clubs and organizations. Our Alumni Council has a core of alumni both Greek and non-Greek who encourage and support the goals of the Independents. The alumni back this support up with resources including partial funding of the first ever all-campus formal sponsored by the Independents.

Our CIVICUS program is open to any student who wishes to engage in service oriented initiatives and programs and connects with all students on the common theme of helping others. Our federal grant (ED) funded Center for Leadership & Service (CLS) has taken the concept of service to another level engaging students in extensive leadership development programs and service learning opportunities. Both of these organizations are thriving and provide the local community with extensive support. CIVICUS has a dedicated home and budget as part of the grant.

We also have a dedicated Women’s Resource Center staffed by two paid interns that operates much as CIVICUS does but with a focus on women’s issues and the local community. The Remley Resource Center is a joint venture between faculty and Student

Life staff and involves a wide cross section of women on this campus. The Center leads programs on a number of women's issues year round and has extensive support from faculty and the school administration. It also has a dedicated budget taken from the federal grant.

The College has actively sought and continually supported the hiring of women in many positions, although retaining women faculty remains a serious concern. Recently we have been able to hire women in the following student life positions: Director of Diversity Programs, Assistant Director of the CLS (female alumna), two counselors, women's volleyball coach and the women's softball coach. All are superb professionals who serve as consummate role models and mentors for our women students. Our Counseling & Health Services staff is well trained and versed in caring for women and afflictions that seem to affect more women such as eating disorders. We have a fine Wellness Program funded by SGA and run by a female counselor.

Our Chapel Leadership Council and their president have taken the lead in providing a large number of social events with no alcohol. These events are open to the entire campus and some in the recent past have had numbers approaching 10% of the student population as participants. Many of our international students, particularly those whose cultures do not promote alcohol use, have supported this endeavor.

Our international student enrollment has increased to approximately 70 students, or 8% of the student body. They represent 35 countries and a huge diversity in race, culture, and religion. They have brought an entirely different flavor to Westminster and participate in programs that expose their cultures to all interested faculty, staff, and students. International students have their own International Club, which is open to all Westminster students, and participate in the Multicultural Club, which is made up of minority American and International Students. The International Club is one of the strongest on campus, and the Multicultural Club has literally exploded in popularity in the past two years. Their actions have brought them to the forefront of student leadership on campus and had an electric effect on enthusiasm.

Our women's Greek organizations have continued their tradition of philanthropy and community involvement. They also consistently receive excellent grades and always exceed our all-women average GPA. College administration has taken a much more aggressive approach to rigorous enforcement of Risk Management policies for our men's fraternities and most have responded positively. We have reduced the number of Risk Management incidents during the Fall 2004 semester to zero. Consistent and firm enforcement has had a significant positive effect. We have also pushed the men towards more self-governance and accountability and have made huge advancements in the Inter Fraternity Council in the past two years. Student Life has also worked with our safety personnel and enforced higher standards of maintenance and safety in the men's houses. We pay particular attention to fire and electrical safety. The men's philanthropic endeavors continue to expand with a men's chapter winning the annual service hour award in the past two years. We have tried to support and enhance the many positives

that a healthy Greek community can bring to a campus. Our community is healthy and getting better.

Our Counseling & Health Services (C&HS) in concert with the University of Missouri's Wellness Resource Center implemented the BASICS alcohol program this year. BASICS is a one-hour harm reduction, responsible decision-making program. We set up the program to be given to all first time freshmen through our freshman seminar and it has been well received. Alcohol violations on campus are at an all-time low to this point in our year. We think we are the first school in the country to give the program to an entire class and plan on expanding it to all Greek presidents and social chairs. Also, C&HS has instituted a campus wide social norming initiative.

Despite our many successes, much work still remains. Certainly the influence of alcohol use and abuse has to be constantly addressed and we are committed to reducing its influence. We are working cooperatively with our local community and William Woods University to continually address this challenge. We have a permanent retention council that addresses the entire student developmental experience. Our council recommended a series of major retention related programs and initiatives last year that are in different stages of implementation. Our initial focus is on freshman to sophomore retention and must be expanded to include all students/classes.

However, as represented above, Westminster has improved significantly over the past ten years. While we still have many of the same challenges most other colleges have, we have made progress in the areas mentioned in the 1994 report as well as many others. Westminster is a safe and healthy place to learn.

*2. The curriculum has been in place, relatively unchanged, for a number of years. Although projects for curricular reform have been undertaken, an overall vision has not been articulated and the faculty remain unsure of their role in the reform process.*

The curriculum in 1994 had been in place since the early 1980s, when the College adopted distribution requirements. The format of the curriculum in the 1980s was significantly different from what had existed in the 1970s and represented a more structured approach to the idea of general education requirements. The distribution requirements seemingly addressed a number of concerns and met the needs of students for a decade or more. By the early 1990s, however, a number of faculty expressed concern that the basis for the distribution requirements was not sufficiently clear and that there was no clear mechanism for adding or subtracting courses in this program. Following the NCA review in 1994 and along with the arrival of a new Dean of Faculty in 1995-1996, the College significantly revamped its general education program. Our current program (*New Foundations*) is criteria based and three tiered. There is a format for adopting new courses into the general degree requirements, and all courses are periodically reviewed for continuation. During the last ten years, many of the departments have revised their major requirements on one or more occasions; we also adopted minors in the late 1990s and have created several new majors (e.g., International

Studies, Environmental Studies). At the same time that curricular reform began to unfold, we also adopted a new mission statement and goals and objectives, and we have been engaged in strategic planning. Within the last five years we have again revised our mission statement, adopted vision statements, developed more fully an assessment program, and pursued another phase of strategic planning. Our curriculum is now much more connected to the College's mission, goals and objectives, and vision statements. Likewise, assessment data are more readily available to help in making curricular decisions.

*3. Stated personnel policies and procedures have not been followed in recent years. Inconsistencies in the Faculty Handbook have not been corrected.*

The College drafted a complete employee handbook for the first time in the mid 1990s; we also revised the *Faculty Handbook* through a very time consuming and difficult process that took almost six years and was completed in Spring 2003. At this point, the *Employee Handbook* and *Faculty Handbook* are correlated closely with one another, and faculty can now find all campus-wide policies in the *Faculty Handbook*. Every effort has been made to draft handbooks that give good guidance, and personnel policies and procedures are pursued in accordance with the handbooks. Both the *Employee Handbook* and *Faculty Handbook* have provisions for incorporating additions, revisions, and corrections in a systematic and regular manner.

In the mid 1990s the College also created the position of Director of Human Resources, and as the result of guidance from this office, we now have job descriptions for all positions on campus, an annual performance appraisal procedure, and a salary administration plan. The Director of Human Resources has also worked closely with faculty and staff to develop key campus-wide policies in areas such as harassment and discrimination and violence in the workplace.

*4. The team notes with concern the outside evaluation of fundraising that has suggested considerable missed opportunities, weakening the College's financial position and impeding its growth.*

In the last five years, the College has made significant progress in its ability to raise funds. The development office is now staffed appropriately and the infrastructure has been developed to identify and solicit donors, provide stewardship of gifts, and to manage the fundraising program. Annual alumni giving has risen from less than 20% to 39%, placing the College in the top 100 in its *U.S. News and World Report* ratings in this category. The current capital campaign has raised more than \$65 million, allowing the construction of a new science building and a host of other campus improvements, program support, scholarships, and endowed chairs. While fundraising was certainly a weakness for the College in the 1990s, it now has become a strength.

*5. The College needs to continue and expand efforts to recruit a student body appropriate to the programs and facilities of the institution.*

For many years, an enrollment of 600-700 students each fall seemed adequate to meet the college's need to maintain a balanced budget and to limit the additional use of earnings from the endowment to balance the budget. However, the middle to late 1990s saw significant increases in computer technology, health care costs, deferred maintenance costs, increased use of scholarship funds and other fixed expenses. After examining the college's budget history, it became obvious to current President Fletch Lamkin that the College needed to grow its enrollment in order to stabilize and secure the college's financial future.

As President Lamkin and the Board of Trustees examined various options to secure a strong financial base for the College, it was apparent to them that the College needed to increase its enrollment from the mid 700s to 1,000 students or more. The College had the capacity to grow and could still retain the significant characteristics for which it is known--namely, small classes, full time faculty members, and a supportive, residentially oriented college community. It was important to strengthen the college's financial base by spreading fixed costs over more students. National data also suggested that colleges under 1,000 students were not attractive to most high school seniors.

During the past three years, the College has enjoyed a record enrollment each fall--topping out at 861 for Fall 2004. In order to accomplish these goals, the College made some significant changes during the past decade.

- (1) The College hired the Noel Levitz, Inc. firm in 2001-2002 to help it spend financial aid dollars on more and better students with a systematic approach to financial aid. The current freshman class profile is close to a 25 ACT composite.
- (2) The College also lowered its tuition \$3,000 for new students for the 2002-2003 school year to make the College more competitive with area schools and to make it more affordable to more students. The College increased its new student enrollment from 248 to 283.
- (3) An anonymous donor helped the College establish the SSS Scholarship program for students of color, providing full tuition scholarships and other assistance, starting in the fall of 2002. There are 27 SSS students enrolled in the fall of 2004.
- (4) The United World College (UWC) Shelby Davis Foundation selected Westminster as one of their schools to enroll UWC graduates--international students who receive a \$10,000 grant per year for four years if they enroll at Westminster. Currently 19 students are UWC Davis Scholars.

- (5) In the late 1990s, the College completely renovated all eight of their residence halls to make them more attractive to students.
- (6) The College leased two new apartment buildings to house 64 juniors and seniors; the facilities opened in Fall 2004.
- (7) The College was given a gift for campus improvements: to greatly improve the buildings and grounds of the campus, including more technology in the classrooms, lighting for the intramural, softball, baseball and soccer fields and underground sprinkler systems.
- (8) The College, with a gift from the Coulter Foundation, completely renovated and constructed a new 80,000 square foot building housing our math and natural science facilities as well as other academic departments; the facility opened January 2003.

It is the intention of the College to continue increasing enrollment over the next several years, and all indications suggest we will be able to do so.

*6. There are no clearly articulated policies and procedures for staff, collected in a readily available handbook. The College needs to put into place a Personnel Director to oversee employment practices and policies.*

Following the 1994 NCA report and concern regarding the lack of a Personnel Director and articulated policies and procedures in a handbook, President James Traer appointed a task force that was charged with creating an employee handbook. Dr. Audrey Remley chaired this task force, which later became the Staff Liaison Committee. The first handbook was completed in the fall of 1995. Additionally, the College did a search for and hired a Human Resources Coordinator, Sallie Jo Cunningham, in 1995, who was charged with managing the HR and payroll function, and to continue upgrading policies and procedures for the staff handbook. With the support of the Staff Liaison Committee, Ms. Cunningham continued this work and other related endeavors to improve the human resources function, which included policies, procedures, benefit information, and other relevant information to aid and support both the administration and all staff employees of the College in those matters important to the daily and on-going operation.

With Ms. Cunningham's departure in 1997, the College promoted Sara Winingear to the same position from her role as Payroll Assistant. Ms. Winingear remained in that role for one year before taking the position of Assistant Director of the Winston Churchill Memorial and Library. The College then hired Carl Marriott in the expanded role of Director of Human Resources and Compensation. As a matter of course, the HR Director and Staff Liaison Committee review and upgrade the *Employee Handbook* for publication in January of each year, and have done this continuously since 1999. A number of new or upgraded policies and procedures have come from the work of the HR Director with the Staff Liaison Committee, to include the Harassment Policy, the Salary Administration Policy, the Performance Review Process, the Sick Leave Pooling Policy, the Violence in

the Workplace Policy, the Background Check Policy, and many changes to employment practices and benefits. Additionally, with the support of the Cabinet, the HR Director has led training efforts for managers and supervisors in areas such as performance management planning, the hiring process, and the employee assistance program.

*7. The College has no clearly articulated plan for achieving cultural diversity. In the context of number one above in Concerns, such an initiative should achieve progress toward a campus ethos more consistent with the liberal arts ideals of the institution.*

Since the time of the last self-study the College has concentrated much attention on issues related to cultural diversity. In the early 1990s, the College established an Office of Off-campus and International Programs, which was initially overseen by a faculty member with release time and supported by a part-time secretary. The key goals of the office have been to encourage and facilitate study off campus by our own students and to help make Westminster attractive to international students. The operations of the office have grown steadily, and in academic year 2001-2002, the College hired a full time staff person to serve as Director. A faculty committee now serves as an advisory board for the Director, who reports directly to the Dean of Faculty. Under the leadership of the Director, the College has regularized its affiliations with various off-campus and international programs, has identified more off-campus opportunities, and has more systematically brought information related to off-campus programs to the attention of students.

For three years (1998-2001) Westminster supported a program at Sunderland University, where a group of Westminster students, along with a faculty member, was in residence during the fall semester. The students took several regular Sunderland University courses and a cultural heritage course taught by the Westminster faculty member. The Westminster faculty member taught one course open to Sunderland University in addition to the cultural heritage course for Westminster students. The original plan was for the Sunderland program to develop into an exchange program, and for the arrangement perhaps to serve as a model to use for programs at other schools in other (especially non-English speaking) countries. Unfortunately the cost of sustaining the Sunderland program was deemed too high, and the College is currently looking at affiliating with a consortium of Missouri schools for a similar program in London.

Westminster has been particularly successful at recruiting international students over the last ten years (especially the last six years). We currently have 71 international students from 36 different countries enrolled at the College, and international students represent 8% (19 students) of freshman class entering in fall 2004. The international students have often maintained a very high profile at the College in terms of academic achievement and involvement in campus activities. The World Within Westminster program, supported by the Office of Off Campus and International Programs, has been a rich and successful venue for a cultural discussion and exchange.

Recently the College has had greater success attracting a more ethnically diverse population, and the approximately 8% of the freshman class entering in fall 2004 have indicated that they are African-American, Non-Hispanic (4%, 9 students), American Indian or Alaskan Native (1%, 2 students), Asian or Pacific Islander (1%, 2 students), or Hispanic (2%, 4 students). In academic year 2002-2003 the College established a scholarship program (SSS Scholarships), and this program has attracted many ethnically diverse students. In academic year 2002-2003 Westminster also established the position of Diversity Coordinator, and through the leadership of the Coordinator the College has been more successful at addressing issues related to cultural diversity. For example, there has been an increase in the number of programs that pertain to cultural diversity and a higher persistence rate for students of diversity (e.g., 9 of 10 students awarded a SSS Scholarship in 2003-2004 have returned for academic year 2004-2005). In the last few years a Multicultural Club has also been organized to promote understanding of issues related to cultural diversity.

In the Academic Area the College now has major programs in International Studies and International Business and minors in International Business and Asian Studies. The College also was awarded a Title VI grant from the US Department of Education with the expressed purpose of internationalizing the Westminster curriculum. Eleven faculty members were actively involved with the grant and as many as ten new courses were developed as the result of the program. A proposal (entitled the Churchill International Institute) to coordinate and enhance further a number of initiatives related to cultural diversity and international programs is currently under discussion. The general degree requirements also include a three-course sequence that includes the study of a foreign language and the examination of a foreign culture through two courses; an additional course must include a non-Western focus. For several years (1997-1999) the College supported a program with the Gila Crossing Community School in Arizona, where Westminster Education students spent several weeks working with Native American school children. Although staff changes at both Gila Crossing Community School and Westminster have resulted in the discontinuation of the program, we are eager to explore developing a similar opportunity elsewhere--especially for our Education students.

The College has made a concerted effort over the last ten years to address issues related to cultural diversity. The diversity in the student body, the expansion of academic programs with an international perspective, and the appointment of a Diversity Coordinator are all encouraging developments. At the same time, however, not all of our efforts have fully succeeded or continued as originally planned (e.g., the Sunderland program and Gila Crossing programs have been discontinued), and the College will need to continue its commitment to diversity to assure demonstrable progress in the future. Such a commitment is consistent with our efforts of the last ten years and with our identity as a liberal arts institution.

*8. The College's Self Study fails to engage the activity of the academic life of the college, reflecting institutional lapses in communication, curricular vision, and pedagogical imagination.*

By its very design and in accordance with the guidelines of the Higher Learning Commission, our current self-study appropriately focuses on the academic life of the College. Throughout the self-study process we have tried to determine how best to use the self-study as a way to reflect on where we currently stand, how we have developed in the past ten years, and where and how we might best proceed in the future. The last ten years have been a period of tremendous change. We have revised our mission statement twice, adopted vision statements and educational goals, made significant progress on becoming a culture of evidence, revamped our general education program, revised and added majors, adopted minors, and experienced a tremendous turnover of faculty and staff (which will continue as colleagues reach traditional retirement age and our enrollment increases). We have opened the Center for Teaching Excellence, which fosters pedagogical imagination through a wide range of workshops and presentations. Finally, we have strived to unite the self-study process with strategic planning, whose ultimate goal is to become an academically stronger school and one recognized for the strength of its faculty and curriculum and the success of its students.

*9. The faculty need to address their concerns regarding workload, including especially the degree and manner of their involvement in the governance of the College.*

The issue of workload and degree and manner in which faculty are involved in governance of the College continues to be a concern. The last ten years have been a period of tremendous change and activity, and the faculty has been at the center of virtually all the initiatives. Most of the initiatives were pursued either by standing committees or task forces, and the effort required to complete the initiatives has in many cases been exhausting. To a certain degree it is understandable that initiatives like strategic planning, curricular reform, the construction of a major academic building (Wallace H. Coulter Science Building), revision of the *Faculty Handbook*, and the self-study process would tax the energy of the faculty of a small college.

In light of our experience of the last ten years and anticipation that the level of activity in the future may also be high, there has been renewed concern for finding a means to address issues related to course loads and participation in college governance. In academic year 2000-2001, a task force conducted a time and motion study that identified the magnitude of the situation and some steps that the community may wish to consider. Another task force in academic year 2001-2002 examined issues related to course loads for both students and faculty. A proposal to streamline the committee system is currently (as of October 2004) under consideration by the Faculty Executive Committee, and the Curriculum Committee is currently discussing the issue of course loads. In the case of college governance it will be important to find ways to ensure that decisions and recommendations made by a limited number of faculty and administrators are subject to an appropriate level of review by the community as a whole. In turn, any proposal to change course loads will need to assure that we can deliver and staff our academic program in its present form or modified form.

*10. With the new configuration in the College's leadership, allocation of responsibility among the chief administrative officers should continue a process of normalization.*

Since the last accreditation visit, the College has placed within its structure a human relations officer, who performs the important function of defining each staff position. Thus, under the current system, each position has a job description, a level, and a specified rating scheme. Everyone receives an annual rating that is backed by required counseling. Each position is thoroughly reviewed, particularly when a vacancy occurs, to ensure that the job description and level are appropriate to the responsibilities of the position.

Within the Cabinet, each position is given a specific job description by the President, and each Cabinet member receives an annual evaluation letter from the President, which is kept in the individual's personnel file. The evaluations include performance relating to specific goals, which are outlined in each Cabinet member's annual business plan. Thus, not only are Cabinet-level positions clearly defined, but also incumbents are required to establish strategic plans with long-term goals and one-year objectives to accomplish their responsibilities. Additionally, Cabinet members meet regularly as a group, in specified clusters, and one-on-one with the President to ensure effective coordination and communication.

At this point, virtually all of the "vagaries" that existed in the previous system have been eliminated, having been replaced by a very structured system for defining duties, evaluating performance, and managing personnel.

## **Conclusion**

As the discussions in this chapter suggest, the College has carefully considered all the concerns of the 1994 Evaluation Team. Many significant improvements have resulted, such as the reversal of the trend in fundraising, the regularizing of policies and procedures for faculty and staff, and a new general education curriculum for the students. Given the challenges of a small college, our ability to increase significantly both enrollment and diversity give us much to be proud of. These changes have also had a positive effect on the social climate of the College, which has notably improved since 1994. However, such changes cannot be achieved without considerable effort, which has led to continued overwork on the part of the faculty. Although several attempts have been made to ease faculty workload, we must find viable solutions to this problem in the near future.