

Report to the  
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students

Of

Wesleyan University  
Middletown, CT

By

An evaluation Team representing the  
New England Commission of Higher Education

Prepared after study of the institution's  
Self-evaluation report and site visit  
November 6-9, 2022

**The members of the team:**

*Chairperson:* Dr. Leon Botstein, President, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY

Dr. Bryan Burns, Professor of Classical Studies, Wellesley College, Norwood, MA

Dr. Catherine Epstein, Provost and Dean of the Faculty, Amherst College, Amherst, MA

Dr. Marianne Thomson, Associate Dean of Student Affairs, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH

Mr. Jay Herlihy, Associate Dean for Finance, Harvard University, Belmont, MA

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This report represents the views of the evaluation committee as interpreted by the chairperson. Its content is based on the committee's evaluation of the institution with respect to the Commission's criteria for accreditation. It is a confidential document in which all comments are made in good faith. The report is prepared both as an educational service to the institution and to assist the Commission in making a decision about the institution's accreditation status.

**New England Commission of Higher Education  
Preface Page to the Team Report**

Please complete **during the team visit** and include with the report prepared by the visiting team

**Name of Institution:** Wesleyan University

**Date form completed:** 11/28/2022

**1. History:** Year chartered or authorized 1831 Year first degrees awarded 1833

**2. Type of control:**  State  City  Religious Group; Specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Private, not-for-profit  Other; specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Proprietary

**3. Degree level:**

Associate  Baccalaureate  Masters  Professional  Doctorate

**4. Enrollment in Degree Programs:** (Use figures from fall semester of most recent year):

	Full-time	Part-time	FTE	Retention <sup>a</sup>	Graduation <sup>b</sup>	# Degrees <sup>c</sup>
<b>Associate</b>	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0
<b>Baccalaureate</b>	3,000	6	3,002.00	95%	93%	801
<b>Graduate</b>	124	20	130.67	n/a	BAMA: 96% / MA: 100% / PhD: 79%	82

(a) full-time 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> year (b) 3 or 6 year graduation rate (c) number of degrees awarded most recent year

**5. Student debt:**

	Most Recent Year	One Year Prior	Two Years Prior
<b>Three-year Cohort Default Rate</b>	1.4	1.7	1.8
<b>Three-year Loan Repayment Rate</b>	87.61*	90.55*	67.12*

\*The three year loan repayment rate values are taken from the College Scorecard data, specifically, the respective fields: RPY\_3YR\_RT, COMPL\_RPY\_3YR\_RT, and NONCOM\_RPY\_3YR\_RT

	Associate	Baccalaureate	Graduate
<b>Average % of graduates leaving with debt</b>	n/a	34%	10%
<b>Average amount of debt for graduates</b>	n/a	\$24,873	\$23,189

**6. Number of current faculty:** Full-time 391 Part-time 49 FTE 407.33

**7. Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year:** (Specify year: 2022)

(Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions, e.g., \$1,456,200 = \$1.456)

**Revenues 1**

Tuition 2	183,410
Gov't Appropriations	0
Gifts/Grants/Endowment	78.022
Auxiliary Enterprises	0
Other	7,001
<b>Total</b>	<b>268.433</b>

**Expenditures**

Instruction	118,794
Research	7,230
General 3	65,290
Auxiliary Enterprises	59,510
Other	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>250,824</b>

Note 1: Revenues exclude nonoperating activities.

Note 2: Tuition represents net student charges (tuition, room and board less financial aid)

Note 3: General Expenditures of 65,290 represent Academic Support (12,609), Student Services (20,949) and Institutional Support (31,372).

**8. Number of off-campus locations:**

In-state   2                        Other U.S.   0                        International   0                        Total   2  

**9. Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:**

Programs offered entirely on-line   0                        Programs offered 50-99% on-line   0  

**10. Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?**

No     Yes    Specify program(s):   Mango Languages and iTalki HK Limited (provide alternative language study options)

## ***Introduction***

I want to express my admiration for the colleagues who served with me on the evaluation team for Wesleyan University. They were exceptionally committed to the task and meticulously prepared. I also wish to thank the staff of the New England Commission of Higher Education for their support. Last but not least, I want to express my gratitude to the members of the Wesleyan community who interacted with us during our visit. What was striking was the curiosity exhibited by the Wesleyan community about how the institutions represented on the team handled comparable issues and problems, especially those that can be linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. The university constituencies exhibited loyalty, pride and ambition.

Members of the evaluation team met with the constituencies appropriate to the nine standards set forth by the accreditation process. There was an opening meeting and dinner for the evaluation team hosted by Wesleyan at which members of the team met students, trustees, faculty, and administrators. The evaluation team found the participation by the several constituencies of the university satisfactory and adequate to the demands of an accreditation visit. The Chair visited with the president and the team met with a representative group of trustees. An extensive tour of the campus was conducted. By the end of the visit, members of the evaluation team unanimously regarded the visit as meeting the expectations of an accreditation site visit.

Wesleyan provided a well-written and concise self-study. Members of the evaluation committee met with the primary authors of the self-study to get an accurate idea of how the self-study was put together and composed. All of the requests from the evaluation team for more information before and during the visit were responded to promptly. The evaluation team had at its disposal all the necessary documents to form a comprehensive and accurate account of Wesleyan's mission, programs, governance structures, and finances. The materials supplied by Wesleyan and the visit gave the evaluation team the confidence that the standards for accreditation for the NECHE could be addressed, appropriately and sufficiently in the case of Wesleyan in 2022.

The one regret expressed by members of the evaluation team was that we did not have a full database of the faculty with updated CVs. However, by perusing the website and the descriptions of the faculty and programs in the public domain, the team was satisfied that Wesleyan has continued to maintain a very high standard of excellence in terms of its faculty. The expectations that came out of the chair's preliminary visit before the onsite evaluation were fully met by the visit and the materials provided by Wesleyan.

—Leon Botstein, Chair of the NECHE accreditation team for Wesleyan University

## ***1. Mission and Purposes***

Wesleyan University is an historic and distinguished institutional exponent of the ideals of liberal learning. Its identity is overwhelmingly located in undergraduate education, despite the institution's designation as a "university" rather than a "college", owing to the presence of a small number of fine graduate programs and students. Wesleyan's graduate programs have consistently supported its primary undergraduate mission.

Wesleyan takes pride in its long tradition of intellectual excellence and curricular originality, its distinguished teacher-scholars, its allegiance to the elective system (Wesleyan describes its curriculum as "open" and therefore without general education requirements), and its emphasis on problem based, interdisciplinary study and student initiative. These virtues guide Wesleyan's pursuit of a distinctive liberal arts education.

In its recent mission statement Wesleyan seeks to distinguish itself in terms of liberal education by framing its approach to liberal education, in the classroom and outside of it, in terms of what in the self- study is called "pragmatic" liberal education. Students at Wesleyan, as Wesleyan's mission statement puts it, are guided towards "practical idealism". These phrases, which imply that there may be something inherently impractical in the manner in which the ideals and practice of liberal education are usually understood, however, would benefit however from closer scrutiny and wider amplification. As it stands, Wesleyan's distinctive approach to liberal education could be better articulated, and more clearly and consistently understood by the members of its community. It should be noted, however, that Wesleyan's President is widely recognized as a persuasive and influential advocate of the liberal arts tradition and the pivotal role higher education ought to play in a democracy.

What flourishes at Wesleyan is high student achievement and exemplary teaching. Nonetheless, the academic excellence of the faculty (in the context of a commitment to the undergraduate classroom) - a decisive element in Wesleyan's sustained success in admissions and retention - did not have as prominent a place as might have been expected in the institution's self- presentation. Wesleyan does, however, consistently foreground excellence in student and alumni achievement.

Well managed and fiscally secure, Wesleyan has maintained a high standard of idealism and excellence on behalf of liberal education. It could, however, further strengthen its distinctiveness, deepen its penchant for innovation and expand the range of its impact. Clarifying its mission and ambitions may help Wesleyan distinguish itself from its equally venerable, well-funded and geographically proximate peers. Given its traditions, the loyalty and strength of its alumni and parent constituencies, Wesleyan should consider a more ambitious goal in its capital campaign to secure its mission and ideals in the decade ahead; the Wesleyan community possesses the requisite philanthropic capacity.

## ***2. Planning and Evaluation***

**Planning:** Wesleyan’s engagement in planning activities has been extensive, from broad institutional planning (e.g., Towards Wesleyan’s Bicentennial), to planning around key functions (e.g., enrollment planning), and planning for specific units (e.g. the library). The university has used major external events to catalyze its institutional planning efforts, with the Great Recession preceding the Wesleyan 2020 plan in 2010 and the COVID-19 pandemic leading to the Towards Wesleyan’s Bicentennial plan in 2021. Further, in 2017, Wesleyan updated its Wesleyan 2020 plan with Beyond 2020, in which the university reaffirmed its academic core and aligned its financial planning with ambitious goals for access and affordability and for capital planning.

Towards Wesleyan’s Bicentennial builds on the two previous institutional plans by emphasizing the university’s key academic elements, ensuring financial strength, and serving as a national leader in liberal education. Incorporating input from faculty, staff, students, trustees, and alumni, this strategic plan represents the spirit of innovation and interdisciplinarity that permeates so much of what Wesleyan does. An interesting component of Towards Wesleyan’s Bicentennial is an invitation to all Wesleyan faculty, staff, and students to submit a proposal for funding to support projects that align with the plan’s strategic goals and promote student success at the university and beyond. This type of initiative has been done twice before during President Roth’s tenure and has generated a variety of impactful programs at the university. Given Wesleyan’s culture of creativity and experimentation, it may be a helpful reminder that NECHE standards indicate that planning should be “appropriate to the institution” and, in turn, the outcomes of planning should be mission-aligned.

Undoubtedly, the pandemic caused great uncertainty around student enrollments. Wesleyan’s Enrollment Planning Group helped the university navigate through that uncertainty and the institution maintained enrollments that were mostly consistent with historical levels, dipping 4.1% in its undergraduate FTE in Fall 2020. This short-term dip, though, led to a marked increase of 15.7% in Fall 2021 as students returned from leaves of absence and first-year students who had previously deferred admission matriculated into the university. There were 910 students who entered in Fall 2021 as members of the Class of 2025. This is nearly 200 more students than the prior year and 145 students more than what is typical from other recent first-year classes. The self-study identifies how the university will need to find ways to provide course access and housing for this large cohort during their time at Wesleyan. Enrollment planning has been and will continue to be critical as Wesleyan adjusts to having this large class in its pipeline. It will be important for those engaged in enrollment planning to have thoughtful conversations about how to moderate enrollment in the short-term without experiencing an enrollment cliff once the large Class of 2025 graduates. Finally, the university balances its internal enrollment planning efforts with external consultation with SHBrooks to support the admission process.

Wesleyan's financial planning is guided by an established set of financial management policies and procedures, utilizes a variety of long-term models, incorporates input from multiple internal and external stakeholders, and is sensitive to external environmental challenges. A critical element of the financial plan looking forward over the next few years is a new \$600 million fundraising campaign. The campaign priorities, including academics, student access, and improvements to facilities, are aligned with both the institutional mission and the priorities articulated in the most recent strategic plan. Information about financial planning is presented in greater detail later in this report, in Standard 7: Institutional Resources.

Regarding technology planning, the university has carefully considered the shortcomings and challenges that have been presented by the existing information technology infrastructure. In response, the institution has developed a philosophy of technology planning that emphasizes cloud storage and Software as a Service (SaaS). The most notable decision related to technology has been the decision to transition from PeopleSoft, which the university has used since 2001, to a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. The search for a new ERP is ongoing with a choice expected in later 2022 or early 2023 with implementation beginning as soon as Summer 2023. This transition will have a major impact for several units (e.g., Information Technology, the Registrar's Office, and the Office of Institutional Research), greatly diminishing capacity for these units over the next few years. In the long run, though, this transition is likely to have a transformative impact on the university. As noted in the self-study, the university is relying on siloed transactional data systems that are not easily integrated and hinder the ability to do complex data analyses in a timely manner.

In 2014 and 2015, Wesleyan worked with Sasaki Associates and Eastley+Partners to craft a master plan that would guide campus development over the following 10 to 15 years. This was a lengthy process that involved faculty, staff, and students and produced a set of principles and priorities for facilities planning. The plan has yielded tangible results that are documented publicly on the Wesleyan facilities website. The priorities articulated in this plan should continue to serve the institution well as it strives to maintain a balance between meeting campus needs with new projects like the Public Affairs Center and sustaining its existing facilities.

Planning and evaluation efforts at Wesleyan are supported by a capable and well-regarded Office of Institutional Research. Faculty, staff, students, trustees, and alumni have been engaged in planning activities and the Chief of Staff and Director of Strategic Planning serves in a central role that connects a variety of planning efforts.

**Evaluation:** Wesleyan University engages in a broad range of evaluation activities, employing both quantitative and qualitative analyses, and has used their evaluation results to inform their planning efforts. There is consistent alignment between planning and evaluation activities. Progress on the institution-level strategic plans is tracked and reported. Functional planning activities and planning for academic and administrative units are supported by data. The

university uses a variety of peer sets for benchmarking. The lack of a consistent peer set is by design. Instead, the institution prefers to employ peer groups based on the purposes of the benchmarking exercise. The visiting team notes that Wesleyan frequently uses peer sets that could be perceived as aspirational, which indicates that the institution is striving to measure itself against peers with greater financial resources and stronger market positions though it may create unrealistic expectations about where Wesleyan should be in the competitive landscape.

The university has established a strong culture of data-informed decision making. While this is good practice, there are questions about whether Wesleyan has the capacity to keep up with the demand for data and analyses. Much of the responsibility for this work falls on the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) and, to a lesser extent, the Registrar's Office. In the self-study, the institution is candid about its struggles to meet its growing evaluation needs. Demand has grown considerably, and, at the same time, both OIR and the Registrar's Office have experienced staffing changes while relying on outdated systems and insufficient data integration. The migration to a new ERP will make a meaningful difference in the long run, but the institution will need to be thoughtful about adding capacity for evaluation and reporting as staff need to dedicate time and energy to the transition to a new system.

Wesleyan engages in regular reviews of its programs, including both academic programs and key administrative units. Institutional expectations for reviews indicate that reviews of academic programs are to occur approximately every ten years. For a variety of reasons, the university has fallen behind on its review schedule and is attempting to catch up. This has resulted in the university planning to conduct a large number of reviews in the short term. It is commendable that the institution is making an effort to maintain a regular schedule of reviews, but it is also important to be mindful of capacity and whether there are diminishing returns when it conducts a larger-than-normal number of program reviews in a single year.

### ***3. Organization and Governance***

Wesleyan University, a non-for-profit institution of higher education, was established in 1831 under Special Laws of the State of Connecticut. Its mission is to provide an education in the liberal arts that is "characterized by boldness, rigor, and practical idealism." Its Charter was last amended in 2019 to increase the number of trustees to 36. Nine members of the board are elected by alumni and students to a three-year term and the remaining trustees are elected by the board to serve a six-year term. There are some 72 emeriti board members listed on the university website. Faculty (six) and students (two) have representation, without voting privileges, at board meetings.

The board has six standing committees. Three of those committees – Campus Affairs, Finance, and University Relations – have faculty and student representatives who have voting privileges

on the committees. In addition, the board sometimes creates ad hoc committees or task forces to assist the university with difficult issues. All members of the board are provided with a Conflict-of-Interest policy on a yearly basis and all new board members undergo an intensive orientation process. Trustees meet regularly with faculty and students and to address their desire to have more direct access to the President, meet with him in a briefing session at the beginning of each board meeting. The Governance Committee of the Board has responsibility for cultivating prospects for new trustees and it pays particular attention to areas of competence and diversity in proposing new trustees for election to the Board. A recent review of board effectiveness suggested that the Governance Committee pay more attention to potential trustees from outside the areas of finance and business and from other parts of the world.

The board has a clear understanding of the institution's distinctive mission, which was developed in 2010, and it exercises the authority to ensure the institution's mission and purposes. It undergoes a self-assessment, periodically reviews the performance of the President and delegates proper authority to the chief executive officer.

The President, through his Senior Cabinet and other administrative officers, effectively manages the institution to fulfill its purposes and objectives. To increase transparency and collaboration, the President now conducts four all-staff meetings a year and he and his Cabinet attend regularly scheduled faculty meetings. In addition, the President and Provost meet monthly with the Faculty Executive Committee and the President meets monthly with the Wesleyan Student Association.

The 12-member Senior Cabinet now includes the Chief Investment Officer and the University's General Counsel & Secretary. In addition to regular Cabinet meetings, the President also meets regularly with the Provost and CAO/Treasurer who directly report to him.

Faculty governance supports the academic and institutional mission of the university. It is conducted through meetings of the assembled faculty and through elected committees that oversee educational policy, honors, faculty rights and responsibilities, and the tenure and promotion process in conjunction with the Academic Council. Through this structure the faculty continuously reviews the academic process of the university, and consults with and advises the administration.

Thus, faculty are collectively responsible for faculty governance. There are 75 elected governance positions filled by faculty each year and over the last five years, 163 different faculty have participated in faculty governance through these roles. However, engagement among faculty through committee work is demonstrably uneven. The Faculty Handbook provides the structure and procedures for faculty governance. Faculty carry out their governance duties through two legislative bodies: the Faculty as a Whole and the Academic Council. Formal faculty meetings, open to all faculty, are held at least three times a semester. The Academic Council, which is open to all tenured faculty and three elected probationary faculty addresses matters of tenure, promotion, and evaluation and is comprised of

two standing committees – the Advisory Committee and the Review and Appeals Board (RAB). The Advisory Committee, consisting of nine members, reviews departmental recommendations on tenure and promotion and makes recommendations to the President. The RAB is comprised of thirty faculty, ten each from the three divisions of the faculty, and has the authority to review Advisory Committee recommendations and hear appeals of negative tenure and promotion decisions.

In addition to the two legislative bodies of the faculty, there are four standing committees – the Educational Policy Committee (EPC), the Faculty Committee on Rights and Responsibilities, the Committee on Honors, and the Compensation and Benefits Committee. The EPC has six elected faculty, two undergraduates and one graduate student. It meets weekly during the academic year and is responsible for overseeing the curriculum and approving changes to it. A senior administrator from the Office of Academic Affairs meets weekly with the EPC chair.

The effectiveness of faculty governance is evidenced in significant legislation to change the class schedule, add inter-semester classes and the creation of new majors. Recent efforts to increase faculty participation in governance have achieved modest success.

The Wesleyan Student Assembly (WSA) represents undergraduates through its 36 members across all four class years. The WSA is comprised of five standing committees and has responsibility for distributing funds to student groups from the Student Activities Fee. The WSA manages a \$500,000+ endowment.

#### ***4. The Academic Program***

**Introduction:** Wesleyan University’s primary academic program is a traditional undergraduate liberal arts degree that students pursue in a residential college environment, leading to a Bachelor of Arts (BA). Wesleyan also offers a small graduate program in the sciences and music. In recent years, it has introduced a second undergraduate degree program, a non-residential Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS). The university has recently begun to offer credit-bearing remotely-taught classes during winter and summer sessions.

The Wesleyan curriculum, taught by a faculty of teacher-scholars, is characterized by innovation and interdisciplinarity. By constantly creating cutting-edge majors, programs, colleges, and centers, Wesleyan fosters an intellectually vibrant community. Students (and faculty) follow their unique passions and interests, yet together they create a stimulating intellectual environment.

Based on a review of the program goals and requirements found in the University’s catalog, on academic unit websites, and in selected syllabi, the team found Wesleyan’s undergraduate and graduate academic programs to be clear and coherent, with standards of achievement appropriate to the degrees awarded (BA, BLS, MA, MALS, PhD, MPhil). The learning goals and requirements were well

within the traditional expectations of a premier liberal arts college or, in the case of its graduate programs, flagship state universities.

**Assuring Academic Quality:** To ensure academic quality, Wesleyan relies on its robust shared governance system, in which the faculty is expected to approve all major curricular decisions. The Educational Policy Committee (EPC), composed of nine voting members (six faculty members, two undergraduates, and one graduate student), reviews academic programs and policies.

All academic units are expected to engage in a self-study and external review process once every ten years. In recent years, Wesleyan fell behind in the schedule for external reviews, but it has now committed to doing 5-7 self-study and external reviews per year, instead of the three previously. Academic Affairs, the administrative division overseen by the provost, has developed guidelines to guide units through the self-study and review process. The external reviews are intended for use by the academic unit, as well as for Academic Affairs and the faculty-led EPC. External review committees are expected to assess the unit's effectiveness in meeting its educational objectives; the range, balance, and strength of the curriculum offered with respect to the current state of the discipline; and the unit's vision for the future. The self-study and external review exercise has led to important curricular and structural changes in academic units.

With regard to academic planning, Wesleyan has needed to focus on the challenges of pandemic enrollments. With a very large entering class of 2025—some 100-150 more entering first-year students than usual—Academic Affairs is gathering data on the curricular demands and making plans to hire additional faculty to meet the needs of this class.

**Undergraduate Degree Programs:** Wesleyan offers two undergraduate degree programs: a residential Bachelor of Arts (BA) and, as of Fall 2019, a non-residential Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS). Both programs involve a traditional liberal arts curriculum, updated to suit the needs and proclivities of the first decades of the twenty-first century. In the primary undergraduate degree program, the BA, Wesleyan students enjoy an open curriculum, in place since 1968. Students are expected to take ownership of their education and to shape it to meet their needs and passions; they have the freedom to explore the curriculum widely and, when they discover new interests, to pursue them without regard to core or distribution requirements other than those of their chosen major. Because students only take classes that they wish to take, they are generally highly engaged in their academic work. Although not required, Wesleyan has articulated general education expectations that involve strongly encouraging students to take a range of courses across the curriculum (see below, General Education).

For the BA degree, Wesleyan offers 45 majors, 31 minors, and 3 certificate programs to an undergraduate population of roughly 3,200 students. The degree requirements are clearly described in the Academic Catalog published on the Wesleyan website: students must complete the requirements for at least one major, complete 32 course credits, maintain a cumulative grade average of 74%, and spend at least six semesters in residence at Wesleyan. The requirements for transfer students are modified according to the length of time that they will attend Wesleyan.

For the BLS degree, there are four intended audiences: students in the program of the Center for Prison Education (CPE), Wesleyan staff and eligible family members, former Wesleyan students who did not complete their degrees, and other individuals who meet the standards of admission but who are unable to commit to eight full-time semesters of residential learning (by a vote of the faculty, this category is limited to ten new students per year). Students in the BLS program may major in one of the 45 BA programs, but they also have the option to major in one of three concentrations: arts and humanities, social and behavioral sciences, and natural sciences and mathematics. The requirements for the BLS degree are similar to those of the traditional BA program. There are currently 14 CPE students, 1 former CPE student, 1 staff member, and 1 “other” student. As of March 2020, NECHE approved Wesleyan offering the BLS degree at two new locations, the Cheshire Correctional Institution and the York Correctional Institution.

At Wesleyan, academic units are organized as departments, programs, colleges, and centers; the nomenclature is somewhat distinctive. Departments are the traditional academic units at Wesleyan. Programs focus on thematic fields, often emerging disciplines or areas of study. Colleges are intended to be interdisciplinary and contain more than one kind of academic unit. In addition, Wesleyan offers “course clusters,” lists of courses for students interested in a particular topic in which Wesleyan does not offer a minor or major. It also offers “linked majors,” that are generally for interdisciplinary study. “Linked majors” may only be declared and completed in addition to a primary major; the idea is that the student should have a core discipline, and then the linked major builds an interdisciplinary focus on top of that core foundation. Discussion with the EPC revealed that there is some confusion about what constitutes each kind of academic unit.

In keeping with its spirit of innovation, Wesleyan continuously adds new areas of study for its students. In recent years, this has included new minors in Human Rights Advocacy and Global Engagement, Chemistry, and two course clusters in Sustainability and Environmental Justice and Asian American Studies. The university also approved a new interdisciplinary College of Education Studies (CES), which now offers a linked major in addition to the existing minor in Education Studies.

Discussion with the EPC revealed concerns around how new academic units are founded, as well as about how resources are allocated to new initiatives. Some faculty believe that interdisciplinary colleges and centers are being founded at the expense of more traditional departments. The EPC is currently engaged in a project to formulate guidelines on the proposal of new academic units in the hope that such guidelines will bring a new level of transparency to the process of curricular innovation.

**General Education:** Wesleyan has stated general education expectations, but due to the open curriculum, students are not required to fulfill general education requirements. The general education expectations are that students should earn at least two course credits in six different departments or programs in each of the three curricular divisions—natural science and mathematics (NSM), the social and behavioral sciences (SS), and the humanities and the arts (HA) by the end of the sophomore year. By senior year, students are expected to take one additional course credit in each of the divisions. In the past five years, 75% of graduating

students fully met this expectation, 13% completed stage 1 only, and 12% fulfilled neither stage of the expectation.

In meetings with students, concerns were voiced about the true openness of the Open Curriculum. Students noted that some majors require the completion of the general education expectations; the general education expectations are also required of students who wish to graduate with honors or to triple major. Students felt that many faculty advisors are ill equipped to advise them on the intricacies of the Wesleyan experience. This concern was felt especially keenly by first-generation and low-income students, who felt that poor advising during their first years at the college meant that they were unable to major in all of the disciplines that they had hoped. As the self-study notes, and students confirm, in an open curriculum, good faculty advising is considered key to the success of the program; like its peers, Wesleyan relies on its faculty to do pre-major and major advising. Some faculty advisors, however, are more effective than others, and some are more interested or simply better at major rather than pre-major advising. At Wesleyan, students are consistently more satisfied with their major advising as opposed to their pre-major advising. Currently, roughly 1 in 8 students will switch pre-major advisors prior to declaring a major.

First-year advising remains an area of concern. Students now register for four courses during the summer before matriculation (as opposed to registering for some courses during orientation), a new policy introduced in 2015; the policy was intended to reduce anxiety by allowing students to know their courses in advance. With the four-course summer registration system, however, there are concerns that some students, and especially students from disadvantaged backgrounds, have made poor choices in their course selection.

In response to these concerns, the provost convened an Ad Hoc Advising Task Force to consider ways to improve the student advising experience and to ensure greater equity in faculty advising loads. Some of the recommendations of the Task Force have already been implemented: a pilot is being developed to provide summer advising as well as more intensive advising during the first year for students who might most benefit; a new “Academic Roadmap” tool was developed for incoming students; and enhanced training and ongoing support for faculty advisors has been instituted. In addition, there has been an expansion of those eligible to advise. Athletic coaches, who have faculty status, began to do first-year advising four years ago. In addition, a new pilot is underway to allow a limited number of staff with some faculty privileges to do first-year advising.

Wesleyan offers two programs which involve more intensive advisor training and advising experiences for particular student populations. The Wesleyan Math and Science Scholars (WesMaSS) program focuses on historically marginalized students interested in STEM disciplines. Each year, around 30 new students are accepted into the program, so that at any given time there are approximately 120 WesMaSS students on campus. Besides supporting students, the program trains advisors in metacognitive and growth mindset practices and gratitude discussions with advisees. WesMaSS has significantly improved retention in the sciences for historically marginalized students (in 2019 78% of WesMaSS students ended up majoring in science or math compared to 51% of the control group). In addition, since 2014-2015, Wesleyan has admitted a cohort of Posse veteran scholars each year, with numbers ranging

from 10 in 2018 to 4 in 2022. There are currently 24 Posse students enrolled at the university. In the first four cohorts, 79% of Posse participants completed their degrees. Wesleyan is currently evaluating whether advising training and techniques used in these programs might be utilized by more faculty in their pre-major advising with broader groups of students.

**The Major or Concentration:** Wesleyan students may choose from 45 clearly defined majors, and every student must complete the requirements of one major to graduate. In recent years, 45% of students have chosen to double major (double the number of students in 2004). Double majors take courses in fewer subjects (12 versus 14), and so there are concerns that multiple major requirements may actually prevent students from broadly exploring the curriculum. Wesleyan's Academic Regulations limit students to declaring no more than a combined total of three majors, certificates, and minors.

Besides offering majors in traditional disciplines, Wesleyan has a number of academic centers that offer minors or certificates, combine curricular and co-curricular activity, and support the research and learning of faculty and students across disciplines and divisions. In recent years, these centers have fostered considerable academic innovation. The Fries Center for Global Studies (FCGS), founded in 2015, aims to promote language learning and a culture of multilingualism, and to increase international and intercultural education opportunities. Wesleyan has promoted innovative language pedagogy, and offers more flexible options for students to study foreign languages, including through online Mango classes (a for-profit company). Through a variety of initiatives, Wesleyan has also sought more international and intercultural education opportunities. After significant declines, there is evidence that language study is showing small signs of growth. In the class of 2020, 43% of students studied for at least one semester abroad; the COVID pandemic led to the suspension of study abroad in fall 2020 and spring 2021. Spring 2022 and fall 2022 are back to pre-COVID participation numbers. FCGS is working with academic departments to encourage more study abroad; it has set a goal of reaching 50% student participation in study abroad by 2027.

The Allbritton Center for the Study of Public Life, established in 2012, is the hub of civic engagement. It hosts a range of programs and other centers, including the Center for the Study of Public Life (CPSL), a partnership with the University Network for Human Rights, a Civic Engagement minor, The Jewett Center for Community Partnerships, the Patricelli Center for Social Entrepreneurship, a new Sustainability and Environmental Justice course cluster, WESU 88.1FM, service-learning courses, and the Center for Prison Education. The impact of the Allbritton Center can be seen in the increase in enrollments in Allbritton-hosted courses: they have increased from 128 in 2012-2013 to 393 in 2021-2022. The Center has allowed Wesleyan to offer courses that would not have been possible otherwise. The Center also hosts a new Human Rights Advocacy minor and a Civic Engagement minor. Service-learning courses are also offered through the Allbritton Center; over the last five years, 14-22 service-learning courses have been taught, with between 170 and 240 students enrolled. These service-learning courses allow the university to build relationships with community partners; over the past five years, Wesleyan has had between 9-16 partnerships each year with local non-profit or civic organizations, as well as multiple partnerships with local schools. The Patricelli Center for

Social Entrepreneurship has awarded a total of \$537,700 in grants to 237 students or student-led projects.

The Center for the Arts, opened in 1973, supports research, teaching, and productions in the departments of Art and Art History, Dance, Music, and Theater. It also organizes arts events, often with visiting artists, for the Wesleyan community, as well as with the local, state, and regional audiences. Recent initiatives include the Creative Campus Initiative, as well as the newly launched Embodying Antiracism Initiative funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The CFA is currently undergoing an intense planning process, aimed at clarifying its mission and identity. A new Campus Arts Plan looks to the CFA's next half century. The plan addresses specific physical and technological needs, but the CFA's primary aim is to return to its conceptual roots in experimentalism by hosting fellowship time and resources for students, faculty, and outside artists, and by emphasizing think-tank style collaboration process over final performance.

The Shapiro Center for Writing, founded in 2009, draws together all aspects of academic, creative, and public writing. The Center assists professors with writing instruction, administers peer-to-peer mentor and tutor programs for students, and coordinates writing support for multilingual students. It plans the Russell House Reading Series for visiting writers, and administers and supports the Calderwood seminar program, focused on writing for the public. The Center has seen a significant increase in the number of participants in its faculty seminar on the teaching of writing—from 7 or 8 per year in 2018-2019 to 26 in 2021-2022 (the seminar was not run in 2020-2021). It is projected that roughly 16 faculty members will participate each year moving forward. The Shapiro Writing Center has just begun a new Distinguished Writers in Residence Program, with three fellows on board; it is currently searching for the next cohort and hopes to expand this program in future years (see **Projection** below). The Center is working on coordinating writing offerings, and particularly on ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of writing-intensive courses, from the First Year Seminar to the senior capstone.

The Center for the Humanities (CHUM), founded in 1969, offers programming on campus that highlights the relevance of work in the humanities. Each year, it has a theme tied to a timely issue. There are no automatic curricular implications for the themes, but departments may choose to offer courses aligned with that year's theme.

The Quantitative Analysis Center (QAC) supports data analysis across the curriculum. It has seen enormous growth since 2012, when it offered one course each fall. That course is now offered every semester, including intersessions, and follows a flipped-classroom project-based learning pedagogy. The course is always over-enrolled, and has received attention for attracting a high number of students of color (48% in AY22). QAC has also increased tutoring and course-specific workshops, and offers more than 1,500 hours a year of statistical consulting services to students and faculty. In 2014, the Data Analysis minor and the Applied Data Science certificate were introduced. In recent years, 70-80 students have graduated with a Data Analysis minor, making it the largest minor on campus. The QAC is also involved in a number of co-curricular events, such as participating in the American Statistical Association's "datafest" event that brings 70-100 students from different schools for a long weekend of competition on data analysis projects with prizes awarded at the end.

**Area of Special Emphasis: Graduate Degree Programs:** Since the mid-1960s, Wesleyan has offered small PhD and MA programs. The doctoral degree is offered in Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Music (ethnomusicology), Molecular Biology and Biochemistry, and Physics. Every student is funded, and there are currently 74 stipends in the sciences and 13 in music available; in addition, some faculty with grants are able to provide additional stipends for more graduate students. All doctoral students receive a stipend--\$3,188 a month in 2022-2023 for PhD candidates in the sciences and mathematics, and \$2,710 per month for students in the music program. Giving science students a higher stipend than music students is controversial, and the stipend policy is in the process of review. At the same time, the University is vigilant about keeping the graduate programs within budget.

The director of graduate student services conducts exit interviews with every graduate student who is completing graduate work at Wesleyan. In addition, the graduate program conducts exit surveys. Based on these and other forms of assessment, the graduate program has introduced a number of curricular and administrative changes since the last self-study. These have included the centralization and standardization of graduate admissions letters; the introduction of a graduate concentration in Planetary Science; a graduate student exit survey and review process; establishment of clear written standards and timelines for significant milestones and graduation; initiatives to assist with the thesis writing process; efforts to reduce the stress of advisor-advisee relationships through multi-person mentoring committees for each student; and the introduction of limited budgetary flexibility around graduate stipends, beginning in 2022-2023.

Despite its small size, the graduate program is seen as an essential component of the university, not least for how it enhances the undergraduate experience. It is widely believed that the program helps with the retention of a stellar science faculty. It allows for science laboratories to be staffed year-round. In addition, graduate students are available to mentor undergraduates. It should be noted, however, that the graduate program generates little revenue for the university (other than grant support). While the faculty would like to expand the number of students, the administration is rightly adamant in keeping the program within budget. The limited resources available to the program means that any reallocation of funding—as happened with the establishment of three floating (between departments) graduate stipends—means that one unit loses when another gains. Despite some debate on the size of the program, the president, trustees, and faculty members are unanimous in their desire to maintain Wesleyan's graduate program.

Additional graduate programs include MA degrees in the sciences and in Music (composition and ethnomusicology). Students do not pay tuition for these MA programs, and they receive stipends from the central Wesleyan budget. Wesleyan also has a BA/MA program available only to Wesleyan undergraduates in the sciences. Students complete the BA degree in four years, and stay on for a fifth year (tuition-free) to receive an MA in the fifth year; in the past students had to pay room and board costs, but thanks to a gift, eligible BA/MA students will be able to receive financial aid to offset these expenses beginning in the 2022-23 academic year. This program is limited to 23 fall admissions, and 1-2 spring admissions for students off cycle.

Finally, Wesleyan also offers a Graduate Liberal Studies (GLS) program, which offers the MALS and MPhil degrees, commonly pursued by regional K-12 teachers. This program is

administered by the Director of Continuing Studies. The curriculum is independent of undergraduate and MA/PhD courses, and faculty are hired on a per-course basis and compensated by Continuing Studies beyond their standard Wesleyan course load. Enrolled participants take one or two courses at a time in fall, spring, and/or summer term, and customize their own course of study via broad concentrations (Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Sciences, and Education and Human Development). The program is expected to pay for itself and to return revenue to the University. The program has decreased in size in the last decade—in 2012, there were approximately 280 active students and 45-80 students graduated each spring. Today, there are approximately 150 active students and 33 graduated in 2022.

Over the past twenty years, GLS student recruitment has become increasingly difficult. This is true not only for Wesleyan's program, but for similar programs at other institutions across the country. Wesleyan's program has been impacted by both local decisions and national trends. About twenty years ago, a new GLS leadership was brought in with a charge to add rigor to the program. The application process was revamped and more careful vetting took place. Tuition was also raised. After the 2008 recession, however, many local corporate tuition programs were discontinued, and retirees and older adults who in the past had returned to the classroom for personal enrichment had less disposable income. In addition, in 2014, the State of Connecticut's Department of Education announced that it would change the requirements for professional certification for K-12 public schoolteachers, but the details were delayed until 2017. During this period, Wesleyan stopped marketing to public schoolteachers. As concerns national trends, competition for students has increased in the past decade, especially with the exponential growth of online professional degrees, programs, training opportunities and certificates. Prospective students also seem to be feeling more pressure and desire to gain skills that are immediately and concretely applicable in the workforce than a "Master of Arts in Liberal Studies" seems to provide. Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought much stress and burnout, not least among teachers who have traditionally made up a large percentage of GLS students.

The GLS program has undertaken a number of curricular initiatives in recent years. These include a new 6-course non-degree Graduate Certificate in Writing; a multidisciplinary concentration in Education and Human Development; the integration of online courses into the GLS curriculum; and an increase in the number of course offerings in the social sciences. At the same time, the GLS has discontinued programs due to lack of student interest. For example, it no longer offers a mathematics concentration.

The proliferation of degree programs and academic units is viewed as both an asset and a challenge. Wesleyan prides itself on innovation, and new programs and academic units provide an outlet for curricular and other ambitions, and presumably enhance Wesleyan's distinctive profile. Mission creep, however, is an inevitable outgrowth of the creation of programs beyond the traditional BA. Restraints, in the form of limited financial and other resources, must be imposed on a university community that faces few natural limits on its ambitions.

**Transfer Credit:** General policies concerning the transfer of credit are found on the Wesleyan website and are very clear. A student may obtain credit toward the Wesleyan degree for courses

taken during the academic year at another accredited U.S. institution or in the summer session of another accredited U.S. or international institution if (1) the courses have been approved in advance by the relevant Wesleyan department, program, or college, and (2) the grades in the course are C- or better. Departments, programs, or colleges may impose other conditions for the transfer of credit, and the final amount of credit transferred to the Wesleyan transcript will be determined in accordance with Wesleyan's policy on transfer credit and the evaluation of the appropriate department.

For students who study abroad, the Office of Study Abroad maintains a very clear web page on how credit transfer works, and the steps that students need to take to ensure that credits from their Study Abroad programs are recognized by Wesleyan.

The Wesleyan website is also clear on transfer credit policies concerning transfer students. Wesleyan has one articulation agreement with a local community college, Middlesex Community College (MxCC). Wesleyan and MxCC collaborate on the Center for Prison Education Program (CPE) so that CPE students earn an associate's degree at MxCC, and then a BLS at Wesleyan. Initially, there was a mismatch between Wesleyan and MxCC credit hours; the MxCC credits were articulated as .75 credits when they transferred to Wesleyan. Wesleyan worked with the leadership at MxCC to develop a block articulation policy, which was approved by the Wesleyan faculty in November 2021. Those who complete the associate degree at Middlesex Community college and are admitted to the BLS program will receive a minimum of 16 Wesleyan credits upon transfer into the BLS program.

The graduate programs generally do not accept transfer credit. The one exception is the BA/MA program, in which a student may count appropriate credit not needed for the BA degree towards the completion of the MA.

**Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit:** At Wesleyan, one course credit is worth 4.00 semester-hours or 6.00 quarter-hours. The expectation is that a course awarded one credit requires 120-160 hours of engaged academic work. Most Wesleyan courses are worth 1.00 credit. Instructors are encouraged to include language in their syllabus that tells students that they should expect approximately three hours of work for every class hour. A review of the syllabi made available suggests that instructors are indeed putting such language into their syllabi.

In all respects, Wesleyan follows Commission policy as regards the awarding of credit. Learning objectives are clearly articulated at the university, department, and individual course levels. Wesleyan offers a 0.25 credit internship course every semester, including Summer and Winter sessions, to address the Curricular Practical Training (CPT) issue for international students. Only 0.5 credit of this can count towards graduation, but the course may be repeated indefinitely. Credit is also awarded for service learning courses. No credit toward graduation is awarded for pre-collegiate-level or remedial work designed to prepare the student for collegiate study. Wesleyan does not offer dual or concurrent enrollment, other than for local high school students, and for high school students through National Education Lab, who receive credit through their high schools for the courses taken at Wesleyan.

Over the course of the pandemic, Wesleyan—like many other colleges and universities—has seen an increase in academic dishonesty. To counter cheating, Wesleyan provided faculty with a license to Respondus, used occasionally by some faculty. Respondus allows for a Remote Lockdown Browser that locks down internet access while students are taking exams, thereby preventing them from accessing online resources. Similarly, Moodle (Wesleyan’s Learning Management System) has a “Safe Exam Browser” option available. At the same time, faculty were cautioned against administering high-stakes exams virtually, and encouraged to come up with new forms of assessment that limited the potential for academic dishonesty.

Like many other schools, Wesleyan has seen grade inflation over recent decades, as well as recent years. In winter 2017, Institutional Research provided each academic department with data summarizing their grade distribution over the past three years. For the past several years, IR also shared a grade distribution report for every faculty member going up for tenure/promotion. Wesleyan has not focused on grade inflation during the pandemic, but may return to this subject after the pandemic has ebbed.

### **Area of Special Emphasis: Distance Education**

In March 2020, due to the COVID pandemic, Wesleyan transitioned to remote instruction for the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester. During that Spring, as well as during the 2020-2021 academic year, the Center for Pedagogical Innovation, along with other university offices, held workshops and provided other resources to help faculty with remote instruction.

In summer 2020, Wesleyan piloted a summer first-year seminar (FYS) program that involved all remote FYS courses at no additional cost to the incoming class. Incoming students took advantage of all 311 available seats. Both faculty and students appreciated the opportunity, so it was made available again in summer 2021. That summer, however, only 138 students were interested, and a number of proposed classes had to be cancelled. Wesleyan continued the program in summer 2022, with 66 students taking five FYS courses. Wesleyan expects to continue a small version of the program, at approximately the 2022 level. Similarly, Wesleyan offered online Winter and Summer Sessions in 2021. These sessions were very well enrolled, with 3 to 4 times the usual on-campus enrollments. Since Wesleyan charges tuition for these courses (albeit at approximately 50% of Wesleyan’s usual per-credit charge), these courses generated significant unexpected revenue for the university. This was true even though low income and financial aid students received financial aid to take these courses. Indeed, these options are viewed as particularly helpful for students struggling with the academic program, as they are afforded significant flexibility to make up courses that they failed and/or to balance workloads between the regular fall and spring semesters with winter and summer sessions. Students can use Summer and Winter session courses to graduate early or graduate on time, potentially saving them money and also allowing them to start their careers earlier. In October 2021, faculty voted to approve a 3-year pilot to allow online course options as part of Winter and Summer sessions. It should be noted that some low-income students believe that summer and winter courses are out of their financial reach because of the earning expectations imposed on aided students.

Prior to the pandemic, online GLS courses had been approved in 2015, but were not widely used. During the pandemic, however, these courses did well, and there is plan moving forward to include a mix of online and on-campus programs (under Wesleyan's current accreditation rules, Wesleyan may not allow more than 50% of a student's degree to be completed online).

When the university moved to remote instruction, Academic Affairs put out a guideline that a minimum of 25% of normal course contact hours had to include synchronous interaction between the student and the instructor. Most online courses, however, included a much higher percentage of synchronous teaching.

Wesleyan is using distance learning to broaden access to the Wesleyan experience. Since fall 2021, Wesleyan has partnered with the National Education Equity Lab. In fall 2021, it offered a remote version of President Michael Roth's course on The Modern and the Postmodern to 70 high school students in under-resourced schools; each course includes co-instructors in the high schools. Wesleyan plans to continue offering one course per semester, presuming faculty interest in the program. The National Education Equity Lab conducts post-course student and co-teacher surveys that look at satisfaction, as well as key learning outcomes related to students' perceived confidence. High school students who participated in the program reported improved confidence in college preparedness. One National Education Equity Lab student applied to Wesleyan, was admitted, and enrolled in fall 2022.

Wesleyan is engaged in rigorous efforts to ensure educational effectiveness and assessment of its distance education efforts. During the three-year pilot of the winter and summer sessions, the university plans to regularly offer a training program for faculty who choose to offer online courses. At the same time, the university is eager to assess whether the online courses are of the same quality as those offered in person during the regular semesters; how the course fit into larger enrollment strategies of specific academic units and degree programs; how the courses affect students in terms of learning, time to graduation, and the balance of their academic and other responsibilities and commitments; and how these courses affect Wesleyan financially. The university plans to collect a wide variety of data, including student course evaluations, student surveys of their online experiences, faculty interviews, and institutional data to address these matters.

**Projection:** Wesleyan is currently developing or considering a number of curricular initiatives, including a new College of Design and Engineering and a new interdisciplinary College of Computational Studies. It is considering an expansion of the writing fellows program in the Shapiro Writing Center. The university is also focused on developing a number of pilot programs to expand access to the Wesleyan experience to a wider and more diverse group of learners.

The Office for Equity & Inclusion is currently developing and expanding programs to support academic success, particularly among underrepresented groups. It hopes to expand workshops and other opportunities for the WesMaSS program. It also hopes to further develop the First Things First program to help First-Generation/Low-Income students navigate the "hidden curriculum" at Wesleyan. Finally, there is a proposal to create a new Wesleyan Scholars

Institute, a six-week, credit-bearing intensive residential academic experience to support incoming students who might otherwise struggle at the college.

Finally, to make use of Wesleyan's strong and unusual collections (such as the World Music Archives and the Archaeology/Anthropology collection), the university will need to pay attention to physical infrastructure concerns such as storage and security, as well as teaching spaces and online discovery. This will allow for enhanced coursework, pedagogy, and research in areas in which Wesleyan has already developed great strengths.

## ***5: Students***

Wesleyan University enrolled a total of 3,238 full-time undergraduates (total FTE 3,287), 132 full-time graduate students, and 64 part-time graduate students in Fall 2021. Graduate students fall into two categories, supported by two separate offices and with different resources. Doctoral (PhD) programs and Master of Arts programs (including a BA-MA degree program) in the sciences and music include stipends and have access to similar resources and supports as undergraduate students. Students in the Master in Liberal Studies program and Master of Philosophy in Liberal Arts program are generally working adults employed at Wesleyan (tuition is an employee benefit) or tuition-paying students primarily employed in K-12 schools. These students are supported differently and have less access to on-campus supports given their nature as adult learners. In addition, Wesleyan supports a Bachelor of Liberal Studies program which is primarily composed of the Prison Education Program, whose support services are in large part dictated by the Department of Corrections.

Since its last comprehensive evaluation in 2012, it has embarked on a new strategic plan that rests on academic strengths, the value of pragmatic liberal education, and enhancing access through sustainable financial practices. The ties to admissions and the co-curricular experience of students are clear. The self-study addresses this strategic plan directly and the role that these two functions play in its fulfillment.

**Admissions:** On the undergraduate side, the self-study pointed directly to a key metric of reputational strength, evidenced by robust application numbers. The report also pointed to targeted admissions strategies to open access such as the partnership with QuestBridge and the adoption of a test-optional admission policy. The clear goals to minimize the amount of debt students graduate with and the adoption of creative ways to truly meet student financial need (e.g. grant for health insurance) are indicators that the administration understands the lived experience of Wesleyan undergraduates and is investing accordingly. The financial support of low-income international students deserves attention, particularly around summer earnings expectations and travel allowances.

Through its need-aware admissions and financial aid strategy, Wesleyan has been successful in enrolling Pell-eligible and other low-income students in addition to its sizable full-pay

population. Wesleyan reports more difficulty yielding middle income students, creating a barbell effect and a somewhat bifurcated student experience based on socio-economic status. Undergraduate admissions is keenly aware of shifting demographics and college-going characteristics in the country, and understands that its historic reliance on traditional college-age students from the Northeast is a pipeline in jeopardy. Using data analytics, they have identified and targeted several high schools in promising markets to grow the knowledge of Wesleyan. The focus on Quest Scholars and international students are promising for both diversifying the class but also deepen Wesleyan's reach to markets where the institution's reputation as a leader in pragmatic liberal education is likely less well known. The collaboration between Admissions and Student Affairs will be essential to ensure that these students have needed support on campus.

The class of 2025 is the largest by far over the last few years, and the size of the class of 2026 was adjusted downward to account for this. Admissions hopes to maintain their historic class-size targets of about 770 and has no plans for growth.

In recent years, more effort has been put into the transition from admissions to the first year. The collaboration between admissions and student affairs has resulted in several pilots including the provision of a financial aid start up grant and intentional advising pre-matriculation. A group convened by the Vice President and Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid reviews enrollment trends and retention issues.

Wesleyan currently uses the Wesleyan-Based Evaluation model (WBE) for admission. The team is looking at other models currently, and will likely sunset the WBE. The Admissions team commits to thorough reviews of applications, team-based conversations, and multiple stages to ensure a rigorous and ethical admissions process. Student-athletes are admitted in collaboration with Athletics, but admissions decisions are held within Admissions.

Strong retention and graduation rates indicate that Wesleyan is admitting students that can be successful in the program. Underrepresented students are retained and graduate at rates similar to the general population. Notably the entering class of 2015 boasted a 93% graduation rate for Pell students, as compared to 91% for the overall population. Wesleyan has put significant resources into supporting low-income students, and the high graduation rates for this population indicate meaningful success.

On the graduate side, admissions targets are defined by the number of stipends available for the PhD and MA programs rather than by program or academic goals. Interestingly, there was a need for more graduate music students to perform needed tasks of the department such as support for ensembles. In order to increase the number of graduate students, with no additional stipend funding, the department opted to decrease the amount of the stipend but increase the number of students; this means that music student stipends are lower than science program stipends (85%

for PhD students, 65% for MA students). This differential in stipend amount has the unintended consequence of potentially devaluing the work of music students and should be examined.

The liberal studies MA programs have no enrollment targets beyond a self-funding and revenue generation expectation. Staff in the program are being creative in thinking about additional recruitment tactics for paying students, including outreach to school systems and tuition discounts.

All staff members in Admissions & Financial Aid and those dedicated to graduate students showed a deep understanding of their fields and populations, shared a dedication to Wesleyan, and were motivated to meet the challenges of the coming years.

**Student Services and Co-Curricular Experiences:** Wesleyan offers a wide and appropriate variety of student services to support its primarily undergraduate population. A Director of Graduate Student Services reports directly to the Vice President of Student Affairs, thus providing focused attention on the MA and PhD population although it was not clear how embedded this person is in larger student affairs conversations or priorities. Additional support services are housed under the Vice President for Equity & Inclusion, notably the newly formed Resource Center.

There appears to be deep and authentic collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, which reflects the strategic plan's focus on Wesleyan's focus on academic strengths and how the co-curricular advances these strengths. Lean staffing was a theme the team heard throughout Wesleyan. Staffing levels in Student Affairs seem particularly lean. Students were not consistently aware of resources, funding opportunities for programs, and options for support. This was heard particularly from international students. Students expressed that they did not necessarily have one place to go to connect available resources and to problem solve their needs.

Student Leadership, most notably through the Wesleyan Student Assembly, is the primary conduit between the administration and undergraduate student leaders. The Student Involvement Office hosts WesNet, an online hub for engagement opportunities on campus. This one-stop resource for campus happenings presents a great opportunity to help students acclimate to the culture of Wesleyan and to build community. Students reflected a lack of continuity of student culture due to the pandemic, and it is unclear what is being done on the administrative side to maintain a robust student life outside of the classroom. Students stated that lack of funding, confusion over where to find support, and unclear rules and policies hindered their ability to host events that might be of interest to their peers. Graduate students are supported by a Graduate Student Association and also their home offices, and staff feel that these populations feel connected and find community.

Athletics and recreation play a central role at Wesleyan, 25% of students are student-athletes. All coaches have faculty status and teach courses; the Athletic Director reports to the Provost. The graduation rates for student-athletes are higher than the average for all students, reflecting the strength of the advising and support available in the Athletics Advantage Program.

Wesleyan's ability to experiment and pilot promising programs is noted. The open Call for Proposals shows respect for the innovative faculty, staff, and students that make up the university. The self-study notes a number of pilot programs, presumably designed out of a similar ethos of innovation, aimed to enhance co-curricular learning and to build stronger faculty-student connections. The report acknowledges that none of these programs have been truly successful. It is commendable that the Student Affairs staff has had the courage to sunset programs that are not as successful as hoped, freeing up time for staff to focus on essential tasks and other promising strategies.

The self-study noted two student support areas that have seen dramatic increases in the need for services: Accessibility Services and Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). The report notes that one FTE was added to Accessibility Services in 2016 and that CAPS has increased staff by 8.14 FTE in the last decade. Accessibility Services has modified their model somewhat to utilize technology to orient students to accommodations, minimizing the amount of staff time spent on transactional conversations and allowing for more developmental conversations. The accommodation needs and mental health concerns of college students are becoming exponentially more complex, and the increase in sheer numbers of students seeking these services exacerbates the workload of these two vital offices.

As a predominantly white institution (56% of full-time undergraduate students identify as White), Wesleyan has invested resources in supporting underrepresented students. The financial aid resources available for low-income students help to attract and yield underrepresented students to Wesleyan. The Resource Center, which now has two FTEs seems vastly under-resourced. This center has great capacity to help Wesleyan feel like home to all students, advocate on behalf of underrepresented students, and advise campus leaders on the needs of these important populations. Additional staffing and programming dollars would likely be a good use of finite university resources.

The Academic Advancement team in Student Affairs is in the midst of a review of academic performance which will include analysis of academic disciplines and majors to better understand the success of students, particularly from underrepresented identities, in the various academic programs. The Class Deans serve as primary points of contact for students and also for faculty and staff who are concerned about students. These deans are able to notice patterns in the student experience and feel that they have adequate access to leadership to share these concerns for hopeful resolution.

Student conduct, violations of the Code of Non-Academic Conduct (adjudicated by the Community Standards Board), and The Honor System (adjudicated by a consolidated Community Standards Board since last academic year, and previously by the Honor Board) fall under Student Affairs. The Dean of Students is responsible for both systems and there is an Assistant Dean who leads the office. The presence of this Assistant Dean is not clear on the website. Given the importance of a clear and understandable conduct process for students, the website should be updated to clarify leadership in the office and where students can turn for questions. Students expressed concerns about their relationship with Public Safety, this was also evidenced in the self-study. Given this office's report through Student Affairs, there is reason to believe that the relationship between Public Safety and the students it serves can be improved.

Student Affairs runs an active and effective CARE Team that reviews students - undergraduate and graduate - on a regular basis. Built into the CARE Team is a threat assessment process.

Student Affairs has enjoyed consistent and thoughtful leadership, which has served the staff and students well through the pandemic and beyond. The staff were well-qualified for their roles, demonstrated deep care for students and colleagues, and showed significant commitment to Wesleyan.

## ***6. Teaching, Learning, Scholarship***

**Faculty and Academic Staff:** Wesleyan University employs a total of 445 faculty members in Fall 2022: 194 tenured, 79 tenure track, and 172 non-tenure track. The third group comprises short-term visiting faculty, artists in residence, as well as 46 Professors of Practice on multi-year, renewable contracts (discussed in greater detail below). Faculty appointments are well distributed across traditional departments, interdepartmental programs, and “colleges,” Wesleyan’s terms for distinctive interdisciplinary units that also host majors and minors. Many Division I and II faculty are listed in multiple units, including a home department or program and one or more interdisciplinary units in which they are either “core” or “affiliate” faculty.

The Professor of Practice (PoP) title was created in 2015 as an alternative to Wesleyan’s appellation “adjunct professor” for many continuing, non-tenure track (NTT) instructors. Some long-employed individuals have preferred to keep their title of adjunct, but most are now known as PoPs. The number, status, and role of PoPs are much discussed on campus, and the University is still in a process of defining faculty categories in a way that responsibilities and distinctions are sufficiently clear to all. Data distributed by the Office of Institutional Research demonstrates that the overall ratio of tenure-stream to NTT faculty has remained relatively constant since 2008. Yet concern is voiced across the faculty that the number of NTT faculty has increased with the establishment of PoPs. This stems partly from the change of titles coincident with the fact that not all tenure lines have been renewed following retirements from some traditional departments. Also, the teaching contribution of each group has shifted in the aggregate, as the

percentage of total credits taught by NTT faculty has slowly increased from 29% in 2008 to 37% in 2022.

The presentation of salaries for assistant, associate, and full professors is framed through comparison with a set of twelve colleges and three universities. Each group's average ranks towards the middle of their set, with assistant and associate rising from 11th to 8th, and full from 8th to 6th from 2007 to 2021. Wesleyan froze salaries in 2021 but continued to pay retirement benefits and did not furlough employees. Raises of 6-7% were announced in 2022, aiming to cover some of the ground lost the prior year. The University provides significant support for internal research and professional development funds, including incentives for collaborative teaching. Grants In Support of Scholarship (GISOS) are available up to \$5000 for projects, \$750 for general support, and \$2600 for conference travel per year.

Faculty assignments provide adequate time to balance their responsibilities, including expectations for scholarship and advising. The teaching load for tenure-stream faculty is 2/2, while those in science departments with PhD programs teach 1/1 undergraduate courses. The customary course load for PoP is 3/2, as it had been for full-time "adjuncts" as well. Faculty compensation has been the focus of anxiety over the past year of high inflation, and the lesser total compensation of NTT faculty has been a particular point of concern voiced by Wesleyan faculty across all ranks. After an increase announced in Spring 2022, the salary for PoP is now benchmarked as 80% of assistant professor starting pay. Despite the fact that there is no expectation for research productivity, all faculty contracted at least three years (PoP, adjunct, artist in residence) are eligible for GISOS funding. The Office of Academic Affairs has recently clarified policies so that PoP faculty can also apply for opportunities such as the Center for the Humanities Faculty Fellowship and the Allbritton Research Network.

It is an active question on campus how the current composition of the faculty embodies the institution's mission and long-standing pride in its teacher-scholar model. The shift to Professor of Practice title – and the creation of some PoP positions in new units – has brought visibility to this group and to the fact that there are not uniform expectations for their responsibilities for teaching and service beyond their assigned courses. It varies, for example, how much advising or supervising of student projects like senior theses should be expected of PoP. Also, in addition to a feeling that the general rate of compensation is too low, the standards of renewal and promotion for PoP were not clearly articulated from the outset. Some confusion likely stems from the fact that the new title suggests a uniformity for what are still varied positions, as PoP teach diverse types of courses across Divisions and some combine staff responsibilities with a smaller teaching load.

Tenure-stream faculty are held to high expectations of scholarship and creative products. Clear standards for tenure, promotion, and merit review all give proper attention to teaching, research and collegiality as well. Departments and programs have posted online statements with clear

descriptions of the tenure process and disciplinary-specific standards for promotion. These vary in accordance with expectations appropriate to their field, but all articulate the need to demonstrate both scholarly achievement and teaching excellence as asserted in the Presidential Statement on Tenure on the Conferral of Tenure and the Promotion to Tenured Full Professor. Numerous departments delineate a program of class-visits and mentorship to improve the teaching of new assistant professors, but practices differ. These efforts are informed by the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Peer Evaluation of Teaching (2019-22), but a more uniform approach or the formal adoption of other methods to assess teaching have not been approved by the faculty. Therefore, evaluation of teaching excellence for tenure, promotion, and merit is done primarily by student evaluations.

Ninety-five percent of tenure cases have been successful over the past ten years. But retention of junior faculty in their first six years has been challenging. For example, of 110 assistant professors starting at Wesleyan from 2006 to 2015, 21 chose to leave the university prior to tenure review. Department chairs and tenured faculty are committed to supporting junior faculty through the initial years: each unit has posted clear practices for mentoring as well as the standards for tenure and promotion. Also, more attention has been brought to the value of connecting junior faculty to mentors outside of their departments. A 2021 study points to the success of the “mentoring communities” sponsored by the office of Academic Affairs, which matched a senior faculty member with two or three assistant professors, PoPs, and visiting faculty to create more vibrant and productive dialogues. In on-campus interviews, tenured faculty express deep support for their junior colleagues. But associate professors note a lack of mentoring at mid-career, as they are challenged to balance new expectations of departmental leadership and committee service with continued expectations for scholarly productivity.

The University has redoubled long-standing efforts to increase racial and ethnic diversity among the faculty. Recognizing a distinct challenge in retaining faculty of color, the office of Academic Affairs set a goal in 2021 that all hires over the next three years would be at least 50% BIPOC faculty. This reflects well on new protocols for anti-bias training in faculty recruitment and makes the current semester’s faculty 30% people of color. As a whole, the faculty is well balanced in terms of gender, with a somewhat higher proportion of female faculty among the PoPs. On the other hand, 68% of full professors are male. Data forms only allow for the recording of faculty and students as male or female, but a 2021 faculty survey indicated that at least three individuals identify as nonbinary/trans/genderqueer.

**Teaching and Learning:** Teaching assistants are carefully trained and supervised, both graduate students and undergraduate Teaching Apprentices (who earn course credit: 209 in 21-22) and undergraduate Course Assistants (who receive payment). All students enrolled in MA and PhD programs receive tuition waivers and stipends. The self-study states in Standard 4 that graduate stipends are “not payment for work” (p. 26) is not consistent with the letter sent to accepted students, which stipulates that the support is “in exchange for services as a Teaching Assistant.”

A further complication is that advanced graduate students are sometimes the instructor of record for independent course sections (Math) and performance courses (Music). There is no doubt that these graduate teaching experiences all contribute to the development of students' abilities and enhance their professional development, but it could be beneficial to further define how teaching by students is compensated.

Instruction, advising, and support for students are carried out by those with appropriate academic and professional qualifications. Faculty are the primary source of academic advising for progress through major and minor programs, and for entering students. The large entering class in 2021 has created a challenge for pre-major advising for the current, continuing cohort of students. A relatively small number of coaches and select staff members were brought into the effort this year to prevent faculty members from taking on too many advisees. This required more explicit attention to the orientation and instruction of advisors, and a significant effort has gone into the review of how advising can be strengthened in recent years.

Pre-major advising is especially important given the University's "open curriculum," and the range of possibilities for how students might complete the General Education Expectations. While the vast majority of students take at least two courses in each division to meet the first part of the General Education Expectations, it is not clear how they envision these experiences fitting together. The survey on advising shows little engagement with the four "MEME" competencies of Mapping, Expressing, Mining, and Engaging developed by Academic Affairs in 2015-16. Rather, advisors prioritize the attempt to balance students' course load and seek out new fields of study while students are keen to pursue courses that speak to their individual interests as already identified. Both students and advisors also voice concern that students may not know to take the foundational courses for potential majors or be able to enroll in limited introductory courses.

An Ad Hoc Advising Task Force (2021-22) is the latest group to assess long-standing challenges in the distribution of advising responsibilities and in bolstering the success of pre-major advising. A new survey this year documents the misalignment in expectations between what faculty and students expect from the other party in their exchanges. Work continues to develop new resources with streamlined information about the curriculum, while also evaluating major changes such as a potential replacement to the WesMaps catalogue and registration system and/or restructuring the timing and organization of the advising conversations.

Academic freedom is supported explicitly in the Faculty Handbook, alongside clear standards for ethical teaching and research. The Office for Faculty Career Development hosts programs and extensive web resources to orient newly hired faculty to the University's logistics and procedures. They also provide resources to all faculty to inform their approach to innovative teaching and expanding research networks.

The content and methods of instruction meet academic and professional standards, as reinforced through internal reflection and a practice of external reviews. Due to various logistical factors (faculty on leave, COVID-19 disruption) the schedule of existing programs has fallen behind schedule. But Academic Affairs is very aware of this, as well as the increase in the number of units that would benefit from this explicit process of seeking external perspectives. Numerous programs encourage faculty to draw on their intellectual interests in developing new courses and curricular programs, while balancing that potential growth with the needs of existing curricula and adapting to meet current student needs.

Diverse methods of instruction are encouraged in order to meet students' diverse learning needs. Faculty, librarians, and other learning support staff are aware of the need to be responsive and adaptive to what current students need, especially entering students who have likely gaps in their preparation after disruptions in their high school programs. The open curriculum is a challenge to ensuring that all students confront their individual needs in a timely fashion. There is an explicit awareness of the need to assess and improve writing skills, and an awareness that the First Year Seminar program could be more consistent in its approach to this need.

There are numerous departmental efforts to assess instructional methods and success, assisted by the Associate Director for Assessment. Additional instructional support comes from numerous centers across campus staffed by a strong team of professional staff, including the Centers for Pedagogical Innovation, Quantitative Analysis, Writing. Research librarians teach class sessions and also hold Personal Research Sessions as well. There is a strong spirit of supporting students' individual learning needs from the beginning of their educational career through to their senior projects. The numerous centers focused on improving learning are in separate locations, and it is worth reflecting on whether they might be effectively coordinated or potentially even brought into a single location.

## ***7. Institutional Resources***

**Human Resources:** Wesleyan currently employs 1,023 employees, of which 445 or 44% are instructional staff. Since 2019, staff has grown modestly by a cumulative annual growth rate of 2.9%. Among its staff are unions representing staff in Public Safety, trades and clerical staff. In addition, in March of 2022, the University recognized a student union representing residential assistants and began negotiations. As of this date, the University and union remain in active negotiations.

Vacancies as of November 1, 2022, numbered 88 positions (77 staff and 11 faculty), a 28% increase over pre-pandemic figures (60 total vacancies – 49 staff and 11 faculty). To retain its employees, Wesleyan offers opportunities for professional education and regular performance evaluations which 97% of employees receive.

Wesleyan promotes its goals of equity inclusion and belonging with Human Resources actively working with its Office of Equity and Inclusion to identify, recruit and retain a diverse community of qualified faculty and staff. In 2021, the Office of Institutional Research prepared its update of *Staffing Patterns by Race/Ethnicity Report*. The report showed that the racial/ethnic composition of Wesleyan staff has not changed materially since its most recent assessment with staff of color representing 23% of the overall staff. The University's goal is to increase its diversity percentage to 33% by a more proactive approach to identifying and contacting diverse candidates for positions.

The report also reviewed the tenure of staff by racial/ethnic composition and concluded that among those that leave, staff of color (2.9 years) have shorter tenures at Wesleyan than other staff (4.9 years). The report suggested that the University conduct exit interviews or surveys to understand the underlying reasoning behind this difference. Although implemented, neither the exit surveys nor in person interviews are highly utilized.

The University has published guidance on the benefits and policies available at its website and are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Included in these policies are those that allow members of the community to file complaints on discriminatory harassment and sexual misconduct

To ensure that Wesleyan is offering a competitive compensation and benefits package, the University participates and reviews compensation surveys of different higher education consultants including CUP, Educomp, Sullivan Cotter & CLAC. These surveys focus on the compensation and benefit offerings within the higher educational environment. Where appropriate (e.g. IT and Development), the surveys have been expanded beyond higher education to ensure that the compensation is competitive.

The team noted that University staff communicate a strong feeling of connection to the University and the students they serve.

**Financial Resources:** Wesleyan has striven to improve its financial foundations since the fiscal crisis of 2008 highlighted by one of the overarching goals of their 2010 strategic plan, to “work within a sustainable economic model while retaining core values”. Toward this goal, the University relies on two different committees to assist with the financial management and stewardship of the University, the Finance Committee and the Audit Committee.

The Senior Vice President, Chief Administrative Officer & Treasurer lead a team that is responsible for finance, budget, legal, risk management, human resources, facilities, and auxiliary services. These responsibilities are distributed to five direct reports who have subject matter expertise and cognitive oversight over their areas. Financial policies and procedures and monthly updates in response to changing conditions are available to the University community. Members of this team meet four times a year (September, November, March, and May) with the committees identified above to meet the committees' stated goals.

Among the topics discussed is a review of the annual audit, internal control assessment, quarterly financial projections for the current year and long-range plan. The Finance Committee also is

engaged on the development of key strategic assumptions underpinning both the long-range plan and the upcoming operating budget request. For example, as net tuition represents approximately 60% of their overall operating revenues, the Board and University discuss different scenarios of tuition and financial aid targets for the upcoming year. The resulting decisions were incorporated in the University's *Long Range Financial Forecast* and the budget request for the following year.

The evaluation team reviewed the FY2022 budget proposal that was presented and ultimately approved by the Board of Trustees in May of 2021. The document included detailed discussion of important assumptions for both operating revenues and expenses identifying both financial risks and opportunities. The proposal also summarized the proposed investments by programmatic area (Instruction & Academic Support, Student Services, External Relations, Institutional Support, Physical Plant and Auxiliary Activities).

The *Long-Range Financial Forecast* was presented to the Board of Trustees in May of 2022. The analysis detailed a ten-year projection based upon a dozen key assumptions that covered important themes including Endowment Support, Access & Affordability, Investments, Compensation & Benefits and Programmatic Investments. The analysis also included an endowment sensitivity analysis for different return assumptions for the current market volatility and contingency balance levels needed to absorb a portion of the potential operating impact.

As mentioned in the self-study, the University is increasingly using data to inform its strategic decisions. To ensure that the University remains on the path described in its 2010 strategic plan, the University developed a series of key financial performance indicators (KPI). There are two components to these indicators.

- First, The University has identified twenty-two different ratios that measure the institution's financial health. These ratios compare balance sheet, income statement and operations metrics to institutional benchmarks such as Moody's Aa median ratio measures and eight peers known as SLAC (Small Liberal Arts Colleges). These peers include Bowdoin, Williams, Haverford, Swarthmore, Carleton Pomona, Amherst, and Davidson.
- Second, the University utilizes the NECHE financial dashboard.

Together, these metrics help measure the institution's current financial health and track the progress that it has made over the previous five years. These ratios are produced and reviewed by the Board of trustees on an annual basis.

The KPI Dashboard produced as of 12/31/21 and presented to the Board of Trustees on February 4, 2022, was reviewed. It showed that the University had no red flags or warnings as described in the NECHE dashboard and met the identified targets for nineteen of the twenty-two financial ratios. Areas of concern from the financial ratios are as described below

- *Endowment per Student* – The University's endowment per student of \$525k slightly lagging the identified target of \$536k – 663k drawn from the NACUBO endowment study. As described below, the University has begun its next campaign, *Toward*

*Wesleyan's Bicentennial*, in 2021. Among its priorities are raising \$200M in endowed funds for financial aid and academic programs. Achievement of these priorities will enable the University to meet its identified target.

- *Debt Service to Operations* – The University's debt service ratio has risen slightly over the past five years from 6.3% to 6.7% which is above the identified target of 5%, the Moody's Aa median ratio. As noted below, Moody's recently reaffirmed its Aa3 rating of the University.
- *Asset Reinvestment Backlog* – Measured as deferred maintenance per gross square foot, the University's backlog grew 16% in five years from \$102 per gsf in 2017 to \$118 per gsf in 2021. This figure is almost double the identified target of \$61 per gsf for the SLAC peers. Further discussion of this will be part of the Facilities Review below.

In comparison, Wesleyan's KPI analysis from five years ago showed that the University met its identified targets in sixteen of the twenty-two financial metrics. The most evident improvement was seen in the topics of financial leverage and sustainability. This improvement was affirmed by Moody's in 2019, when Moody's reaffirmed its Aa3 rating of the University. In doing so, they noted the University's "excellent strategic positioning as a selective private liberal arts institution" and "Wesleyan's effective management and governance yield clear strategic direction and remain a credit strength".

From 2017 to 2021, Wesleyan's endowment grew 77% fueled by market return and philanthropic support enabling endowment distributions to grow to almost 20% of the University's operating budget. Like many other institutions, the University utilizes a spending rule known as the Tobin which seeks to realize benefits of growth in the endowment that are realized while protecting the distributions from market volatility. As a result of the spending policy adopted, the University's effective spend rate remains below 5% of the endowment market value.

The University is currently in the quiet phase of its new campaign that hopes to raise \$600M. The campaign goals were reviewed by senior administration and the Board of Trustees and include enhancement of financial aid, current use giving and support for new construction. To date, the University has received commitments of \$279M, ahead of their internal timeline. If the University is able to broaden the current 24% alumni participation rates in the campaign, future campaigns could consider a loftier goal.

The re-affirmation of its bond rating coupled with an improvement in all Key Performance Indicators since the last assessment demonstrate sufficient institutional resources. Although deferred maintenance lags the identified targets, the University is actively managing how to address this challenge.

### ***Information, Physical and Technological Resources***

*Physical Resources* - Wesleyan has over 300 buildings spanning 2.8 million gross square feet on its 316-acre campus. As the University plans its upcoming bicentennial celebration, it is not surprising that some of the buildings in its facilities portfolio require attention. The self-study highlighted this concern noting that the deferred maintenance backlog per gross square footage is

higher than the peer average. This metric is included in the Key Performance Indicators which is closely monitored by the University and the Board of Trustees. As described above, the Board of Trustees reviewed the KPI analysis which identified the Annual Reinvestment Backlog as being below the identified target. The planned construction of the Public Affairs Center and Science Center will replace outdated buildings which will be demolished. This review will provide some relief from the deferred maintenance backlog but is still a metric that will be monitored in the future.

The University has been using its master plan, last updated in 2014, as a guide for to align the University's residential campus as powerfully as possible with Wesleyan's educational aspirations. The PAC and Science Center projects exemplify University's process of identifying and quantifying needed investments in their physical infrastructure. To do so, the University uses a predictive module, Sightlines, which is purchased through a consultant, Gordian. This program allows the University to accurately evaluate space utilization, update recent capital investments and identify future needed investments on a building-by-building basis. Once identified, internal committees, *Major Maintenance Committee* and *Accessibility Committees*, meet to review and prioritize each identified need. The committees provide a list of recommended projects for review and consideration of the Facilities Planning Committee and Board of Trustees.

*Technological Resources* - The University utilizes two committees, the Information Technology Committee and the Security Advisory Group, to develop a roadmap for information technology planning at the University that will support the instructional, learning and research needs for the University.

The ITS considers the recommendations from these committees to develop their *ITS Objects & Key Results (OKRs)* for each fiscal year. For the current 2022 – 2023 fiscal years, the OKRs identified are Enterprise Risk Management, Continuous Service Improvement and Building Future Capabilities. The necessary investments to meet these goals are imbedded in developing their FY23 operating budget request which was reviewed for approval by senior University leadership, Finance Committee, and the Board of Trustees. ITS shares with the community the list of upcoming projects for each fiscal year, listing of information technology policies and details on the project including timelines and departments impacted on its website.

The Wesleyan libraries consist of three different facilities, the Olin Library, the Music Library and the Science Library. Together, these facilities span over 110,000 square feet that enable storage of over 1,200,000 physical titles and volumes, and seating for over 600 students.

Each year, the University librarian compiles a Library Central Dashboard that provides information on the acquisitions, circulation, website information and the current composition of its collection. Per review of this dashboard, it was learned that the libraries had over 340,000 physical visits to its facilities including 7,500 study room bookings, over 1,000,000 visits to its

website which resulted in over 700,000 downloads or access to digital materials. The library is supported by a budget of over \$4 million to acquire physical and digital access to books, subscriptions and materials. Partnerships with the Boston Library Consortium and Yale University allow students, faculty, and researchers to gain access to a broader reach of materials to support their learning, instruction and research.

As noted above, deferred maintenance is a challenge for the University, but planned construction projects currently underway and improvements prioritized to meet the identified capital needs will help address this issue.

## ***8. Educational Effectiveness***

The institution enrolls multiple student bodies with its largest population being undergraduate students and offers small graduate programs, including Masters and PhD Programs. It offers a joint bachelors program for incarcerated students in two locations, with a total of 14 FTE's. Wesleyan offers 45 majors, 32 minors, and 3 certificates.

The institution defines measures of student success and levels of achievement appropriate to its mission, modalities and locations of instruction, and student body, including any specifically recruited populations.

Rates of retention and graduation are tracked and are publicly available on the Office of Institutional Research website. Wesleyan reports that its 1-year retention rate is close to 95%, the 4-year graduation rate is between 85% and 92%, and the 6-year graduation rate is between 90% and 94%. Importantly, they are tracking rates by certain demographics as well, and have noticed men's rates have been several points lower than women's in recent years. Black and Latino rates show more volatility, ranging from the upper-80s to upper-90s, while graduation rates for Asian students surpass those of other groups.

In their BA/MA programs, the percentage of students who graduate within the 150% time standard varies by year, but for the cohorts that entered their programs between 2016 and 2019, these percentages ranged between 86% and 100%. In their MA programs, these percentages were between 73% and 100%, and in PhD programs, between 56% and 79%. These recent data may have been impacted by the pandemic and remote teaching. The self-study reported "with respect to our graduate programs, our visceral sense is that our graduation rates are strong, but we lack the comparative data to know for sure."

The process of understanding what and how students are learning focuses on the course, competency, program, and institutional level. Assessment at all of these levels indicates that assessment has the support of the institution's academic and institutional leadership and the systematic involvement of faculty and appropriate staff.

*Course level:* The assessment of teaching still heavily relies on student feedback through end of semester evaluation forms. This assessment was revised several years ago, moving from a

short instrument with three items, two of which were open ended, to a longer survey with 12 items on a 9-point scale. The new questions are based on research in the field of educational assessment and focused on areas of instruction that students are best equipped to assess. Faculty are able, with the new form, to add questions to collect specific feedback related to their course objectives. One area of dissatisfaction among faculty with the “new” form, confirmed by a study by OIR is that the new instrument produces much less qualitative feedback for improvement, which can provide more clarity on numerical scores.

At the course level, excellence in teaching is still primarily determined by student evaluations for the purposes of tenure and promotion. Support for course level teaching innovation comes from numerous sources, including the Center for Pedagogical Innovation, the Shapiro Writing Center, and the Office for Faculty Career Development, and indirectly, the Office for Institutional Research.

*Undergraduate Major / program level:* The results of assessment and quantitative measures of student success are a demonstrable factor in the institution’s efforts to improve the curriculum and learning opportunities and results for students. Almost every department and program has now written its own [departmental learning goals](#) that are specific to the major and are publicly posted.

Departmental annual reports are requested to provide information on curricular assessment related to established learning goals, signaling the value placed on assessment at the program level. The level of rigor in assessing student progress toward established learning outcomes in those reports varies, but there is a clear effort to perform that assessment. Goals for the majors are not consistently translated to individual course syllabi, which would provide a guide for learning assessment and curriculum review.

External reviews of departments are conducted and reports generated for improvement. Regular reviews of capstone courses are completed, interviews of and focus groups with majors are conducted and reported, alumni surveys and outreach, monitoring grade distributions.

Numerous colleges and majors have undergone external studies, benchmarked other institutions’ academic programs, and reflected on how to capture educational effectiveness at the major or program level. The Associate Director of Assessment works with several units a year typically to support this work, though with COVID-19 this schedule was challenging to keep. They support the preparation for some external reviews and collaborate in conducting exit interviews or focus groups with students in a major or minor.

At the department or program level, peer feedback of teaching through observation or reviewing students’ work is emerging as an effort to offer a more holistic perspective on teaching effectiveness. This evidence is most easily found in the external review reports for departments and programs. Dance, for example, promotes including peer observation and feedback as a part

of measuring teaching effectiveness, takes into consideration risks taken for innovative teaching practice that may affect student feedback. Some units also request evidence of responsiveness to student feedback.

The Office of Institutional Research has played a significant role in supporting departments and programs to develop visible learning goals. In multiple meetings with faculty and department chairs, and throughout the self-study, the Associate Director of the OIR was mentioned as playing an important role in supporting departments to write and post learning goals articulating what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate or know by the time they complete their academic program. The OIR [website](#) tallies the number of departments they have worked with, and they offer an array of services from services, to analysis of data, customized surveys, exit interviews, support for external reviews, and curriculum mapping. These are functions often supported by a teaching center in other universities.

*Graduate level:* While there is clear documentation for undergraduate student learning goals available on an [assessment page of the website](#) and in the course catalog, learning goals for the graduate programs and measures of success were less prominent. Course and research requirements are available. This may be due to the small number of graduate students spread across numerous departments and the use an individualized approach to learning assessment in some cases. For example, the Master of Arts in Astronomy states that “the small size of the department permits individualized instruction and a close working relationship between students and faculty.”

*Institutional level:* The institution provides clear public statements about what students are expected to gain from their education, academically and, as appropriate to the institution’s mission. The new strategic plan states the intent to “enhance our distinctive educational program, capitalizing on academic strengths.” Review of the externally facing website, the self-study, and the strategic plan shows strong evidence that the institution is working to clarify and identify its intended outcomes, strategies for achieving those outcomes, and mechanisms for assessing those outcomes.

Liberal education / general education outcomes are communicated in several places in slightly different ways and in different places. Clarifying or aligning these outcomes to be clearer would benefit both students, faculty and departments in developing a shared understanding and work toward fulfilling those outcomes.

1. University-wide competencies students are expected to develop at Wesleyan by the time they complete their academic program are described on the website page [Competencies at Wesleyan](#). The four competencies of Mapping, Expressing, Mining and Engaging (MEME), are described with general examples of courses or areas that might align with those competencies, and briefly differentiated from the general education expectations. It is not clear how these are interpreted or assessed in the curriculum, and the self-study indicated there was some disagreement about the use of this model. On that page the competencies are conveyed as “*To help you identify and describe the skills you’ll gain on*

*your journey through Wesleyan's open curriculum, we've developed a flexible framework of four competencies to reflect on and consider as you build—and share—your own personal narrative about your Wesleyan experience.”*

2. Senior survey items ask students to report on how much Wesleyan contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in multiple areas along the lines of traditional liberal arts outcomes. The self-study noted that the survey items do not perfectly align with Wesleyan's MEME though there is some alignment.
3. The term “essential capabilities” frames outcomes posted through the office of the registrar as speaking, interpretation, quantitative reasoning, logical reasoning, designing, creating, and realizing, ethical reasoning, intercultural literacy, information literacy, effective citizenship.

The self-study identified that the institution's ability to generate the data necessary for proper planning and evaluation has not kept up with demand. Currently, senior surveys and alumni surveys are the main sources of assessing educational effectiveness, using a national instrument with the ability to add institution specific questions.

#### Progression through the curriculum - pre-major advising

“The institution's open curriculum requires students, with the support and guidance of faculty, to take responsibility for their own education.” (website)

While most students complete the general education expectations, those who do not most likely have not completed sufficient courses with the sciences. There is a requirement within some majors that all general education expectations are completed. Student success in navigating the open curriculum and expectations within majors relies heavily on the effectiveness of the advising system, and early decisions that impact later academic pathways rely on strong pre-major advising. Low student satisfaction with the pre-major advising system was expressed through student surveys and interviews, and warrants continued attention to addressing those concerns. In the open faculty meeting, the importance of faculty understanding of the unique needs for advising under-represented students and first-generation students in navigating this complex system was expressed.

In order to actualize the intent of the open curriculum to encourage broad exploration across curricular offerings and foster interdisciplinary connection, the University has continued to intentionally expand the number of interdisciplinary Colleges/programs available to Wesleyan students. The university is working to make the connections and role of each of the centers and schools clearer to students and faculty advisors.

In the self-study in Standard 4, there are indicators that students are assumed to be able to make connections across the curriculum and have a clear sense of their learning outcomes. There does not appear to be a widely used mechanism that supports students to reflect on their learning and be able to clearly communicate it. A promising direction for creating those connections seems to be underway through the work of a task force initiated in 2020 focused on Integrative and

Applied Learning at Wesleyan, led by Provost Stanton and Dean Whaley. The task force is focused on exploring “integrative learning initiatives that blend the curricular and the co-curricular” and “support students as they navigate, process, and translate their holistic liberal arts experience.” A small example of a mechanism in place is that the Associate Director of Institutional Research teaches a course and works at the request of some faculty to help students to develop learning portfolios to facilitate the integration of their learning experiences through the open curriculum.

The OIR expressed that because of their limited capacity, they are unable to serve all of the requests for assessment support. Some programs, centers, schools and departments conduct their own surveys to collect and analyze feedback as a result. Two concerns expressed with this trend were survey fatigue, reduced response rates, and the lack of a centralized location for data to allow for more robust, longitudinal and holistic university-wide analysis.

## ***9. Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure***

Wesleyan University is committed to high ethical standards in its management and dealings with students, faculty, and staff. This is also true in the work of its governing board and its dealings with external agencies and organizations. The institutional web site provides information to students, prospective students, and other members of the general public about student success that appears complete, accurate, and timely. The institution expects that all its members will act responsibly, ethically, and with integrity. These expectations are clearly laid out in its three handbooks – one each for faculty, students, and staff. These handbooks provide the standards of conduct for each group as well as standards appropriate for the individual constituencies. Undergraduate and graduate students are bound to an Honor Code, procedures for reporting violations of Wesleyan’s Community Standards are clearly articulated, and statements on affirmative action and equal opportunity as well as policies on non-discrimination, discriminatory harassment and sexual misconduct are evident on the institution’s web page. All members of the community have access to an incident report form to file complaints and a Barrier Reporting Form to notify the institution of challenges they have encountered in accordance with state and federal laws related to accessibility.

The institution manages all its operations with honesty and integrity and updates its policies and procedures related to integrity on a regular basis. It has hired ombudsmen to act as independent parties to address complaints by staff/faculty and students. The institution saw an increase in academic integrity cases during the COVID-19 epidemic and seems to have addressed those cases successfully. It has recently revised its Whistleblower Policy and Sexual Misconduct Policies.

Wesleyan relies primarily on its website to communicate to prospective and current students, alumni, parents, faculty, and staff, although it continues to maintain some print publications. A robust set of resources are readily available on admissions. A university catalog is available

online and WesMaps helps students to identify which courses to take. The web pages were recently audited by WebAim, with noticeable improvements: closed captioning on all public-facing videos; student, faculty, and staff handbooks are now available in HTML format; robust admissions information is readily accessible. However, WesMaps, the primary route for students to access course listings has not been updated and thus has generated student complaints.

The information provided on the web site is readily accessible and appropriate for students and prospective students to make informed decisions and there is a systematic process of periodic review.

Wesleyan University's catalog describes the institution in a way consistent with its mission and properly discloses its mission, objectives, and expected educational outcomes. It publishes information about the total cost of education and net pricing, including the availability of financial aid and the typical length of study. It publishes statements about its goals for students' education and makes available appropriate information about student achievement and institutional performance. Information about rates of retention and graduation rates, as measures of success, are appropriate to its institutional mission.

While Wesleyan University demonstrates high standards in integrity, transparency, and public disclosure from an external perspective, it continues to explore ways to improve the web delivery of information from an internal perspective. The recent hiring of a vice president for communications is one example.

### ***Affirmation of Compliance***

To document the institution's compliance with Federal regulations relating to Title IV, the team reviewed Wesleyan University's Affirmation of compliance form signed by the CEO. As noted on this report, Wesleyan University publicly discloses on its website and course catalog its policy on transfer of credit along with a list of institutions with which it has articulation agreements. Public notification of the evaluation visit and of the opportunity for public comment was made by the University one month prior to the visit in *The Wesleyan Argus*, *The Middletown Press*, and the University's website. Copies of the University's grievance procedures for faculty, staff and students are distributed annually in the Course Catalog and the information is also available on the University's website. To verify student identity in its online programs and courses, Wesleyan requires that students interact on camera during their courses and faculty have access to each student's official university ID photo via the Wesleyan institutional portal. Additionally, all students sign Wesleyan's student honor code. Professors may also use Remote Lockdown Browsers which lock down internet browsers during exams. As discussed in Standard 4: The Academic Program, the team's review of course schedules and syllabi for a cross-section of Wesleyan's course offerings, found the assignment of credit reflective of the University's policy and consistent with the Commission's standards.

## *Summary of Strengths and Concerns*

### **Strengths**

- It is clear to the visiting team that Wesleyan is an exceptional institution that provides an excellent, student-focused education.
- The teacher Scholar philosophy is experienced across faculty, staff and students. This philosophy fosters innovation and interdisciplinarity, modeling the ideals Wesleyan hopes for and cultivates among its students.
- The enthusiasm we experienced for the institution among its constituencies – including current students, faculty, staff, alumni, and trustees – is a strength that will serve the institution well in the upcoming capital campaign.
- The University is in a stronger financial condition since the last assessment. There are improvements in its Key Performance Indicators. This accomplishment is due to careful financial management and strong endowment returns. The University is in a financial situation that permits it to responsibly pursue its aspirational goals.

### **Concerns**

- All constituents have a strong sense that Wesleyan is special. They struggle, however, to articulate to others the distinctive elements and outcomes of a Wesleyan education. The difficulty in articulating Wesleyan's distinctiveness was noted in meetings with virtually every group with whom we spoke. Developing clarity and consistency, language and meaning will greatly benefit all areas of the institution, including admissions, communications, assessment of education effectiveness, and advancement.
- More attention needs to be devoted to clarifying the status, differing responsibilities of, and pathways for promotion of non-tenure-track faculty, particularly Professors of Practice. The significant number of these long-term positions embedded in departments, colleges, and centers across the campus, and their importance as part of the fabric of the community warrants careful attention to acknowledging their contributions and rewards appropriately.
- Wesleyan has a clear commitment to attracting a diverse student body. Given the complexities of navigating the open curriculum, the socio-economic barbell of enrolled students, and Wesleyan's historic characteristics, it would be well-served by deep

coordination of student supports and reflect on whether current resources are sufficient to support underrepresented students.

We thank President Roth, his staff, and the accreditation steering committee for their careful work to welcome us this week and to assemble the self-study document and related materials.

Our review of this information and our helpful conversations over the past two days have given us an opportunity to review the university's many current strengths and a clear commitment to the institution from faculty, staff, and students. We hope that our external perspective can be of assistance as you plan for a strong future.

## AFFIRMATION OF COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REGULATIONS RELATING TO TITLE IV

Periodically, member institutions are asked to affirm their compliance with federal requirements relating to Title IV program participation, including relevant requirements of the Higher Education Opportunity Act

1. **Credit Transfer Policies.** The institution's policy on transfer of credit is publicly disclosed through its website and other relevant publications. The institution includes a statement of its criteria for transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education along with a list of institutions with which it has articulation agreements. (NECHE Policy 95. See also *Standards for Accreditation* 4.29-4-32 and 9.18.)

URL	<a href="http://catalog.wesleyan.edu/academic-regulations/external-special-study/">catalog.wesleyan.edu/academic-regulations/external-special-study/</a>
Print Publications	Course Catalog, page 19
Self-study/Fifth-year Report Page Reference	TRANSFER CREDIT on page 37

2. **Student Complaints.** "Policies on student rights and responsibilities, including grievance procedures, are clearly stated, well publicized and readily available, and fairly and consistently administered." (*Standards for Accreditation* 5-18, 9.8 and 9.18.)

URL	<a href="http://catalog.wesleyan.edu/academic-regulations/grievance-procedure/">catalog.wesleyan.edu/academic-regulations/grievance-procedure/</a>
Print Publications	Course Catalog, page 22
Self-study/Fifth-year Report Page Reference	"...resources for filing grievances" on page 89

3. **Distance and Correspondence Education: Verification of Student Identity:** If the institution offers distance education or correspondence education, it has processes in place to establish that the student who registers in a distance education or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the program and receives the academic credit...The institution protects student privacy and notifies students at the time of registration or enrollment of any projected additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity. (NECHE Policy 95. See also *Standards for Accreditation* 4-48.)

**Method(s) used** for verification

Wesleyan faculty have access to each student's official university ID photo via our institutional portal. This access combined with the practice of holding on-line courses in a format where the instructor and student must see each other (i.e., interact on camera during the course) provides a method of verification. Additionally, all students sign Wesleyan's student honor code, stating that they will behave honorably and that they agree to the following statements: "For Papers and Similar Written Work: In accordance with the Honor Code, I affirm that this work is my own and all content taken from other sources has been properly cited without improper assistance." Additionally Moodle (our LMS) has an "Safe Exam Browser" option available, should the institution administer through this platform.

Self-study/Fifth-year Report Page Reference no reference

4. **FOR COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATIONS ONLY: Public Notification of an Evaluation VISIT and Opportunity for Public Comment:** The institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to notify the public of an upcoming comprehensive evaluation and to solicit comments. (NECHE Policy 77-)

URL	<a href="http://wesleyan.edu/accreditation/self-study-2022.html">wesleyan.edu/accreditation/self-study-2022.html</a> <a href="http://wesleyan.edu/news/">wesleyan.edu/news/</a>
Print Publications	The Wesleyan Atlas: The Middletown Press
Self-study Page Reference	

The undersigned affirms that Wesleyan University (institution name) meets the above federal requirements relating to Title IV program participation, including those enumerated above.

Chief Executive Officer:  Date: 08/29/2022