

**MSA/CHE Team Report
to
Hobart and William Smith Colleges**

April 2004

Standard 1: Mission, Goals, and Objectives

The institution's mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and explains whom the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals and objectives, consistent the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. The mission, goals, and objectives are developed and recognized by the institution with its members and its governing body and are utilized to develop and shape its programs and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness.

“Hobart and William Smith Colleges are a student-centered learning environment committed to excellence, globally focused, grounded in the values of equity and service and developing citizens who will lead in the twenty-first century.” (Self-Study, p. 1)

HWS's newly refashioned mission statement concisely captures the purpose, spirit, and aspirations of the Colleges. HWS are justifiably proud of their collaboratively defined mission, goals, and objectives, which appear to be formally approved, publicized, and understood by the institution's member constituencies. The most recent strategic plan, *HWS 2005*, is both lucid and ambitious, and it has provided a vehicle for expressing the Colleges' current needs and tracking its accomplishments. As acknowledged in the self-study, *HWS 2005* “does not set out quantifiable goals or objectives. . . . Those tasks and activities necessary to the implementation of objectives have evolved over the past several years through a series of concerted individualized planning initiatives undertaken by discrete groups of faculty, administrators, and volunteers.” In fact, however, there has been impressive progress with the implementation of the campus's Master Facilities Plan, improvement in technological services, the development of the Finger Lakes Institute, and improvements in faculty and staff compensation, among other advances. The achievement of an “A” bond rating from Standard & Poor's is certainly a signal accomplishment.

The Self-Study prepared in connection with the MSA/CHE accreditation visit, while generally fluent and useful, was more helpful in its description of academic and student life issues than it was in connection with financial and administrative matters. Overall, it would have been more enlightening had it been less descriptive and more analytical in nature. Nonetheless, it was very helpful as a framework for the team's efforts to assess HWS.

Anyone visiting Hobart and William Smith Colleges, from a prospective student to senior faculty and administrators from other institutions, is confronted by the intriguing concept of an education in the setting of “coordinate colleges” -- clearly, a major part of the HWS identity. As President Mark Gearan puts it, “We are not confused about who we are.” Even if outsiders may at times be slightly confused, and if few other institutions are likely to emulate the “coordinate” model anytime soon, the concept leads to mostly interesting dialogue and discussion. Although some members of the community periodically question whether absolute gender equity is more a pretense than a reality at HWS, there can be little doubt that the Colleges' unique arrangement does provide opportunities for empowerment and self-realization for both young women and

men, who might otherwise find themselves in competition in other settings. The team has little doubt that further introspection on these matters will characterize the Colleges' life for many years to come.

Another key characteristic of the Colleges is their focus on interdisciplinary learning. By all accounts, team-taught multidisciplinary courses were a routine feature of the HWS landscape decades ago, while they were still regarded as bold experiments elsewhere. As the years have passed, however, the primary manifestation of the interdisciplinary ideal has been the proliferation of "programs" that have actually begun to compete with traditional disciplines for resources. In the view of the accrediting team, what began as an admirable intellectual flexibility may be on the verge of becoming a diffuse and slightly chaotic enterprise. Some students' genuine academic interests might be better served by independent studies than by programs that are increasingly narrowly defined. While it is often desirable, in Chairman Mao's words, to "let a hundred flowers bloom," eventually the garden may have to be thinned out if it is to be perceived as coherent and beautiful. A thoughtful and more comprehensive assessment program, advocated below, will inevitably confront this issue.

The loyalty inspired by Hobart and William Smith Colleges among virtually all constituencies is admirable and enviable, and it finds a wide range of manifestations. The impressive level of support for the annual fund by the parents of current and former students is but one example. The low rate of turnover among faculty members (while it could also have some disadvantages) is another. A renewed emphasis on appreciation of the Colleges' magnificent natural setting, including the lake at its doorstep, will undoubtedly enhance this trend. Although the subsequent sections of this report outline some challenges, offer a variety of suggestions, and even impose two recommendations, the visiting team anticipates a bright future for the Colleges.

Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation and Institutional Renewal

An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal.

The strategic plan of the Colleges, *HWS 2005*, is the basis for resource allocation. Every year, the president outlines the priorities of the Colleges based upon the strategic plan. Each department develops a base budget that is 2 percent lower than the current budget, but is entitled to propose additions of up to 5 percent for programs that will implement the priorities of the president. In addition, the president works with the senior staff and trustees to identify significant funding for the highest priority items. For example, in the current year an extra \$500,000 was budgeted for technology. Through this form of strategic resource allocation plan, many of the priorities of the Colleges have been funded over the past few years, including increases in faculty and staff salaries, implementation of a portion of the campus master plan for facilities, and technology improvements.

The goals of the capital campaign, which is now in its silent phase, are also based upon the strategic plan of the Colleges. These goals include building the endowment to provide better permanent support for the increases in compensation, along with other initiatives that have already been built into the operating budget, and further implementation of the campus master plan for facilities. The president is just beginning the process of involving all campus constituencies in the development of a new strategic plan. It will be critical to the success of the capital campaign, because it is essential to base fund-raising goals on clearly enunciated priorities that have been developed through consultation with key constituencies.

There may be grounds for concern that the Colleges have taken small amounts of funding over several years from some departments, in order to fund strategic plan initiatives, rather than making difficult choices to reduce or eliminate programs. Since there is a limit to the reductions that can be made to most departmental budgets without serious erosion of services to students and faculty, this method of funding may not prove sufficient to permit full implementation of some of the priorities of the existing and future strategic plans. For example, significant funding has been allocated to technological initiatives in the strategic plan; however, the technology infrastructure at the Colleges remains inadequate. The recent report to the trustees by the chief information officer states that technology facilities are "...undersized, poorly configured, difficult to access, insecure and lack proper environmental controls, storage space, and work space."

HWS have an effective resource allocation plan that is appropriately based upon the strategic planning at the Colleges. However, institutional renewal will occur only if resource allocation results in the adequate funding of the priorities of the strategic initiatives, and this may require difficult decisions to reduce or eliminate some programs at the Colleges.

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

The human, financial, technical, physical facilities, and other resources necessary to achieve an institution's mission and goals are available and accessible. In the context of the institution's mission, the effective and efficient uses of the institution's resources are analyzed as part of ongoing outcomes assessment.

Institutional resources are effectively and efficiently managed to achieve the goals of Hobart and William Smith Colleges. HWS do not have the resources of many of their peer institutions; however, the educational programs offered are impressive, and the students receive an excellent education. Administrative staff members efficiently utilize available institutional resources to manage the tasks most important to the mission of the Colleges. The buildings and grounds constitute a beautiful campus and appear to provide the infrastructure required for the academic and residential life of the Colleges.

The financial condition of HWS has improved dramatically over the past ten years: The endowment has grown significantly. There have been operating budget surpluses for several years, after a period of deficits. The quantity and quality of students have increased, while the discount rate has decreased. There have been significant improvements to the physical plant. There is a plan to return the endowment spending rate to 5 percent, based on a three-year average market value, from 5.5 percent. And a capital campaign, now in its quiet phase, is expected to focus on increasing the size of the endowment, which will in turn provide additional budget support. These improvements have been achieved by talented administrators, with the support of a strong and dedicated faculty.

There may be grounds for concern about the future financial health of the Colleges, however, given the lack of flexibility in current budget projections. Rather than having a contingency in the budget, deficits are projected for the next five years, reaching \$1.3 million in FY 2007. While there has not been a deficit in the operating budget in the last nine years, in seven of those years deficits were originally budgeted. There is a \$4.6 million reserve fund that is apparently available to offset any deficits in final operating budgets that occur in the next few years. However, the projected deficits are increasing and any negative variances in the key budget variables may make it impossible to continue to have balanced annual operating budgets. In fact, the budget projections include increases in net tuition revenue of 3 to 5 percent annually, at a time when many similarly situated Colleges are finding it difficult to increase their net tuition revenue by a significant amount each year, due to growing discount rates.

Also, the conversion of so-called adjunct faculty (often known elsewhere as "temporary" faculty) to tenure-track lines may reduce financial flexibility, since more of the faculty salary expenditures will be fixed. It is not clear that the potential costs of this conversion have been fully considered. Over the long term, tenure-track faculty generally teach fewer courses than adjuncts, due to their eligibility for sabbaticals, and additional staffing will be needed to compensate. As the tenure-track faculty are promoted, compensation costs will increase. The costs of these converted positions are in addition to the program that has already been implemented to bring faculty salaries up to

the median of the peer comparison group. Tenured faculty salaries are the costs which are most fixed in any college operating budget.

Finally, there is a concern that it may be difficult to raise the needed endowment funds in the capital campaign, since the new endowment will primarily fund current operations rather than new programs. Certainly, it will be possible to raise endowment for financial aid and other budgeted costs, but it may be difficult to meet the expressed goal of increasing the endowment to \$200 million.

HWS have an impressive physical plant, with many recent improvements and exciting plans for new capital projects, the funding of which will be one of the goals in the upcoming capital campaign. The campus is very attractive to prospective students, and that will help with the goal of continuing to strengthen the applicant pool. There is a concern that the annual renewals -and-replacements budget may not be sufficient, in the long-term, to maintain the facilities. Recent renovation projects have addressed many of the deferred maintenance problems, but periodic capital projects do not by themselves take the place of the required annual allocation that may be necessary to keep the list of deferred maintenance projects from growing.

While the improvements in HWS's financial condition over the past ten years are significant and praiseworthy, a number of important issues will have to be carefully considered and monitored to ensure continued financial strength.

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

The institution's system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making. Written policies should outline the responsibilities of trustees, administration, and faculty and be available to the campus community. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution.

Hobart and William Smith Colleges meet this standard. The By-Laws of the Board of Trustees establish the board's organization, its election of trustees and officers, the composition of standing committees, and its responsibility for the fiscal well-being of the institution. There is also a Board of Trustees Handbook, serving in part as an introduction to new board members; it describes the board's duties and the expectations of individual members. HWS are fortunate to have a board of dedicated and enthusiastic trustees, ambitious on behalf of the Colleges and committed to their vision statement and goals, and also cautious about issues of conflict-of-interest. Board members have been generous with their time and special skills in participating, three times a year, in lengthy trustee meetings. They have also been successful fundraisers and themselves generous contributors to the Colleges' capital campaigns. Board members express strong support for President Mark Gearan and his leadership, and for the faculty and its fulfillment of its various professional responsibilities. They believe they have good relationships with the faculty, although there are relatively few formal opportunities for interaction except with the chairs of certain faculty committees. Generally, board members, most of whom are alumnae or alumni, participate in governance at the level of policy decisions, leaving the day-to-day internal operation of the Colleges to the president and his senior staff. A notable – and, these days, quite unusual -- feature of the Board of Trustees is its inclusion of two senior students, one from Hobart and one from William Smith, as voting members. (Two juniors, one from each College, sit in on meetings as trustees -elect.)

The president and his senior staff are regarded by many on the faculty as committed to open, inclusive governance, regularly consulting with faculty committees and often seeking the opinions of other members of the community. The current statement of mission and goals derived from a process involving workshops and retreats, resulting in a strong sense of shared ownership for the Colleges' educational program. The faculty's role in governance is described in the Faculty Handbook. In addition to the faculty meeting monthly as a body of the whole, faculty participation in governance consists primarily of committees elected by the faculty to consider issues having to do with the academic programs and faculty professional life. The chairs of two faculty committees with especially demanding workloads, the Committee on the Faculty (CoFac) and the Committee on Academic Affairs (CoAA), are given release time because of the heavy commitment required for those duties. CoFac serves as an advisory committee to the Provost and Dean of the Faculty (the same person) on policy matters related to the faculty. CoAA is the faculty committee with responsibility for all issues related to the curriculum and academic goals. CoAA has student representatives who are voting members, giving students a significant voice in faculty deliberations .

Both CoFac and CoAA are charged with the responsibility to staff, administer, and oversee a number of subcommittees, creating an extremely heavy workload for committee members and concentrating what some regard as an unusual amount of influence in the hands of a small number of people. This is a concern. A second concern has to do with the assessment of shared governance. Trustees, faculty, and administrators alike express confidence in the effectiveness of shared governance at HWS. Some assessment of this success does occur—for example, the annual performance reviews of the president by the trustees, and by the president and vice presidents of each level of administrative staff. However, other than a formal personal self-evaluation by each board member, no assessment of the board itself, or of faculty committees, appears to take place. (Board self-assessment is now a rather common practice in higher education, particularly in private institutions.)

Standard 5: Administration

The institution's administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution's organization and governance.

Mark Gearan is a strong leader for HWS; faculty, staff, students, and alumni/ae express their respect for him and the work he has done since coming to the Colleges five years ago. Senior administrators have the skills and training required to manage the Colleges' operations efficiently. The result is broad and excellent educational programs, residential life, and co-curricular and community service programs consistent with the mission of the Colleges.

The Colleges are very efficiently managed. HWS programs are competitive with those of colleges with far greater resources. Outsourcing of dining and facilities services has provided good results, while permitting the staff at the Colleges to focus on daily operations in other areas and the implementation of the initiatives in the strategic plan.

Administrative offices lack important technological resources that may affect the Colleges' ability to offer services available at many peer institutions. The administrative software structure is a patchwork of several different systems, some of them fifteen years old, the data from which cannot be easily shared. Staff at the Colleges spend significant amounts of time working with manual or electronic shadow systems to manage their work and communicate with other offices. The implementation of an overall administrative enterprise system may not be the best solution for HWS, because they are so expensive and seem to have many weaknesses. The chief information officer has made a good recommendation that two or three limited systems be selected that work best for most of the administrative functions, and for which his staff can manage the necessary interfaces.

President Gearan is reviewing the administrative structure of the Colleges. He may want to consider the number of direct reports to the president, and the distribution of departments among the vice presidents, which is not a typical one. Also, it might be beneficial to enhance communication with the Colleges' staff members through more frequent meetings of department heads or other appropriate groups. Currently the president meets with community constituencies after each board meeting to review the work and important decisions of the board. These meetings are appreciated by the staff, but it might be helpful to have other routine opportunities for the president and/or senior administrators to discuss the plans for implementing the initiatives of the strategic plan and other important issues at the Colleges.

The goal of diversifying the staff does not seem to be well understood by the staff itself. It is very important to discuss this goal with the Colleges' staff members who do hiring, and to offer training on inclusive hiring methods. The responsibility for hiring is widely dispersed amongst staff members, since the Human Resources Department does not seem to be staffed in a manner that permits it to have a significant role in staff hiring.

The Colleges might consider designating an Equal Employment Opportunity Officer who would be responsible for working with staff to achieve greater diversity.

HWS have a strong administration that has accomplished a great deal with limited resources. The Colleges may be more effective in achieving the goals of the strategic plan if communication and resource issues are addressed.

Standard 6: Integrity

In the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to the ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support to the academic and intellectual freedom.

The accrediting team is pleased with the ethical integrity of Hobart and William Smith Colleges. The institutional strength is reflected in the Colleges' sound, principled practices and respect for individuals. Through its teaching, scholarship, service, and administrative practices, HWS foster academic inquiry and engagement, academic freedom, and a climate that encourages respect among students, faculty, staff, and administrators. The goal is to build a community congenial to a wide range of backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.

Through its curriculum, programs, and co-curricular activities, HWS exemplify an environment of justice, equity, respect for diversity, and human dignity. Prime illustrations include the focus on global education, service learning, volunteerism, and community service. The system for evaluating tenure-track faculty and the standards for faculty promotion seem both fair and just.

HWS have committed to diversity in all its forms. The Colleges have embarked on diversity initiatives in faculty hiring and admissions practices and made consideration of diversity issues a priority in the curriculum. The Colleges also plan to address the need to diversify their staff. The Center for Global Education has led the way in emphasizing teaching about new cultures and ideas. Faculty have been provided with funds to attend diversity conferences and workshops.

A commitment to providing exposure to diversity also comes into play through student participation in successful service learning programs such as America Reads, Jump Start, Habitat for Humanity, and tutoring in the Geneva schools.

HWS are to be commended for their professional Office of Communications, and for the overall honesty and truthfulness that characterize public relations announcements, advertisements, and recruiting materials. Much has been done in HWS web development to insure public access to information about the Colleges' services, policies, and opportunities.

HWS display integrity in the way they handle student grievances and disciplinary policies and procedures. They also exhibit fair and impartial practices in the hiring and dismissal of employees. The MSA/CHE team would welcome more clarity on policies related to harassment and an assurance that grievances are addressed promptly, appropriately, equitably, and through formal established channels. The Self -Study mentions a request for the appointment of an affirmative action officer, but no such appointment has been forthcoming.

While HWS have an evaluation process for administrators and staff on the books, it is inconsistently practiced. The committee suggests that regular annual performance evaluations be required in order to promote periodic discussions of performance and other work issues between staff members and their supervisors.

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

The institution has developed and implemented an assessment plan and process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in: achieving its mission and goals; implementing planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes; using institutional resources efficiently; providing leadership and governance; providing administrative structures and services; demonstrating institutional integrity; and assuring that institutional processes and resources support appropriate learning and other outcomes for its students and graduates.

HWS have met the challenge of creating a comprehensive institutional 2004 Self-Study for MSA/CHE re-accreditation, with the cooperation of a broad spectrum of their constituents: board, students, faculty and staff. Appropriately, this 2004 Self-Study is grounded in *HWS 2005*, the institution's strategic five-year plan, which was also developed with broad representation. (See our review of Standard 2.) In that plan, institutional goals are grouped into three categories: *Academic Program*, *Student Life*, and *Physical and Financial Resources*. The Self-Study includes examples of successful initiatives flowing from *HWS 2005*, particularly those related to resources: implementing the Master Facilities Plan; creating the Information Technology strategic plan (which is under review by a new chief information officer); and developing the Finger Lakes Institute with financial support from the State of New York and private foundations. In February 2003, the provost won approval from the board to develop a "Plan to Increase the Size of the Permanent Faculty." A timeline calls for this project to be completed by AY 2007-2008.

Updates of *HWS 2005 (2001-2002 Annual Review and 2002-2003 Annual Review)* are posted on the Colleges' website. HWS are commended for the ongoing nature of their planning processes, which give substance to the MSA/CHE Self-Study, and for the circulation of annual updates to the entire HWS community. Reports and Board resolutions that are related to *HWS 2005* and affect large segments of the community should be summarized in the appropriate sections of the *Annual Review*.

Institutional Assessment of Academic Programs

As noted above (Standard 1), *HWS 2005* clearly articulates its goals for "Academic Engagement" at the institutional level. Some of these goals are short-term and have been accomplished; they tend to be specifically resource-related (see above). Other goals can only be evaluated in the longer term – for example, strengthening diversity, increasing faculty/student contact, enhancing service learning, etc. (Goals for student learning outcomes are articulated separately and will be discussed under Standard 14.)

HWS use some widely-respected standardized instruments to verify their assumptions about their student body and graduates, including the CIRP Freshman Survey (1989 – present); HEDS Senior Survey (1993-present); the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE); and a variety of homegrown surveys (including job placement and senior exit surveys) that are administered periodically. Among the latter is

the robust post-collegiate life survey, which has been administered every 3-4 years since 1987.

HWS collect numerical data on a range of registrar-related student information (retention rates, current majors and minors, participation in service activities, global education, etc.) and periodically survey certain targeted aspects of student life. In addition, the Colleges receive annual reports from departments; the reports of external reviewers; and data on the First Year Seminars. HWS are commended for the breadth of their data collection at the institutional level.

Since the arrival of the new academic administration, divisional and program reviews have been conducted on an ad hoc or targeted basis, sometimes at the request of the programs themselves. This year, the science division completed a divisional review that was not ready for our inspection at the time of the visit. But there is no formal calendar for the systematic review of divisions, academic departments, and programs. Further, new programs seem to proliferate without sufficient attention to the actual and potential allocation of resources, both human and financial, and without close, ongoing intellectual scrutiny or recurring quality control. The difficult challenge of possible program elimination should therefore be part of the review process.

Recommendation: That HWS implement a regular, rotating system of division, department, and program review.

Student Life Engagement

The Student Life recommendations found in *HWS 2005* provide for effective planning and communication regarding priorities that directly affect the quality of the experience of the students. These recommendations should be implemented. It is especially important to increase faculty engagement in the residential life of students.

Following *HWS 2005*, it is essential to develop a comprehensive plan for student life that encompasses all aspects of student experience, including residential, leadership, and support services. Special attention should be given to a careful review of residential life initiatives, desired improvements of student social space, and the importance of programs for the sophomore year. In addition, there is a need to create a sense of common advocacy for the whole student body – not separate advocacy for men and women – in order to affect positively the quality of student life. This commonality would strengthen all students' experiences and assist them in future endeavors.

The plan should include clear objectives for the various aspects of student life so that they can be assessed later. This assessment should help the community focus on student accomplishments outside the classroom and beyond academic achievement.

Standard 8: Student Admissions

The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals and abilities are congruent with its mission.

“Hobart and William Smith Colleges are a student-centered learning environment, globally focused, grounded in the values of equity and service, developing citizens who will lead in the 21st century.” (Hobart and William Smith Colleges’ mission as presented in the Self-Study)

The essence of this mission was clearly articulated during the team’s visit, not just by faculty and administrators, but particularly by students; it was elaborated upon in the students’ description of both the quality of their experiences on campus and the expectations of their opportunities for pursuing academic goals. The “commitment to global understanding and study abroad opportunities, community service, and service learning” (HWS website), is evidenced in thought, as expressed by many members of different constituencies; in word, in printed and web-based materials; and in deed, apparent as one walks through campus facilities and observes the breadth of opportunities available to students both at home and abroad.

The Admissions, Enrollment, and Financial Aid areas are effectively structured together, resulting in strong and effective communication regarding policies and practices in attracting desirable students and assisting with the financing of educational expenses. Appreciation of the institutional mission and goals is clear in both printed materials and interpersonal contacts. Students with whom we had the opportunity to interact were readily able to answer questions about why they chose Hobart and William Smith Colleges, articulating specifically how their expectations during the college selection process match their current experiences. The most common responses included the importance of the flexibility that is possible in pursuing majors and minors, the interdisciplinary expectations, a special quality of student life that responds to specific interests and initiatives, and the opportunity to be a meaningful member of a community and campus culture rich with tradition, history, and academic challenge. Less commonly, students also commented on the nature of the coordinate college structure, which they feel preserves the positive aspects and unique traditions of a single-sex institution. The latter sentiment was echoed by alumni/ae with whom the team spoke.

The initiatives undertaken during the past decade, and especially the past few years, to decrease the discount rate, maintain or improve selectivity, and enhance the overall management of the recruitment of students seem to have resulted in a strong foundation for future efforts to compete in a market that is making increased demands on institutions with regard to programs, services, and financial aid and scholarship support. The leadership of the admissions program is knowledgeable and sophisticated in its understanding of the market, the institution, and student expectations. Clarity of communication and recognition of the importance of attracting the right students -- students who are likely to be successful and have a positive experience at HWS -- continue to be priorities. This includes communication with prospective students through marketing materials that feature the question, “Are you a hedgehog? Or are you a fox?”

Clearly the policies and marketing strategies are carefully developed, with sensitivity toward the specific types of information that are of significance to students at various stages of the college search process. This involves a subtle recognition of what students need to know, and when, in order to facilitate good decision-making. For the future stability of enrollments and financial security of the Colleges, it will be essential to continue to manage financial aid modeling with great care; the desire for enhanced selectivity, greater diversity, and an increase in the number of students able to pay a larger portion of the real costs may in actuality become conflicting priorities within student recruitment.

Recognizing that over 70 percent of the students receive some form of financial aid, the expectations by families and students to have personal attention can be quite demanding on staff time, specifically including individual consultation regarding identification of the means to meet expenses. However, one result is a thorough understanding on the part of the staff regarding the challenges that the educational expenses present to the families facing the short- and long-term financial consequences. This personalized attention seems to resonate with students, and is emblematic for them of an overall campus culture that is truly student-centered. Individual coordination of payment plans and strategies for financial management for families is an asset to those who need the extra effort in order to manage the finances satisfactorily. Opportunities for debt counseling early, throughout, and later in a student's academic career may assist in improved understanding of the strategies for addressing post-college debt planning, and may minimize the intrusion of the financial challenges during the next phase of the students' experience (e.g. employment, graduate study, international opportunities).

The plan for enhancing the diversity of the student population should be articulated with a clear understanding not only of where HWS may be successful in recruitment efforts, but also of how well those more diverse students will integrate into campus life and be supported in their daily lives at HWS. Therefore, recruitment and retention efforts must be tied closely to the diversity plan and related institutional goals. The accrediting team suggests that the Colleges create well-articulated goals that define a desirable "critical mass" necessary among faculty, staff, and students to enhance diversity.

Clear assessment regarding debt load and which students are most significantly affected by the loan rates should be a consideration for the future. The relative effects of these issues on alumni giving and on the strength of future ties to HWS may be important to track. Recognition of trends related to majors, student experiences, and future career goals may inform the future strategies for debt management counseling.

The ongoing emphasis in recruitment of students to one place, a place which represents two sets of traditions, may be both a benefit and a challenge. Continued efforts to clarify the special nature of HWS for external audiences will be essential for a long-term understanding of the Colleges and their desirability. If the students we met were to any degree truly representative of the overall student population, the marketing, communication, and selection processes are substantially successful. Students know why

they chose HWS and why they are there; their responses tend to match what the institution says about itself.

Standard 9: Student Support Services

The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution's goals for students.

HWS provide a breadth of services and programs for students similar to those offered by many other liberal arts colleges. The hallmark of many of the services seems to be the ability of administrative personnel to supplement the experiences students have in the classroom with personalized attention. The mission of the institution invokes the concept of a student-centered environment, composed of faculty, administrators, and staff who are dedicated to enhancing the lives of students. The traditional student support services at HWS receive reasonable responses from students regarding the availability and purpose of specific offices or functions. Energetic accolades are reserved for specific individuals, either faculty members or administrators, who have engaged students in meaningful ways.

Overall, HWS achieve a significant level of commitment to being student-centered. Students appear to understand their roles and responsibilities as they create their academic program to include a major and a minor, and often more than one of either or both. Conversations with students commonly invoke their understanding about public service and global education. Simply put, the students appear to get the message.

Nonetheless, how this experience translates into the day-to-day lives of students remains an important question. A visit of just a few days cannot provide enough information to evaluate effectively the services available to students; however, the evidence of a genuine commitment to these ideals surrounded us throughout the visit. The residential environment, student leadership, campus activities, athletic commitments, and support services provide appropriate opportunities for fostering student engagement. Considerable effort has been made to try to connect the residential experience directly to the curriculum through the First Year Seminars.

Significant enhancements to facilities have been effectively built into the planning process. *HWS 2005* directed consideration of aspects of student life that ultimately resulted in facilities improvements and initiatives. It will now be valuable to undertake a comprehensive review of student life. This assessment should include both Deans' offices and their related joint functions, rather than conducting the review by College or department. Although we heard some questions about the structure and responsibilities of the College Deans' offices, the organizational strategies and managerial responsibilities seem to accomplish desired institutional goals. However, should key personnel changes occur, it is suggested that the possible benefits of reorganization be thoroughly reviewed prior to perpetuating the same eccentric separation of functions. Although there are only limited complaints or concerns at this stage, the evolution of a common source of advocacy for all students would enhance the student voice, just as strengthening the nature of team approaches to support services for students would enhance the operations and outcomes for them.

While options for student involvement abound, expansion of more systemic programs on life skills and leadership opportunities would likely be beneficial throughout the students' experience. Students report the ability to generate student clubs and organizations on any topic. These experiences provide an opportunity to connect academic interests with activities and involvement. Establishment of a directed leadership program would build on the foundations of these experiences and allow for future exploration of employment or graduate study.

The athletic departments provide excellent opportunities for student-athletes, contribute to appreciation for each other's priorities and programs, and contribute to the HWS reputation in the surrounding Geneva community. The strength of the relationship between the two athletic directors may be indicative of commitments to the overall cooperation and future successes of particular athletic programs, each institution's athletic profile, and, most importantly, successful development of individual student-athletes. Continued emphasis on cooperation, respect for each other's programs, and priority on the student-athlete experience are important for the image and credibility of the HWS athletic experience as a whole.

The overall quality of student support services seems to be consistent with the institutional mission and sound in practice, providing reasonable programs and services for both Hobart and William Smith students. It is suggested that review of data regarding satisfaction with housing and with leadership options be utilized to develop additional strategies for effectively engaging students. It is strongly suggested that the Colleges undertake a review of issues relating to the retention of rising sophomores, such as the limited housing available to them during room selection; other concerns include the consequences of fraternity affiliation and the attrition of students from underrepresented populations. Assessment of the correlation of services for students with disabilities with both the recruitment and retention of those students may provide insight into needed improvements.

Standard 10: Faculty

The institution's instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals.

The faculty of HWS is appropriately prepared and qualified to carry out the teaching mission of the Colleges and its other professional responsibilities, including duties such as designing, maintaining, and revising individual courses of study and the educational curriculum of the Colleges. Students describe the faculty as excellent teachers, advisors, and mentors. In conversations with members of the MSA/CHE team, faculty members present themselves as active professionals, notably committed to the curricular goals of the Colleges. Many are energetic participants in the array of programs offered by the Colleges to meet the interdisciplinary component of graduation requirements. Some faculty members serve as coordinators of programs and participate in several others, in addition to teaching within their own academic departments.

The Faculty Handbook sets forth the Colleges' expectations of its faculty, including the professional standards for appointment; procedures for reappointment, tenure and promotion; and procedures for pursuing grievances based on principles of fairness and with due regard for the rights of all persons. Included in the Faculty Handbook are clear explanations of the Colleges' expectations for professional advancement, including the relative weight given to each of the three areas of review—teaching, professional development, and community service. The handbook also describes faculty roles in Colleges' governance, outlining the faculty committees and their functions.

The faculty places great emphasis on excellence in teaching HWS students. Student teaching evaluations appear to be a significant part of the process in both Review I (third-year review) and Review II (tenure review). Students serve as members of departmental evaluation committees, at a ratio of two students to three faculty members, and their participation includes the evaluation of teaching materials, peer evaluations of teaching, and all other professional work. Notably missing from the criteria for departmental review is the requirement for peer teaching evaluations based upon classroom visitations. Some departments do require peer visitation; others apparently do not.

During the 1990s, financial exigencies led the Colleges to reduce significantly the number of faculty on tenure lines; retiring and resigning faculty were replaced with "adjuncts"—temporary, full-time appointments for a limited number of years. While this strategy undoubtedly allowed more flexibility in filling temporarily the teaching needs of the Colleges, other results have been less positive. Fewer faculty have been available to participate in the large service burden on the faculty, including committee assignments and a large role in advising students for both majors and minors. In addition, the reduction in tenure-track appointments during the 90s resulted in a missing cohort of faculty who would normally be rising through the ranks to positions of leadership. Responding to the urging of the Committee on the Faculty and the Committee on

Academic Affairs, the Colleges are currently engaged in increasing, over the next five years, the tenure-track faculty by twenty-five appointments.

A current initiative of the Colleges is an effort to improve the diversity of the whole community, beginning with the faculty. The Faculty Recruiting and Hiring Handbook, recently completed, is an effort to regularize the recruitment process across all programs and departments. Especially emphasized in this handbook are procedures to ensure that a sufficiently diverse applicant pool has been attained.

The Colleges encourage members of the faculty to participate in the scholarship of their disciplines, and to this end has recently made greater efforts to support that work. One-semester sabbatical leaves are available after three years of teaching. Annual funds for professional development have been increased to \$1,200 for each tenured or tenure-track faculty, with a reduced amount of \$700 available to adjuncts. Substantial funds are made available (in 2003-04, \$60,000) for research projects, and added support is available to encourage outside grant applications.

In 1988 two ombudspersons, members of the faculty, were elected by their peers to assist the campus community with conflict resolution. The first two of these received professional training and served successfully until their retirement. Their replacements have served for five-year terms. Since 2002-2003 the HWS faculty has had four ombudspersons, all elected by the faculty. The last four elected have received no training although funding for training has been offered and turned down, and the HWS *Self-Study* has recognized this deficiency and recommended that such training be accomplished. The MSA team agrees such training is crucial.

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

The institution's educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.

The HWS curriculum supports the mission to provide an undergraduate experience in a coordinate and residential setting with emphasis on student-centered learning, a global focus, and grounding in equity and service. This is reflected in a rich array of innovative interdisciplinary programs and majors and an articulated sequential course of study with introductory, mid-level, and upper-division courses.

Graduation requirements and requirements for satisfactory performance in the major and minor are clearly outlined. Most departments and programs articulate intended goals and learning outcomes. Students can design individual majors, which are reviewed by a special committee.

An honors program is well-defined. Many students undertake independent learning and research opportunities, which may be formalized as an individual major through the Individual Majors Committee. Students also engage in research with faculty during the summer months and participate in an array of internships throughout the year. The Center for Global Studies, with its attention to off-campus and study-abroad opportunities, establishes a link between classroom and experiential learning.

In terms of a total educational environment, students have available a wide range of out-of-class activities. The Colleges offer an array of films, lectures, exhibits, volunteer opportunities, and community service experiences, all tied closely to the curriculum. The Fisher Center for the Study of Women and Men, with its unique lecture series, is an example of coordinated learning opportunities in the extracurricular realm. The integration of community service with educational programs is a hallmark of an HWS education and carries out the institutional mission of fulfilling a responsibility to society. These co-curricular activities are clearly directed toward developing integrity, responsibility, self-awareness, responsiveness to others, and the cultivation of leadership.

HWS may wish to consider some additional curricular issues. Information literacy, as discussed in Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education, "is vital to all disciplines and to effective teaching and learning." This area is not developed at HWS, but could be. Information literacy is not discussed in the Self-Study or in academic or departmental/program goals. The library has an instructional program which, at best, can be described as "catch-as-catch-can." Librarians approach faculty members on a personal basis and offer to conduct an assignment-based instruction session. Some faculty indicated that they did their own library-based instruction and were satisfied with that approach. Others commented that they wished for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to introducing information literacy skills, especially as the universe of information has become more complex.

The First Year Seminar, currently under review, may be an appropriate vehicle for launching multi-tiered information literacy. There should be a coordinated approach to integrating information literacy into the curriculum through a partnership among the librarians, information technologists, and faculty.

Some question whether the HWS learning support services are adequate to buttress the institution's ambitious educational programs.

While the IT network is robust, current staffing levels appear to be insufficient to support the demands of a 24/7 learning environment. Recent network initiatives established 4,200 high-speed data ports on campus, including the wiring of all residence halls. The network boasts 97 percent uptime. However, maintaining network reliability and security, while responding to customer demands, remains a challenge for a small staff. If IT expects to pursue initiatives such as expanding its wireless connectivity pilot program, further developing the campus portal, building a strong Blackboard program, supporting technology-enhanced classrooms, and responding more aggressively to the integration of technology into the curriculum, additional staff in training, customer operations, and support are essential.

Staffing is also a concern in terms of library support. With only five and a half professional librarians in addition to the director, the library serves a large clientele and is called upon to support a broad curriculum in terms of reference, instructional, and collection resources. Monograph-purchasing is low and largely funded with endowments. There is a concern that an increasingly large percentage of the library budget must go to fund serials, and that money for science journals and online products, in particular, is not sufficient. There is some question as to whether the 3.5 reference librarians could manage the instructional demands of a full-fledged information literacy undertaking. The library at this time does no comprehensive assessment of services and collections, but will be participating in the LibQual study this spring, which will be a good first step. The library staff has no direct opportunity to participate in discussions around curriculum changes, additions, new courses, etc. However, they are expected to support an expanding curriculum and new academic initiatives without additional staff or funds to build collections. The library may benefit from creating long-range collection and staffing plans and find ways to align itself more directly with faculty – particularly looking for a point of intersection with the Committee on Academic Affairs. Consideration could be given to placing a librarian on this committee.

In a related vein, the new Center for Teaching and Learning might benefit from a closer association with the faculty and the academic program. Both physically and programmatically, this unit appears removed from the academic enterprise it is charged with supporting. The Center for Teaching and Learning is understaffed, with one full-time staff member and temporary part-time workers supported by both the "hard-money" budget and a temporary infusion of endowment funds. While the office has a clear mandate of advising, consulting, and providing services to students with documented disabilities, this unit has a disabilities specialist who works only 25 hours per week. Student tutors provide writing support.

The Center for Teaching and Learning is also tasked with supporting faculty teaching. Its effectiveness might be enhanced by co-location with a related enterprise such as the Library or IT. IT's work with faculty in technology-enhanced learning and the library's efforts in information literacy might be enhanced by a stronger partnership with the Center for Teaching and Learning.

Standard 12: General Education

The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including oral and written communication, scientific analysis and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy.

The general education program at HWS is composed of several components: a First Year Seminar, achievement of a writing standard, the "eight educational goals," a major and a minor (one of which must be disciplinary and the other interdisciplinary). This program, supported by a strong system of faculty advising, offers students a varied array of learning opportunities and intellectual challenges. Its structure also provides interesting opportunities to engage in significant learning outcomes assessment, not currently being fully exploited.

The curriculum was created after intense discussion by the faculty, and the faculty continues to review and assess it – particularly the First Year Seminars, which are offered on an array of topics that reflect the breadth and depth of faculty interests. Taken as a group, the seminars exemplify the institutional values of interdisciplinary study, equity, and global education. When it seems necessary after completion of the First Year Seminar, faculty may mandate that a student take a writing course. The appropriate student records are flagged until they fulfill that requirement.

Eight goals define the general education outcomes. The goals, which were put in place in 1996 as a result of an intensive faculty retreat, outline the broad ambitions of general education at HWS: effective communication, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, and understanding of scientific and artistic expression. They also ask students to develop an intellectually grounded foundation for the understanding of differences and inequalities of gender, race, and class, as well as a foundation for ethical judgment and action. Goal 7 speaks directly to the HWS mission of creating "citizens who are globally focused." It asks students to exhibit a "critical knowledge of the multiplicity of world cultures." Advisors and students agree on how the goals can be met through on-campus course work and/or an overseas experience. Some (but not necessarily all) advisors engage with students in extensive conversations about how their proposed strategies meet the various goals. The results of those decisions are recorded on a checklist, a form required by the registrar to certify having met the requirements for graduation.

Program Strengths

The requirements are structured to ensure that students will be involved in interdisciplinary education. The First Year Seminars are themselves interdisciplinary, and students are required to have both a disciplinary and interdisciplinary area of study. The overall general education program offers students the opportunity to have a powerful and enduring educational experience that relates directly to their needs. The range of choices of First Year Seminar, major, and minor ensure an interdisciplinary learning experience. The eight goals invite students to consider the outcomes of their education and to describe how the components fit together into a coherent whole.

Faculty leadership spoke thoughtfully about the need to strengthen this program and described the plans to increase the number of seminars from 35 to 42, as a means of improving the advising related to the seminars. Many faculty are committed to the advising process, and student leaders spoke favorably about the rich learning opportunities open to them.

Other Considerations

The program collects some data, but would benefit from a broader program of data collection and dissemination. First Year Seminar evaluations by students and faculty and the goals sheets collected by the registrar provide a starting point for an overall assessment of what students have learned. However, a broader and more comprehensive data collection is needed. For example, students should be systematically queried about the effectiveness of advising services.

The eight goals offer a potentially compelling framework for organizing learning assessment, particularly for those students who write extensive narratives describing how they achieved the desired learning goals. If the learning assessment initiative were to consider this approach, it would benefit by first reviewing the goals for their currency. The goals might also be strengthened by addressing the concern with information literacy currently included in the Middle States standards.

The Self-Study reported some data suggesting that the First Year Seminar program would also benefit by a more intensive review. A strong majority of students (64 percent) (p.84, Self-Study) report a positive experience in the First Year Seminars. The changes to the seminars that will be implemented in the fall create an opportunity to ask again for student feedback. A repeat survey may also be used to probe further for reasons some students were less satisfied than others. Enhanced data collection and a learning assessment program will further strengthen the general education program.

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

Institutional programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.

HWS offer several programs that support the primary academic mission. These include the First Year Advantage program, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), and the Summer Academic Orientation Program (SAOP). There are also curricular and co-curricular programs: certificate programs that prepare students to work as teachers, internships, peer education, public service programs, and the Center for Global Education.

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) hired a new director in July 2003 and expanded its mission from serving students with special learning needs to include all students and also to become a faculty development center. The new mission appears to be meeting with some success. A broader array of students is seeking assistance, a system of peer education is in place, and the first faculty development seminar has been conducted. About 20 faculty attended. As part of its faculty development initiative, CTL will undertake a "chilly climate" survey to assess the campus environment for women and underrepresented populations, designed by the Director of Peer Education and Human Resources.

The Center has a bold vision that includes enhanced services, particularly for students with disabilities. Conversations with center staff suggest that the Center for Teaching and Learning needs broader institutional support and increased visibility. Campus-wide recognition of the center's services and greater awareness of the range of students who may be supported by it would enhance the overall success of the programs and services. Stronger faculty connections are essential to achieve the maximum benefit to students and the HWS community.

Public service programs relate directly to the Colleges' educational goals of civic responsibility and community engagement. Internships administered by the Career Development Center are important in achieving experiential learning. The Public Service Office exhibits an energy and enthusiasm for its work that well fulfills the Colleges' stated mission and goals. The office arranges several programs and also works to track service that emanates from other programs.

With almost thirty off-campus programs, many developed and led by HWS faculty, the Center for Global Education offers students an important avenue for achieving the Colleges' goals for students. Faculty members accompany students to the international sites and offer courses. The ratio is approximately one faculty member to twenty students. Students link their experience directly to their own areas of study; they are prepared in advance of their time abroad and debriefed after. The program may have grown as far as reasonably possible, given its present resource base.

CTL, the Public Service Office, and the Center for Global Education deserve commendation. They reflect the institutional mission and exhibit the creativity and energy that will help move the programs forward.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning (See our report on Standard 7 on institutional and program assessment)

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional goals and that students at graduation have achieved appropriate higher education goals.

As the Self-Study notes, HWS are concerned about the lack of comprehensive assessment of student learning outcomes and the failure to use the assessment data that already exist. Without a formal plan for assessing student learning or for feedback of assessment results to the appropriate constituents, the value of assessment is relatively negligible. (The team does note, however, that the recent assessment of the First Year Seminar has resulted in significant changes in advising in the first year.)

Work has begun on the assumptions that will eventually result in a comprehensive assessment planning document, but at present it lacks specificity of the kind noted in Standard 14. In addition, few of the syllabi reviewed by the MSA/CHE team include measurable course objectives, and even fewer link the course objectives to general education, department or program goals. We suggest that the next task of the Assessment Committee be to make an inventory of all possible sources for student learning evaluation available in the Colleges.

Recommendation: That, after an inventory of possible sources for student learning evaluation is complete, the Assessment Committee work with departments, programs, and individual professors to create an assessment plan that includes specificity at the course level. It is further recommended that all HWS syllabi be written to include clear course objectives linked explicitly to general education, department and program goals.

Assessment Based on the Eight Goals for Student Learning

At HWS, the most frequent way for a student to be certified as having satisfactorily fulfilled the eight goals required for graduation from HWS is by completion of a course checklist approved by his or her advisor. Students also have the option of writing a narrative description of the way a goal or goals have been met outside of regular coursework. Were the practice of narrative assessment used more widely, an analysis of the resulting student self-evaluations would be immensely valuable for student learning assessment. (Copies of these narratives would have to be collected in a central location, since the registrar's files are kept student-by-student.)

For example: In Goal 4, students are expected to have the "experience of scientific inquiry," an expectation that is reasonably fulfilled by satisfactory course completion. But Goal 4 also includes the expectation that students develop "an understanding of the nature of scientific knowledge." A narrative description of the acquisition of that understanding (gleaned either from courses or experience) written by the student could form the basis of the complete assessment of achieving Goal 4. A

similar use of narrative might well be used to augment satisfactory course completion in assessing aspects of Goals 6, 7, and 8, as well.

Clearly, HWS will soon be poised to implement a successful assessment plan that will enhance teaching and learning.