



**Fairmont State University**

**Focused Visit Report**

**To the Higher Learning Commission**

**April 2015**



**This report and all related documentation are available at:**

<https://w.taskstream.com/ts/dempsey12/FairmontStateUniversityHLCFocusedVisitExhibits>

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## INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 2013 Fairmont State University began building infrastructure and processes to support two major initiatives that would serve as the foundation for a comprehensive institutional strategic planning effort. Given the immediate needs of the University related to the institutionalization of assessment of learning and a systematic approach to enrollment growth, the strategic focus on the design, development and implementation of two campus wide initiatives – the Critical Friends Group (CFG) to support assessment of learning and the Campus Collaborative for Recruitment and Retention (CCRR) – were intended to serve a pragmatic set of purposes. They were also vehicles to create inclusive, collaborative structures and processes involving faculty and staff in academic and student support services that would support and inform a broader institutional strategic planning effort. This report will describe this ongoing continuous improvement and capacity building process and Fairmont State University's efforts to come into compliance with HLC accreditation.

The report is organized to provide the institutional context – including recent administrative changes, institutional changes, and fiscal challenges – for the strategic focus on assessment and the strategic focus on enrollment and retention. A section on each of the areas of strategic focus includes a description of the development and implementation of a collaborative and inclusive campus wide initiative to develop the institutional infrastructure and the capacity of faculty and staff to engage in the ongoing processes of an institutional assessment system and in regular, cyclical efforts to recruit and retain students. A final section describes the relationship between the two major initiatives and long term strategic planning.

## INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY AND CONTEXT

### Institutional History

For Fairmont State University, 2015 is an important and celebratory year in the life of the institution and its community. This year, students, faculty, staff, alumni and the community are celebrating Fairmont State's sesquicentennial with activities, special remembrances and events throughout the year. The festivities will culminate in October with the dedication of a Sesquicentennial Time Capsule during Homecoming 2015. This is a signature moment in the life of Fairmont State as these activities and events create intersections between the University's past success, present challenges and opportunities, and aspirations for the future.

Over those 150 years, the University has experienced many changes in name, academic identity, and campus character. Fairmont State University's roots reach back to the formation of public education in the state of West Virginia. The first private normal school in the state, the West Virginia Normal School at Fairmont, was established in 1865 by John N. Boyd, the school's first principal. The institution became Fairmont State Normal School in 1870. In 1923, the Fairmont State Normal School first offered a four-year bachelor's degree program in education, making the school a college. The institution's name changed to Fairmont State Teachers College in 1931, to Fairmont State College in 1944, and to Fairmont State University (FSU) in 2004.

The University's changes in location within Fairmont also reflect its continued growth. When, in 1867, the normal school became a state institution, construction began on a brick building on the northwest corner of Adams and Quincy streets. In 1893, the school moved into a new building on Second Street and Fairmont Avenue. In early 1917, the Fairmont State Normal School moved to the building now called Hardway Hall on the current Fairmont State campus. With that event, Fairmont State became "The College on the Hill" overlooking Locust Avenue. One hundred years ago in October 1915, a special ceremony commemorated the placing of the cornerstone for Hardway Hall.

From its first officially recorded enrollment of 30 students in 1868, FSU has grown to become the third largest of the West Virginia's universities. The first student, Hyre D. Clark of Buckhannon, graduated from the Normal School in 1872. Today Fairmont State offers more than 80 baccalaureate degrees, minors and concentrations, as well as graduate programs in architecture, business, criminal justice, and education. The mission and vision that guide these academic programs and the broader work of the University include the following [exhibits 01D & 01L]:

The Mission of Fairmont State University is to provide opportunities for individuals to achieve their professional and personal goals and discover roles for responsible citizenship that promote the common good.

Fairmont State University aspires to be nationally recognized as a model for accessible learner-centered institutions that promote student success by providing comprehensive education and excellent teaching, flexible learning environments, and superior services. Graduates will have the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind necessary for intellectual

growth, full and participatory citizenship, employability, and entrepreneurship in a changing environment.

What was a single building and part of a dairy farm has become a master's degree granting university with 23 buildings on a 120-acre campus [exhibits 02D & 02L]. New construction over the past decade includes the following physical plant changes that have greatly impacted the accessibility, functionality, sense of community, and beauty of the campus:

- Construction of the Falcon Center (student recreation center);
- Construction of a parking garage providing, student, staff and faculty parking;
- Construction of Bryant Place, a new residence hall;
- Expansion and renovation of the Engineering Technology building;
- Enhanced library facilities;
- Redesign and renovation of the Frank and Jane Gabor West Virginia Folklife Center;
- Complete redesign and renovation of the Turley Student Services Center;
- Major renovations to the Fine Arts facilities in Wallman Hall;
- Major renovations to administrative and academic space in Hardway Hall;
- Upgrades and space redesign in the Feaster Center (athletics);
- Renovation of academic space and supporting infrastructure in multiple academic buildings; and,
- Major redesigns and advances in accessibility infrastructure.

In addition to the main campus, Fairmont State features two satellite locations in Harrison County just to the south of the main campus in Fairmont. The Gaston Caperton Center in Clarksburg provides a satellite location where selected degrees and general education credits can be earned. The Robert C. Byrd National Aerospace Education Center in Bridgeport provides both two and four-year degrees and Federal-Aviation-Administration approved flight training.

In February 2015 the University celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Falcon Center, the central hub and center of energy for the campus. The University will also this year break ground on a new residential complex. The Fairmont State University Board of Governors and the Governor of West Virginia have approved bonding for and construction of a new housing complex on the Fairmont State campus. The facilities will replace the existing College Park Apartments (142 beds) built in the 1960s, and purchased by the University in 2002. Features of the state-of-the-art, new student housing facility include the following:

- Options for single apartments with kitchens, double apartments with kitchens, quads with kitchens and semi-suites with a shared bath;
- 345 bed capacity;
- A glassed commons area between two of the three buildings (the third building is detached);

- A courtyard area with a small amphitheater;
- Furnished rooms;
- Wi-Fi throughout the complex; and,
- Options for a “grab and go” type food service based in the facility are under consideration.

Primary design purposes for the residential complex include cultivating and reinforcing a sense of community, creating a culture of student engagement, and enhancing retention and academic success efforts. Ground breaking is anticipated to occur in spring 2015, with a fall 2016 opening targeted. The complex will cost approximately \$30 million to construct and equip.

### **Fairmont State University and the Fairmont Community**

General information for Fairmont State University and the local community includes the following:

- The University was founded in 1865.
- The University is governed by a twelve member Board of Governors, comprised of community stakeholders and constituents appointed by the Governor of West Virginia. The Board has responsibility for general governance of the University, its regional campuses, facilities, programs and services.
- Fairmont State consists of six academic colleges and schools:
  - College of Liberal Arts;
  - College of Science and Technology;
  - School of Business;
  - School of Education, Health and Human Performance;
  - School of Fine Arts; and,
  - School of Nursing and Allied Health Administration.
- The University Administration includes the following units (each led by a vice-president, with the exception of an Athletic Director who reports directly to the President):
  - Academic Affairs
  - Administrative and Fiscal Affairs
  - Information Technology
  - Institutional Assessment and Effectiveness
  - Student Services
  - University Communications
  - Fairmont State University Athletics

- The main campus is approximately 120 acres and is shared with Pierpont Community and Technical College (PCTC).
- The University offers over 50 undergraduate majors, over 40 undergraduate minors, pre-professional degree options, and 5 graduate degree options with 9 concentrations.
- Degree areas conferred by Fairmont State include:
  - Bachelor of Arts;
  - Bachelor of Arts in Education;
  - Associate of Science;
  - Bachelor of Science;
  - Bachelor of Science in Engineering Technology;
  - Bachelor of Science in Nursing;
  - Master of Architecture;
  - Master of Arts in Teaching;
  - Master of Business Administration;
  - Master of Education; and,
  - Master of Science.
- Over seventy percent of Fairmont State students receive some form of financial aid.
- The University has a student to faculty ratio of 17:1 and an average class size of 22.
- There are more than 50 student clubs and organizations, ranging from Greek life to Intramural Sports to the Anime Club.
- The University has an alumni network of more than 29,000 proud Fighting Falcons.
- As a member of the Mountain East Conference, FSU is an NCAA Division II school featuring 16 varsity sports.
- The main campus is located in Fairmont, West Virginia, a city of approximately 20,000.
- Fairmont is noted for being the home of the original pepperoni roll, the inaugural celebration of Father's Day, Olympic gymnastics gold medalist Mary Lou Retton, and Johnnie Johnson, the "father of rock and roll."
- Fairmont is part of north central West Virginia's fast-growing high technology corridor.

## **RECENT ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES AND FISCAL CHALLENGES**

### **Administrative Changes, Institutional Changes, and Budget Challenges**

The following sections outline major changes that have occurred at Fairmont State University that have presented challenges and constraints in advancing the work of the University, and key decision making contextual factors. These include administrative transitions, separation from



Pierpont Community and Technical College and its administrative and fiscal effects, and general budget challenges. This information is followed by an analysis of the University's investment of resources and commitment to infrastructure to support assessment of learning.

### Administrative Changes

In the last ten years Fairmont State has experienced a period of significant administrative turnover and transition, followed more recently with relative stability and continuity in administrative leadership. In that same time period the University has faced the challenge of merging with, and then separating from PCTC. The formal separation of the two institutions occurred in 2009, reversing a multi-year span where the two operated under one governance structure. As noted in greater detail below, the two institutions have been engaged in a formal separation process over the last five and one-half years.

In the last ten years the following administrative changes and transitions have occurred at Fairmont State:

- Since 2005 there have been four different presidential tenures, with two of those as interim status.
  - The current President served in one of those interim appointments (2011-12), and has been President since 2012.
- Since 2005 three different people have served as Provost, with the current Provost having also served with interim status for one year.
  - The current Provost is now in her third year since transitioning from interim status.
  - In addition, within Academic Affairs, three of the six academic dean positions have been interim status since 2013-14 (with searches on hold pending resolution of budget issues noted below).
- Student Services/Enrollment Services has been led by five different people (two with interim status).
  - The current Vice-President of Student Services is in her third full year.
- In the last ten years there have been three Vice-Presidents for Information Technology/CIOs, with a fourth person serving for one year as interim.
  - The current VP/CIO is in his first year at the University.
- In September 2013 the University created a new position of Vice-President for Institutional Assessment and Effectiveness (VPIAE).
  - The person appointed to that position is in his second full year.

### Separation from and Arbitration with Pierpont Community and Technology College

In 2009, through a "Separation of Assets" agreement the University formally separated from PCTC, an institution that co-resides in part on the Fairmont campus. The two institutions

previously operated under one administrative structure and one governing board. Since approval of the formal separation, the two institutions have been engaged in ongoing, complex negotiations, to complete the separation with as little negative effect on the two student bodies as possible. Major challenges have been in areas such as the following:

- Separation of academic programming for previously shared programs;
- “Chargeback” rates for shared academic programming, physical plant, and operational and administrative services;
- Budget support for shared infrastructure and physical plant;
- Joint fiscal responsibilities for revenue supporting long term capital expenses for maintenance and repair, and for securing bond covenants tied to shared campus facilities; and
- Separation of operational and administrative functions and costs (e.g. student services, information technology, and business operations);

As a result of the formal separation in 2009, the two institutions engage on an annual basis in analyses of shared costs and inter-institutional services and supports provided to each other. The fiscal values of these costs are assessed by the institutions against each other producing "charge backs" for the annual costs of services and functions that PCTC or FSU provide to each other. Total charge back values set the payments the two institutions assess each other on an annual basis for the cost of these services and supports. Because the greater values of the services and supports provided come from the University, the “balance” reflects a revenue stream from PCTC to Fairmont State to offset the relatively higher costs to the University.

The chart below reflects this balance in costs and payments over the last five years, reflecting a significant decrease in revenue to Fairmont State. The "PCTC Chargeback" column below reflects charges over the last five years from FSU to PCTC, and the "Fairmont State Chargeback" columns reflect charges from PCTC to Fairmont State. Each annual budget chart is followed by a "net revenue" calculation for that year. Net annual revenue for Fairmont State equals chargeback total from PCTC to FSU minus FSU chargeback to PCTC.

Since fiscal year 2010, due to the ongoing separation process from PCTC, Fairmont State University has experienced a \$1,495,235 (27.6%) decline in chargeback revenue. It is important to note that Fairmont State has not reduced its own expenses accordingly because many of the services and functions are ongoing for the University, though no longer shared (in terms of cost and budget support). In many cases, the University has absorbed the loss of revenue through realignment of positions and services to its own students, faculty and staff. In some cases, where practical and possible, the University has downsized staff and services.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Fairmont State Chargeback</u>	<u>PCTC Chargeback</u>	<u>Net FSU Revenue</u>
2015	\$467,142*	\$4,388,994*	\$3,921,852*
2014	\$374,115	\$5,057,166	\$4,683,051
2013	\$382,431	\$5,419,059	\$5,036,628

2012	\$542,068	\$5,922,584	\$5,380,516
2011	\$566,902	\$5,929,869	\$5,362,967
2010	\$517,837	\$5,934,924	\$5,417,087

\* Note: Estimate for FY 2015

In December 2014 Fairmont State and PCTC formally accepted a Settlement Agreement resolving issues related to the 2009 “Separation of Assets” agreement. This agreement articulated resolution of separation issues and avoided an evidentiary hearing with a three-member arbitration panel. Key provisions of this agreement include:

- PCTC receives for its capital projects \$1,000,000 total from the two institutions’ Joint Capital Fund, payable in FY 15 (\$500,000), FY 16 (\$250,000) and FY 17 (\$250,000).
- Fairmont State receives all funds due and owed from PCTC to Fairmont State, and would receive the same funds in subsequent years as identified in the Separation of Assets Agreement.
- FY 2015 chargeback funds owed to each institution from the other are to be released for payment, with annual agreements for chargeback rates and payment for services and operations, and academic program costs affected by chargebacks.
  - By March 1, 2015 PCTC will have identified a one-year plan and timeline identifying services that it intends to obtain from Fairmont State and those services it will no longer require. By that date the two institutions will have also establish a chargeback agreement. (Note: The timeline for this step was extended through a mutual agreement between the two institutions.)
  - By January 1, 2016 the two institutions will agree to a three-year plan for services that PCTC would obtain from Fairmont State, and a three-year chargeback agreement.

Note: Additional budget effects of the separation and chargebacks are discussed in the next section.

### Budget Challenges since 2012

The University continues to face budget and resource challenges driven by declining legislative funding in the state, by local economic challenges, and a declining enrollment base due in large part to a declining college age population in West Virginia. These challenges have led to difficult institutional decisions related to decreasing program support in terms of both existing and new positions and in operating support. All units at the University have been impacted by these challenges and resulting declines in revenue and support. The effects of these declines include the following decisions.

#### Fiscal Year 2015:

Due to declining enrollments, the University projected a net revenue loss for the “Education& General” and “Graduate Programs” fees of \$948,891. Units whose labor

and operating expenses are supported by these funding sources were asked to reduce their spending plans.

The University has seen an overall University budget reduction of \$1,068,165 and loss of chargeback revenue (from PCTC) of \$159,295 associated with those budgets. The result of these reductions and chargebacks was a net effect of \$908,870 in budget savings due to the reductions.

The enrollment decline led to reduced revenue projections of \$33,600 for Student Program Fees and \$12,005 for Central Fees. Labor and operating budgets of units supported by those funds were reduced as well.

On the basis of enrollment decline in the spring 2015 term, the University anticipates an additional revenue decline of approximately \$200,000 that will need to be reduced from the budget prior to June 30, 2015.

During regular budget analyses in the fall 2014, the University identified areas of unexpected increases in expenses that created the need for budget adjustments for FY 15. Major fiscal areas in these analyses include:

- Projections in chargeback revenue with PCTC in budget preparation for FY 15 fell short of actual revenue;
- Expense obligations tied to funding source changes for Retention services;
- Contractual agreements with PCTC and the Robert C. Byrd Center related to Aviation programs;
- A shift in chargeback percentages with PCTC that negatively impacted the University budget;

These adjustments, along with other normal budgeting activity created a deficit condition of an estimated \$1,034,023 in FY 2015 that will have to be addressed in FY 2016 pending FY 2015 action.

#### Fiscal Year 2014:

During FY 2014, the University experienced a mid-year reduction to the state appropriation of \$177,552.

Other revenue budgets for unrestricted funds had fallen short of the budget projections over the years and required modifications that were addressed in FY 14. These shortfalls along with revenue loss projections due to enrollment declines resulted in a revenue budget reduction of \$1,439,734 in January 2014. Likewise, labor and expense budget reductions of \$1,511,940 were managed. These reductions created an additional loss of chargeback revenue of \$186,912.

In addition, FSU agreed with PCTC reductions in chargeback payment on various positions. This resulted in a loss of chargeback revenue of \$421,671.

## Institutional Investments during Resource Challenges

Since 2012 the Fairmont State University has made significant investments – in the face of the challenges and constraints discussed above -- in building and enhancing its capacity to support assessment of learning and to engage in strategic initiatives related to enrollment. It is important to note that as the University has faced major budget challenges and declining revenues on multiple fronts, it has also made critical decisions to identify fungible resources and apply new sources of revenue (i.e. tuition increases) to supporting strategic work in assessment and enrollment.

In the last eighteen months the University has restructured and focused available resources to create a stronger commitment under an institutional office at the cabinet level. This office is under the administrative stewardship of a Vice-President who works closely with Academic Affairs, Information Technology, and Student Services in the design, development and ongoing implementation of an academic assessment infrastructure. The chart below includes a basic overview of the investment categories that have been made in the last eighteen months.

<u>Budget Item</u>	<u>Fiscal Year</u>	
	<u>FY 13-14</u>	<u>FY 14-15</u>
VP for Institutional Assessment and Effectiveness (salary/benefits)	\$158,670	\$158,670
TaskStream Coordinator (temporary position; salary/benefits)	\$0	\$41,092
Temporary Appointments (Faculty stipends for PD)	\$56,597	\$17,956
TaskStream License	\$0	\$175,500
Operational and Current Expenses	\$325	\$33,151
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$215,592</b>	<b>\$426,369</b>

Brief descriptions of these investments include the following:

### VP for Institutional Assessment and Effectiveness

The University has created and filled a position at the Vice-President level to provide leadership in assessment. The position was originally posted in the summer 2013. Review of the initial pool led to a search committee decision to repost the position at a later date with a revised position description. In order to begin the 2013-14 academic year with leadership in place, the President appointed an interim Vice-President in September 2013. The person appointed at that time continues to provide leadership to the process of building and refining structures to support assessment and enrollment.

### TaskStream Coordinator

In August 2014 the University created a temporary, full-time position to support the campus-wide installation, implementation and use of TaskStream as the primary tool for supporting assessment of learning. This includes both the use of TaskStream at the level of instructional delivery and for program assessment support. The person who is in this role has worked with

TaskStream at Fairmont State since its early adoption in select programs, primarily Teacher Education. Prior to creation of the full-time position, this person worked in a limited way with individual programs and faculty across campus already using TaskStream tools. This person also managed the assignment of individual subscriptions for faculty and students. As Coordinator, this person now provides the primary technical assistance across campus for all programs, faculty and students. She also coordinates implementation tasks with offices in Information Technology, and coordinates communication and networking with the TaskStream corporate office.

### Institution-wide Adoption of TaskStream

TaskStream is a cloud-based technology that supports institutional, program, course, and student assessment against learning outcomes [exhibit 03L]. The Accountability Management System (AMS) in TaskStream supports assessment of academic programs and operations and provides a system for monitoring progress towards goals and resource allocation. With the Learning Achievement Tools (LAT) faculty and students have the ability to assess performance against program and institutional standards and outcomes, identify areas for improvement, and demonstrate areas of success through performance-based assessments and portfolio development. TaskStream as implemented at Fairmont State communicates with existing data management and learning management systems including Banner and Blackboard, creating a seamless information system. All faculty, administrators and staff can be affiliated with any program or course in the AMS to see the assessment plan and results, creating a level of transparency not available in past assessment efforts..

In April 2014 Fairmont State University finalized adoption of and began implementation for the use of TaskStream as the University-wide, institutional tool supporting development of assessment of learning, archiving assessment data and analyses, and creation of program assessment reports. The tool had previously been piloted in multiple academic programs across several University colleges and schools. The School of Education, Health and Human Performance had piloted, and become intensive users of Task Stream's learning assessment components that complement the program level assessment process. These pilot initiatives laid the groundwork for campus-wide adoption and implementation that began in the late spring 2014. In the 2014-15 academic year the University is for the first time using TaskStream as a tool available to all students, faculty and staff and all program areas.

TaskStream as implemented at Fairmont State includes the following system and technical supports for students, faculty and staff that are critical to widespread implementation of the tool:

- Unlimited LAT accounts for all Fairmont State faculty and staff involved in LAT implementation to support learning;
- Consultation and partnership on system setup and configuration for implementation;
- Unlimited (live) online custom training for all faculty/staff/student groups involved in the implementation;

- 7-day per week live help desk support for all end-users through Mentoring Services in provided by TaskStream;
- ‘Webcast’ live online training events offered most weekdays on a rotating list of topics related to the use of TaskStream tool and assessment of learning, available for all TaskStream end-users;
- Customized ‘quick-start’ guides for both students and evaluators;
- All hosting services (cloud-based system); and,
- Implementation Services including TaskStream’s Enterprise Data Hub

All Fairmont State students have access to TaskStream capacity in all courses, programs, majors, minors and General Studies. All faculty and staff have parallel access, with additional access to capacity for program assessment plan and report development, as well as data aggregation and action planning in the AMS side of TaskStream.

In addition to linked general access to TaskStream from Blackboard for faculty and students, the TaskStream structure includes a Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI) interface that allows faculty to “push” data from TaskStream into Blackboard for instructional use and purposes. Instructors can do assessments of learning in TaskStream and push results for specific courses into Blackboard for archiving grades. This eliminates the need to manually copy into a grade book in Blackboard for instructors who choose to do so. This is a particularly important tool and resource for our campus as the institution has historically used Blackboard and there is pervasive faculty use of that tool.

- Instructors are able to post assignments in Blackboard that connect to the assessment strategy for that assignment in TaskStream.
- When students click the assignment tool in Blackboard it opens TaskStream, the LAT program associated with it, and the assignment can be submitted there.
- Instructors can grade assignments and have grades transfer to the Blackboard grade book.

Access to seamless integration between Blackboard and TaskStream has been a major element of success in implementation of TaskStream.

Students, through the registration process are automatically subscribed in TaskStream by virtue of major codes in Banner. (This process is no longer being done manually by a staff person as in the past.)

Temporary Appointments (Faculty stipends for professional development and initiative design work)

As part of capacity building to support assessment of learning and to support faculty and staff in design and development of enrollment and retention initiatives, the University has focused some budget resources on collaborative teams supported through stipends (while off contract). This commitment has been essential in implementation and integration of

assessment practices and in design efforts with enrollment and retention strategies. This has included primarily efforts to provide professional development and to support faculty and staff in design and development work related to both assessment and enrollment and retention strategic initiatives.

While the total investment decreased over the two fiscal years provided, this is actually a positive step. Resources that were used for stipends and short term and fixed term expenditures (e.g. overload contracts) prior to fiscal year 2015 were captured in more structured uses such as the TaskStream Coordinator position as a full-time, temporary position.

#### Operational and Current Expenses

This category reflects the institution's building commitment to provide ongoing professional development and infrastructure support to faculty and staff in assessment, and enrollment and retention initiatives. This includes primarily the Critical Friends Group (CFG) and Faculty Academy described later in this report. Funds to support the summer 2014 Faculty Academy "straddled" two fiscal years and were drawn from both the "operational" budget and the "temporary appointments" budget.



## **STRATEGIC FOCUS ON ASSESSMENT**

Fairmont State University has engaged in strategic work to build a systematic and coherent assessment of learning structure to transition away from an assessment process that was episodic and inconsistent across academic programs. Prior to the design and ongoing implementation of the structure and strategies described in this report, in general professional programs with external, specialized accreditation had relatively well-developed assessment practices, continuous improvement processes, and faculty with a more refined capacity to engage in assessment of learning. In contrast, the assessment efforts of programs without a national accrediting body were more uneven.

In the context of the administrative and institutional changes and the budget challenges described above, planning and implementing a coherent system and consistent processes for assessment of learning would be built through a series of short term strategic actions that would develop into institutional infrastructure and institutional capacity in the long term. The focus on the development of the infrastructure to support institutional assessment, as well as establish a coherent and consistent process for continuous improvement of learning, was intended to simultaneously develop the capacity of the campus to engage in assessment of student learning while also designing, developing and implementing the structure and process for sustaining assessment efforts. The short term strategic steps that would be reflected in the long term structure and process for assessment of learning was designed and implemented across three phases:

- Phase 1 involved an audit of current assessment practices, assessment of current capacity of faculty and staff to engage in assessment of learning, and analysis of the institutional structure for supporting assessment of academic programs. In addition to identifying existing resources that could be directed to strengthen these efforts, the audit required programs to evaluate and document the state of practice of assessment efforts, to share audit results, and served as a catalyst for engagement in the assessment process.
- Phase 2 focused on building the structure to support assessment of learning. These steps involved creating the infrastructure to support an assessment process and to strengthen and build as necessary a critical mass of faculty with the expertise to support campus wide implementation of the process and supporting infrastructure.
- Phase 3 focused (and continues to focus) on expansion of the infrastructure, and implementation and institutionalization of the process.

The detailed elements and strategic steps of this process are described below.

## **ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING AND THE CRITICAL FRIENDS GROUP**

### **Development of the Critical Friends Group**

In the fall term 2013 leadership at Fairmont State critically examined structures and resources in place at that time to support academic programs as they engaged in assessment efforts to confirm

that students were meeting challenging learning outcomes and were being provided with high quality learning experiences. This process originated in a review of the challenges related to assessment of learning articulated in the 2012 HLC visit, report, and subsequent monitoring process. Results of this analysis suggested that faculty and academic program leadership wanted and needed a stronger sense of direction about the purpose of learning assessment at the instructional and programmatic levels. Faculty and leadership also wanted more consistent and substantive faculty development in assessment of learning, program assessment, and the purpose and use of a digital program such as TaskStream in that process. This preliminary analysis process also included an examination of the structures and strategies in place to support academic programs' collection and analysis of data to ensure learning outcomes were in place and being met.

To address concerns identified in that preliminary analysis process, and engage in redesign of infrastructure and resources supporting assessment of learning, the University created the "Critical Friends Group" (CFG) comprised of fifteen faculty leaders representing all academic units [exhibit 04D]. The CFG provides direction to and creates structures and support for University-wide, comprehensive assessment of learning and of academic programs. The CFG designs and promotes -- through faculty participation and stewardship -- working guidelines, procedures and expectations for the assessment process, as well as support and embedded professional development for colleagues as they engage in the process [exhibit 03D]. The CFG works through the VPIAE to coordinate efforts and implementation strategies with the broader faculty and academic leadership. This group would come to include 44 members, across all six colleges and schools and the Faculty Senate General Studies Committee, who represent the following roles: faculty, program coordinators, department chairs, associate deans, and deans. The CFG, in collaboration with the VPIAE and leadership in Academic Affairs (Provost, Associate Provost, Deans and academic program leadership) engages in an ongoing collaborative process to support assessment [exhibit 05D].

Purposes of this process and intended outcomes have included the following:

- Creation of a faculty-based, collegial leadership and support team to ensure the academic integrity of all programs as evidenced in articulation of program goals and outcomes, assessment for learning, and production and analysis of program assessment reports (for all programs campus-wide);
- Design and implementation of a program assessment process, with integrated assessment of learning strategies and measures;
- Adoption, implementation and faculty development support for campus-wide implementation of TaskStream as the primary tool to support assessment for learning and program assessment;
- Creation and implementation of a program assessment cycle with key annual dates and benchmarks;
- Design and delivery of professional development to support faculty and CFG members;
- Design and implementation of cross-program collegial review and within-program faculty review of programs; and,

- Integration of strategies, structures and expectations into all academic programs.

Through planning and design efforts undertaken by the CFG, the campus addressed three key goals in the first year of the work:

- 1) Implementation of a program assessment process, cycle, and reporting structure, including delineation of program learning outcomes and goals;
- 2) Capacity building for faculty mentoring and collaborative support, and direct, broad-based faculty participation in the assessment process; and,
- 3) Adoption of TaskStream as the University-wide tool to support assessment for learning and program assessment/reporting.

The initial step in creation and implementation of the Critical Friends Groups was to identify (by December of 2013) faculty leadership to convene and lead the CFG. The VPIAE worked with the Provost, academic deans and other administrators, and the Faculty Senate to identify two faculty leaders who would convene and provide leadership to efforts to build campus wide capacity for the design, implementation, review and continuous revision of learning assessment across all academic programs, including General Studies. These two conveners were selected because of their backgrounds and experience in program design and learning assessment, and both also had experience as leaders in their academic program areas and in faculty governance.

As part of the process of identifying people who had an interest and willingness to help organize and support the work of the CFG, several faculty and staff were invited to be part of a team representing Fairmont State University at an assessment workshop at Robert Morris University in November 2013. Linda Suskie, a noted national expert in academic assessment served as the keynote speaker and workshop facilitator. The seven people who participated in the workshop all eventually became members of the CFG, including the two faculty conveners.

In January 2014 the CFG conveners and VPIAE initiated a process to identify faculty leaders from each of the six colleges and schools who would provide direction to the creation of structures to support assessment of learning and academic programs. The conveners and VPIAE worked with the academic deans to identify these faculty leaders, with a plan to name a total of twelve college and school faculty representatives to the initial CFG. The initial CFG faculty assessment team was identified by mid-January 2014. These faculty members would serve as the initial CFG, and convening them would also serve as the initial step in creating assessment teams within each college and school. Two faculty members (and in some cases more than two) were ultimately identified from each college and school to provide leadership and capacity building support for faculty in their units. The initial CFG ultimately grew to include fifteen. Three faculty members were later added to the CFG to specifically represent the Faculty Senate's General Studies standing committee, bringing the number of group members to eighteen. The GS representatives were selected by the GS Committee, and subsequently took a leadership role with the program level assessment report for GS, synthesizing the assessment of GS courses being done by course faculty in the colleges and schools.

Once team membership was identified, much of the early work of the CFG was delayed by severe winter weather from early January through mid-March 2014. Multiple meetings and work

sessions had to be cancelled and rescheduled. To make up for lost ground and time, the CFG members met twice during multiple weeks in the early spring and through the end of the semester.

The CFG conveners worked with the VPIAE to develop a preliminary plan for the development of the CFG, with a tentative action plan created for the spring 2014 term. The initial focus included review of programmatic needs and challenges in engaging in assessment work, implementation (including design and review) of assessment strategies and practices, and continuous improvement of learning assessment. Once identified, the faculty leaders from each college/school engaged in work focused on the following general areas:

- 1) Identification of faculty needs and challenges in engaging in assessment at the program level and instructional level;
- 2) Identification of professional development needs for CFG members and faculty in general;
- 3) Design of key components of the assessment process;
- 4) Development of tools, templates and a cycle (timeline) for use in the assessment process; and,
- 5) Implementation and use of TaskStream as a catalyst and resource for the assessment process.

Over the spring 2014 term the two CFG faculty conveners offered collaborative professional development and planning support to the initial CFG team. This began in January with a focus on design, implementation, review and improvement of the assessment process, specifically at the program level within the colleges and schools. The group also engaged in preliminary discussions to outline and develop assessment planning and professional development for and within academic units. This included the use of TaskStream as the tool for managing and archiving assessments and data, and for production of analyses and reports.

The CFG process included the goal of creating CFG support teams for each college and school, with the intent of each team being to provide faculty leadership and mentorship to academic unit-level assessment. Each college and school assessment team would have five to six faculty members, including the original CFG members from that unit. This would create a campus-wide team including the original fifteen CFG members, plus a goal of identifying and recruiting twenty-four additional faculty members, all supported through professional development by the CFG. The goal was to create a University-wide CFG team of 38, including the two conveners.

By mid-April 2014 the CFG expanded to 44 members. The expanded group had as a goal collaborative engagement in professional development to build capacity for providing leadership, capacity building, and peer mentoring support for faculty in their college's or school's academic programs. This work would include ongoing implementation (including design and review) and continuous improvement of learning outcomes, assessment practices, and program analyses and reporting. The college and school teams ultimately ranged from five to eight members, including the representatives dedicated specifically to GS.

In the period from March through May 2014 the initial fifteen CFG members designed a “Critical Friends Academy” where the CFG would engage in collaborative professional development and build capacity to implement and support assessment of learning, program and course assessment, and the use of TaskStream. When the expanded group of 44 was identified, new members were integrated into the planning process, delineating needs and interests from their perspectives and collective academic assessment needs. The resulting three-day Academy, was offered three times over the course of summer 2014, provided the framework for campus wide assessment process to be implemented in 2014-15. The elements of the Academy provide the basic structure of faculty professional development in assessment and the use of TaskStream. The Critical Friends Academy also established a shared knowledge and skill base for the CFG members to serve as peer mentors for a campus-wide structure for assessment.

The long range goal was that by the end of the 2014-15 academic year all faculty on campus (approximately 175) would be directly involved as leaders or indirectly as participants in assessment-related professional development and capacity building collaboration. While this has been partially achieved through academic meetings and faculty development opportunities during “Opening Week” (a week set aside for faculty development before the start of classes) activities each term, budget constraints have limited this process. However, as a result of the initial CFG design work in the spring 2014, expansion of the group, the Critical Friends Summer 2014 Academy, and ongoing-professional development, the process has created the potential for a 1-to-4 faculty ratio for providing campus-wide peer mentoring and support.

By the start of the 2014-15 academic year, 44 faculty members had participated directly in CFG professional development activities, including the Summer 2014 Critical Friends Academy. In addition, the GS committee and representatives of the CFG held a day-long joint review and strategic planning meeting to draft a program report documenting the assessment of GS, and to develop a plan for the 2014-15 academic year. During “Opening Week” in August colleges and schools held faculty-wide professional development and/or program assessment work sessions. Subsequently Academic Affairs instituted a common “Assessment Day” as part of the January 2015 institutional Opening Week agenda and made a commitment for this to be a standing agenda item for future Opening Weeks [exhibits 06D & 07D]. By September 15, 2014 all colleges and schools had participated in a common, comprehensive, program-level assessment reporting process affecting all academic programs on campus (including GS as an academic program and courses embedded in other programs of study). This process was built on an assessment cycle designed by the CFG. The template driving the 2014-15 cycle has been adopted as the institutional assessment cycle for all academic programs.

### **Key CFG Action Steps and Initiatives Supporting Assessment**

The initial steps to establish the Critical Friends Group (CFG) took place from December 2013 to mid-March 2014. By mid-March the CFG had expanded into a working faculty group, and was working to build and refine a sturdy and robust structure to support assessment of learning across the University. The CFG group, comprised of approximately one-quarter of the total faculty, developed in less than a year, from a process involving the VPIAE and two faculty leaders, to fifteen original CFG members, to the current 44 members. The process has been

designed and driven by faculty perspectives, identification of faculty professional needs, and strategic faculty choices about how to allocate professional development resources.

From January 2014 through the present, CFG members have used campus-based expertise, knowledge and resources, and have accessed research and professional knowledge bases as relevant to the stages of building the program design, assessment of learning strategies, and program goals/outcomes structures. From March through September 2014, under the leadership and guidance of the CFG, the University piloted all elements of the capacity building, structural design and implementation and reporting processes to generate a systemic University assessment system. This now includes, for example:

- Participation of academic programs in the assessment cycle; and,
- Production of draft or working elements of the program assessment reports;
- Production of program assessment reports.
- Audits of programs to ensure that elements of the assessment process, cycle and reports are in place or in development; and,
- Assessment and continuous improvement of the annual process.

Key steps in the process have been:

- Design of the CFG process and identification of the original fifteen members (December 2013 – January 2014);
  - Included the design and adoption of a campus-wide structure for program and program assessment design, program reporting of assessment, assessment cycle benchmarks, and design and definition of program assessment elements, including program goals, outcomes, and corollary measures and data sources.
- Groundwork planning and design by the original CFG group (January – May 2014);
- Initial audit of all program assessment components for all academic programs on campus (March 2014);
- Design of the Summer 2014 Critical Friends Academy (April – June 2015);
- Second audit of all program assessment components in all programs (May 2014);
- Summer 2014 Critical Friends Academies (July-August 2014);
- Submission of program assessment reports campus-wide as a result of the first “assessment cycle” established by the CFG (September 2014);
- Development of peer review and academic review processes for reports (October – November 2014);
- Completion and sharing of Program Assessment Report (PAR) peer reviews by CFG (December 2014 – January 2015); and,
- Initiation of a common institutional Assessment Day during Opening Week (January 2015).

From mid-January to May 2014 the group met twice a week (weather permitting) to do its work. In that period CFG focused on the design and drafting elements of three major tasks:

- 1) Program assessment practices audit: The design and implementation of a template used to solicit, from each academic area, information related to assessment components and the current state of assessment practices and reporting in the programs.
- 2) Faculty-identified needs for professional development: This template also solicited information about faculty needs relative to capacity-building and professional development related to assessment.
- 3) Pilot process for producing program assessment reports: As a next step, we have set as a working target a goal to have a “program report” for each academic program by September 15, 2014. The primary purpose of this report is to have faculty and leadership in each area describe the current state of assessment practices and analysis of those practices. (We know that some if not most areas will already have program reports produced in a previous annual cycle. This process is to ensure campus-wide activity across all programs, and to help provide faculty support as we continue the process.

In March 2014 the CFG provided each program area with a template to perform a content audit on information describing the current state of practice for assessments in academic programs, including undergraduate majors and minors, certificate programs, and graduate programs. Program faculty and leaders were asked to use an audit template to identify the degree to which goals, outcomes, and elements of an assessment plan were in place, in development, or not yet in development. Programs were also asked to note how the information was being archived.

The purpose of the audit was to assist the CFG in planning and implementing strategies to support faculty and staff at the program levels in continuous improvement of academic assessment. Program areas were asked and encouraged in this step to err toward asking for support and assistance from CFG members in their colleges and schools, even if there was some sense of capacity in completing the analyses. The purpose of the audit was to identify assessment areas (and academic programs) where the CFG could focus attention, prioritize their work and provide the best support to faculty and academic leadership. The process was explicitly not intended to “grade” or “score” the current state of practice, in academic programs, but to get a sense of the state of practice

Deans, associate deans, chairs and program coordinators were asked to collaborate with their college’s or school’s CFG members to gather and provide information in a standard Academic Program Assessment Audit Template [see 08D], including the following prompts and questions about the then current state of assessment practices:

- 1) Identification of the college or school and program area, denoting degree level (e.g. major/minor, BA/BS/graduate);
- 2) Clearly articulated *program outcomes*;
- 3) Clearly identified *program assessments* for each of the program outcomes;
- 4) Clearly identified *course, clinical and internship assessments* that map to the program outcomes;

- 5) Location in which program assessment data was archived (options included TaskStream; digital tool other than TaskStream; hard copy; or not currently archived);
- 6) Whether the program has a regular annual assessment cycle? (Schedule of regular meetings to discuss data and findings and to generate and archive program improvements reports);
- 7) Whether the program had assessment cycles for 2011-12, 2012-13, and/or 2013-14; and,
- 8) Name, if applicable, for the designated person(s) responsible for maintaining program data, findings and reports (If archived in TaskStream course space who was responsible for maintaining the space.)

Programs were also asked to identify ways the CFG could support program assessment efforts (e.g. consultation on developing course outcomes or assessments, program outcomes or assessments, using TaskStream AMS or LAT, etc.).

Results of this auditing process were aggregated into a matrix summarizing the results. Each college and school was given the Audit Results Chart [exhibit 09D] for their unit as well as the completed templates specific to their programs. From the open ended responses and recommendations (Program Support Request Comments [exhibit 10D]) for support activities provided in the request for ideas, the CFG created a list of support area narrative themes and workshop ideas [exhibit 11D] for planning faculty support activities.

The CFG reviewed results of this audit, conducted in March 2014, and through the team leaders and VPIAE shared the aggregate chart and workshop suggestions with the President's Cabinet, Academic Leadership, and the Faculty Senate. These groups also received regular updates as the work progressed. These reviews included discussions of the working documents as well as the information generated.

Upon aggregation and dissemination of the information gathered in the auditing process, the CFG moved to designing and delivering, and setting a working calendar for workshops, professional development activities, and help sessions [exhibit 12D] to support the assessment work. The activities include a combination of newly designed workshops and continued use of workshops already designed and implemented in colleges and schools. The workshop planning process began with a focus on elements necessary in the production of assessment reports and the elements of the annual assessment cycle that would lead to the production of the annual reports.

Based on review of the suggestions and request for support from the program area faculty, the CFG surveyed existing workshops and help sessions that had already been offered in academic programs across the University. These existing college and school based workshops and work sessions had been developed and delivered for specific purposes within the colleges and schools. Faculty and administrators in those areas who had delivered the sessions opened future activities to faculty campus wide, and where requested scheduled for sessions within other colleges and schools (as coordinated with CFG members from that college or school). Select sessions were also offered during subsequent Faculty Development Weeks and during the summer upon



request. Examples of those existing workshops and faculty development sessions that were utilized early on included:

- Overview of Institutional Assessment (why we do it, how it can be organized, implications for programs and courses, etc.);
- Developing Program and Course Outcomes;
- Developing Program and Course Assessments;
- Introduction to AMS Program and Course Workspaces;
- “Closing the Loop” (included in the AMS manual – documenting the findings from analysis of assessment data in workspaces, completing the documentation of an annual assessment cycle);
- Introduction to LAT (separate manuals aimed at individual tools – webpages, folios, forms, surveys, rubrics);
- Reports: AMS Curriculum Maps, LAT Data and Standards Reports;
- Program Revision: From philosophy & program outcomes to course & unit outcomes (Mapping concepts and content for their courses to make them consistent with program level); and
- Documenting Richer Findings (How to include individual and aggregate achievement findings, how to document caveats and observations about performance, how to link findings back to outcomes, and when/how to document recommendations & rationale.

In addition, CFG members with expertise and experience in the identified areas designed support activities for colleagues in the program areas expressing need. At these workshops CFG members helped faculty learn about and refine their knowledge of assessment of learning, program assessment, and the elements and details of the assessment process. Also, programs worked with their CFG representatives to schedule sessions to address program-specific needs. These workshops ranged from general discussions and problem-solving for academic programs to topic specific workshops in assessment elements such as program goals and outcomes, assessment measures, and building program reports. Some programs areas requested a general overview of the program assessment process [exhibit 13D]. An additional general area focused on the capabilities and use of TaskStream. These sessions occurred as need and interest warranted between mid-April and the end of the spring term.

Parallel with the design and implementation of the professional development opportunities, the CFG began the process of drafting and refining procedures and working drafts of templates that would frame the assessment structure, process, and annual cycle. The CFG work focused on setting a target date of September 15, 2015 as the first time the University would work toward a common deadline for all programs, with a common set of expectations, and a common structure for program assessment reports. This meant that programs would be asked to pilot over the next six months draft element of the process and reporting. This truncated process would be the precursor to design of an annual, twelve month process. The following elements of the University assessment process were piloted and refined in this process:

- 1) Design and revision of the 2013-14 Assessment Report Template [exhibit 14D] as the prototype for the annual assessment report;
- 2) Drafting of an Assessment Cycle Template [exhibit 15D] laying out key dates and activities in an annual assessment cycle;
- 3) Adjustment of the 2013-14 Assessment Report Template to create a truncated 2014 Academic Assessment Cycle [16D] version for use in the shortened time period between April – September 2014;
- 4) An Annual Program Assessment Report Worksheet [exhibit 17D] to help academic programs refine or draft as needed program report language for select core elements of the assessment report template; and,
- 5) Continuation of activities to support faculty based on Workshop topics [exhibit 18D] reflected in the 2013-14 Program assessment process and report elements.

In May 2014 programs were asked to participate in a second round of auditing elements of program assessment work, using the 2013-14 Assessment Report Template noted above. This audit would introduce program faculty and leadership to the report template, and provide a pilot round of use through a “paper document” serving as the report. This step was done in lieu of using TaskStream across all programs as CFG supported faculty development in use of that tool had not yet occurred. This stage of planning and development was also built on an assumption that these reports could easily roll over into future reports that could be documented in TaskStream because the template was designed and built to facilitate transfer from a Word document to Program Workspace in the AMS side of TaskStream.

A critical institutional goal of this step was to use the auditing process to help programs move toward a September 15 submission date where programs campus wide would use a common template, with common steps, common elements and a common process. This audit and report development stage would represent a progression from the March audit and report development as programs would be able to build on the work done then, refine elements in place, and continue to draft and develop elements not in place previously.

Programs submitted the May 2014 reports to their deans, who submitted them to the VPIAE [these hardcopy reports are available for onsite review]. This step would reinforce the importance of assessment as an academic process and work done as part of the stewardship of the academy and academic programs, and the importance of the intellectual contexts in which academic assessment is done. Also, the primary focus at this point was introducing and reinforcing participation in the process, elements of the assessment cycle, and the elements of the program assessment reporting structure. By virtue of compiling information and preparing a report based on the template, program faculty and leadership would have done a “walk through” of the components of an annual process and report. This step in the process also served as a drafting round, for the reports that were to be submitted in September 2014. (Because this was a drafting process, the reports were not analyzed in the same way as in the March audit and the September reports described below. Examples of these drafts can be made available during the Focused Visit in May.)

At this stage program faculty and leadership were explicitly asked to not draft text or narrative for elements not in place, but to focus first on refining what was in place, and to lay the groundwork for longer term development of missing elements. The first priority was to strengthen and improve upon what was in place (to build from existing successes or from elements with some evidence of building success). From that work programs would build toward “filling in gaps” based on capacity building and support used in the areas of strength.

There was also an explicit press by the CFG to begin institutionalizing the use of TaskStream. (By this point the University had committed to a campus-wide license, a budget to support its purchase, and the process of creating the technical capacity for the implementation of the tool as noted earlier in this document. Thus, the CFG and institutional leadership could ensure for end users the viability and institutional support for the tool.)

By virtue of engaging in these steps, program areas continued the process of drafting the report due September 15, and the CFG would have more focused sense of how to focus their support and assistance for the drafting and revision stages. For program areas that needed assistance with “to-be-developed” components, the CFG continued to focus support efforts on those areas and ensure that every effort was made to help faculty and academic leadership successfully draft and compile the program reports. The CFG and academic leadership also factored into the process regularly that the 2014 assessment cycle being piloted was a compressed cycle (i.e. year-long cycle under normal circumstances being compressed into six-months as a pilot process building toward September 15 submission of reports). The CFG and leadership were confident that there was sufficient time and support in place for programs to document the elements they already had in place and identify elements that in need of further development and revision. There was also a general understanding that along with the implementation of the templates, cycle and process were also engaging in “continuous improvement.” As part of that continuous improvement, we knew at this stage that in some cases the reports produced by September 15 may not reflect in their evidence achievement of “desired” or “best” practices, but by articulating current practices and results we were engaged in the continuous improvement process toward those best practices as an institution.

The program review and auditing processes that took place in March and May of 2014 provided the baseline for participation by all program areas in the assessment process. (As programs learned to use and implement TaskStream that tool was increasingly used for the reporting auditing process.) TaskStream now provides the basis for the submission process and for screening and auditing submissions, and the presence and substance of program report elements.

These program reviews and audits served as screening tools for the CFG to prioritize program support, with primary emphases being placed on helping programs to develop missing or under-developed elements of the program assessment reports. The reviews and audits also provided mechanisms for providing deans, program leaders and faculty with reviews of individual program assessment practices and the program reporting process.

## Critical Friends 2014 Summer Academy

In addition to the ongoing development of the Critical Friends role and the structure to support the assessment process throughout the spring of 2014, the CFG also began identifying their professional development needs and the needs of colleagues to whom they were providing support. Several CFG work sessions were devoted to analyzing the open-ended responses and recommendations related to faculty support needs elicited in the initial March 2014 audit process and cross-referencing the summary list to the needs the group identified specific to the role of a Critical Friend. This process led to identification of the knowledge and skills the group believed should be developed during the 2014 Summer Academy, including:

- 1) Knowledge of assessment of learning;
- 2) Development of the of key components of program assessment plans;
- 3) Effective strategies for delivering embedded professional development;
- 4) Skills related to the use of TaskStream's Accountability Management System (AMS) to develop and archive program assessment plans and results; and,
- 5) The use of TaskStream Learning Achievement Tools (LAT) to create performance-based assessment rubrics and portfolios to document student achievement of learning outcomes, and generate reports on student performance aligned with program outcomes, discipline-specific standards, and national accreditation standards.

The general goals for the Academy were to develop CFG members' knowledge and skills to:

- Participate in assessment of learning.
- Participate in the program and course assessment process.
- Deliver embedded professional development to support the efforts of colleagues in the context of the assessment process.
- Utilize TaskStream Accountability Management System (AMS) to develop and archive program assessment.
- Utilize the Learning Achievement Tools (LAT) to develop assessments of learning and reports of assessment results.

The CFG conveners worked with the VPIAE to organize identified knowledge and skills into a set of major topics and verified these topics with the larger CFG before designing the basic structure for the three days of professional development. The major topics were captured in broad categories that provided an organizing focus for each day of the Academy:

- Day 1 -- Program-Level Assessment;
- Day 2 -- Course-Level Assessment; and,
- Day 3 -- "Closing the Loop" (see schedule below).

The conveners collaborated on the framework for the professional development and selection of supporting resources, with one convener taking primary responsibility for developing the content and activities for each of the three days of professional development and serving as the facilitator for the three sessions of the Academy. Each major topic was introduced using materials that could be employed by CFG members in their work with faculty, followed by a collaborative application activity, and reporting out on the utility of the information and the activity for improvement of the training.

Critical Friends were encouraged to attend sessions with other CFG members in their units to facilitate this collaboration. With a few exceptions, collaboration was supported by multiple faculty members from each unit and/or program attending the same session [exhibit 19D]. Collaborative “integrated application activities” were designed to simulate a help session with faculty and were guided by a “worksheet” that participants were asked to download from the website to capture work they could then reference or use in the future. Each worksheet summarized key points, asked CFs to assess their own program assessment process and components of their own program assessment plan components against a “checklist” of best practices, and engaged CFG members in designing or refining the process or a component. Participants were strongly encouraged to work collaboratively and contact colleagues who were not CFs or were attending a different session as needed for information and or consultation. They were also encouraged to use this as an opportunity to identify program needs related to the process and/or components in preparation for work with the larger program faculty prior to the start of the 2014-2015 academic year.

The Academy topics related to the focus on program-level assessment on Day 1 were organized to reflect the order of sections in a Program Annual Assessment Report workspace in the TaskStream AMS, while the topics related to the focus on course-level assessment on Day 2 were organized to reflect the structure of an AMS Course Assessment and Action Plan workspace. As a result, in the morning of Day 1 the structure led participants from consideration of the institutional mission, goals, and context to development of the program mission, to program goals and outcomes, to alignment of courses to program goals and outcomes, to measures of program goals and outcomes, to target performance on measures, and concluded with a focus on the annual assessment cycle and process for involving stakeholders. On the morning of Day 2 the structure led participants from consideration of the development of course learning outcomes, to alignment of course learning outcomes to program outcomes and professional standards, to measures of course learning outcomes, to the use of the LAT to design and manage assessments of learning outcomes. The structure for the morning of Day 3 had participants begin with analysis of the results of measures of course learning outcomes and moved to connecting those results to the assessment of program outcomes and recommendations and an action plan for improvement. Each afternoon was organized for CFG members to work collaboratively to apply information and resources to develop or refine assessment components and/or use the TaskStream AMS or LAT with support from the facilitator, the TaskStream Coordinator, and CF colleagues. Each day of the Academy closed with a debriefing discussion focused on assessing the professional development and considering the implications for the CFG.

Based on the debriefing discussions during the first session, minor improvements were made for subsequent sessions. The most important outcome of the debriefing sessions was the generation of a summary report [exhibit 20D] with recommendations for:

- Improving campus communications and “messaging” related to assessment;
- Effective use of TaskStream tools;
- Strategies for motivating faculty to engage in assessment;
- Resources needed to support ongoing professional development for CFGs and faculty; and,
- Next steps and challenges for the CFG.

These recommendations informed the action plan for continued CFG efforts and were also shared with the President’s Cabinet and the Deans Council (Academic Affairs).

Summer 2014 Critical Friends Academy  
Schedule (June 24 – 26, July 15 – 17, July 24 – 26)

<b>Day 1 Program-Level Assessment</b>	<b>Day 2 Course-Level Assessment</b>	<b>Day 3 “Closing the Loop”</b>
<p><b>9: 00 – 10:00 Overview of Academy, Role of Critical Friends</b> Embedded professional development</p> <p><b>10:00 – 12:00 Developing the Program Assessment Plan and Annual Assessment Cycle</b> The” Big Picture” Individual components</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction &amp; discussion</li> <li>• Integrated application activities*</li> <li>• AMS program workspace “tour”</li> </ul> <p>Program Mission Statement Program Goals and Outcomes Curriculum Mapping (when/where do measures occur - institutional, program,</p>	<p><b>9:00 – 11:00 Course Learning Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction &amp; discussion</li> <li>• Integrated application activities*</li> <li>• AMS course workspace “tour”</li> </ul> <p>Elements of good learning outcomes Developing and refining learning outcomes Assessing learning outcomes Mapping and aligning learning outcomes to program outcomes and professional standards</p> <p>Developing Measures (what kind, when/where will measures be administered, how will data be managed)</p> <p><b>11:00 – 12:00 Introduction</b></p>	<p><b>9:00 – 11:00 Assessment Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Introduction &amp; discussion</li> <li>•Integrated application activities*</li> <li>•AMS course workspace “tour”</li> </ul> <p>Analyzing and Understanding Course Assessment Results Assessing course outcomes Measures/assessments Summarizing findings, substantiating evidence Generating recommendations and an action plan for improvement Analyzing and Understanding Program Assessment Results Assessing program goals and</p>

<p>or course level)</p> <p>Direct and Indirect Measures</p> <p>Setting Levels of Performance/Performance Standards</p> <p>Assessment Cycle Timelines (when does what happen in the program)</p> <p>Key roles and responsibilities for program stakeholders</p> <p><b>*Participants use own program materials, work with other program faculty where possible</b></p>	<p><b>to Learning Achievement Tools (LAT)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rubrics</li> <li>• Surveys &amp; Forms</li> <li>• Portfolios</li> <li>• Webpages</li> </ul> <p><b>*Participants use own course materials, work with other program faculty where possible</b></p>	<p>outcomes</p> <p>Measures/assessments</p> <p>Summarizing findings, substantiating evidence</p> <p>Generating recommendations and an action plan for improvement</p> <p><b>11:00 – 12:00 Introduction to LAT Reporting</b></p> <p><b>*Participants use own program materials, work with other program faculty where possible</b></p>
<b>12:00 – 1:00 Lunch</b>	<b>12:00 – 1:00 Lunch</b>	<b>12:00 – 1:00 Lunch</b>
<p><b>1:00 – 4:00</b></p> <p>Work on developing/refining individual program assessment components with support.</p> <p>Assessing the professional development – implications for Critical Friends.</p>	<p><b>1:00 – 4:00</b></p> <p>Work on developing/refining course outcomes and measures and/or using LAT with support.</p> <p>Assessing the professional development – implications for Critical Friends.</p>	<p><b>1:00 – 4:00</b></p> <p>Work on analysis and representation of results with support.</p> <p>Assessing the professional development – implications for Critical Friends.</p>

All Academy materials and resources were made available for the facilitator and participating CFs in the “Summer2014 Critical Friends Academy” section of the Critical Friends website in TaskStream. Using the website during the professional development was an intentional effort to familiarize CFs with the organization and content of professional development materials and resources for later use when supporting colleagues in their units and across campus.

### **FSU Critical Friends Group Website**

<https://www.taskstream.com/ts/dempsey12/CriticalFriendsResources> [exhibit 05L]

The CFG website was launched in fall 2013 as a resource for the development of the CFG members. The CFG co-conveners took the lead on creating the website using the TaskStream Folios tool and collaborated with the larger CFG to make decisions about what resources needed to be readily accessible and how those resources should be organized. In addition, while the website is organized to support the development of the CFG and their capacity to support the assessment process on our campus, it is also viewed as (1) a strategy for making the purpose and the work of the CFG transparent to all Fairmont State faculty and administrators, and (2) a strategy for making resource materials available campus wide for use by all faculty,

administrators and staff during the development of the assessment system. The website URL has been disseminated to all FSU faculty and administrators.

The current structure of the website has grown from a simple repository designed to share information related to CFG meetings (upcoming meeting dates, agendas, meeting materials) to include resources developed or selected to support the work of the CFG as they engage and support colleagues in their units in the assessment process.

The original structure of the website included the following sections:

- Meeting Announcements
- Meeting Materials
- Resources

The current structure of the website includes the following sections:

- Meeting Announcements
- Meeting Materials
- Program Assessment Report Review Materials
- Summer 2014 Critical Friends Academy
  - Academy Schedule & Participant Roster
  - Basic Assessment Resources
  - TaskStream Handbooks & Materials
  - Day 1: Focus on Programs
  - Day 2: Focus on Courses & Measures
  - Day 3: Focus on “Closing the Loop”
  - 2014 Academy Debriefing Report
  - 2014 Academy Participant Evaluation Results
- General Resources
- General Studies Resources

#### Program Assessment Report Review Materials [exhibit 06L]

This section of the website includes instructions for CFG members conducting reviews of Program Assessment Reports (PARs), resources to support the review of elements of the PAR, and the most recent PAR audit results. The instructions section includes the list of reviewer assignments, the general charge to reviewers, the review form, and the technical instructions for completing the form. In addition, supportive materials for each element of the Program Assessment Report are also included in the order they appear in the PAR structure: Mission Statement, Goals and Outcomes, Measures, Findings and Recommendations. These materials were developed for the Summer Academy and are



familiar to the CFG members who discussed and interacted with the content of the informational materials and completed the worksheets for their own programs as practice for supporting other faculty. Finally, the most recent version of the PAR audit results chart is also made available.

#### Summer 2014 Critical Friends Academy [exhibit 04L]

The CFG began considering the structure and content of the Summer Academy in the spring of 2014; CFG leadership took the group's recommendations and designed the professional development that was approved by the larger group. The Academy was delivered during the three-day Academy (offered 3 times to accommodate all CFG members). This section of the website was developed to support delivery of this professional development and to make all training materials accessible to CFG members and all Fairmont State faculty, administrators and staff. In addition to information (the Academy schedule and participant roster) and a set of basic resources that were used across all three days of training (Bloom's Taxonomy, AAHE's Principles for Assessment, the Glossary adopted by the CFG, etc.) the other resources were organized around a daily focus (program assessment, assessment of courses and selection/development of measures, and "closing the loop"). At the close of each three-day session, the notes from the daily debriefing discussions were compiled and a comprehensive summary report was created and shared with university leadership, along with the results from the Academy participant evaluation survey. These artifacts are also included in this section.

#### General Resources [07L]

Throughout the development of the critical friend role, this section of the website was used as a place to post materials recommended by members of the CF group or developed by the group. Most of these general resources were included in the Academy.

#### Resources for Assessment of General Studies [08L]

While three members of the CF group represent the General Studies Committee, the delivery and assessment of the General Studies program is a campus wide endeavor. Resources specific to the assessment of General Studies or "Gen Ed" programs are included in this section.

### **Program Assessment Reports (Results of Six Month Pilot Assessment Cycle)**

The fall 2014 term began with a focus on helping programs to submit program assessment reports as seamlessly and smoothly as possible. This stage of the process included the first widespread use of TaskStream coupled with the application of the standard assessment report template (built into TaskStream). During the fall 2014 Faculty Development Week (the week before the start of classes) college and schools voluntarily set aside time to engage in assessment work and update and edit program assessment reports in anticipation of the September 15 due

date. (This practice of focusing time in opening week on assessment would be institutionalized for the first time as “Assessment Day” in the January 2015 Faculty Development Week agenda.)

A key goal for the start of the fall 2014 term, leading into the 2014-15 academic year, was to ensure as much as possible that all academic programs were participating in the full assessment cycle, and had built or were building all components of the program assessment process. Elements expected to be present to meet this set of outcomes included (as reflected in the report template and built into TaskStream):

#### Standing Requirements

1. The program’s Mission Statement? (Articulated as appropriate alignment with University vision/mission statements)
2. The program goals and outcomes? (Articulated as appropriate alignment with University goals and outcomes)

#### Annual Assessment Cycle

3. Program Assessment Plan – how is each program goal or outcome measured?

Goals/Outcomes

Measures

Where is the Goal/Outcome Measured (at Program Level, Course Level – in which courses?)

Direct or Indirect Measures

Details/Description

Satisfactory and Ideal Performance Standard

Timeline (when during the assessment cycle, where in the program – early, middle, late?)

Key/Responsible Personnel

#### Program Assessment Results

4. Assessment Findings Per Measure – how does the assessment data inform program improvement?
5. Overall Recommendations: For the program; For the program assessment process?
6. Master Syllabi
7. External Advisory Board (if the Program has one, include a brief description of the role of the Board and a list of members)
8. Faculty Vitae
9. Other Marks of Excellence

Academic programs were asked to submit their reports in one of two ways, both using TaskStream as the primary tool:

- 1) Programs that had been using TaskStream previously, or that had built report components in TaskStream during the review and auditing steps, would continue to write and refine their work in the TaskStream space.
- 2) Programs that had continued to use hard copy documentation in lieu of TaskStream were asked to capture their documentation electronically (e.g. MS Word documents and PDF) and upload it in the TaskStream “General Information” space for their program.

In this stage we stressed as much as possible (without creating obstructive stress) the importance of using TaskStream in the reporting process [exhibits 21D & 22D]. We knew that in terms of practical application and the variation in experience and comfort with using the tool that we would likely get reports in three forms:

- 1) Programs that were building all their assessment work in TaskStream would use the AMS program workspace template;
- 2) Programs that were moving to use of TaskStream would use a combination of components of the AMS program workspace and hard copy documentation of the Program Report Template; and
- 3) Programs that would use hard copy documentation only.

Program faculty and leadership had access to detailed instructions for both of the program report submission options, and CFG members were available to help faculty and academic leadership complete the process and document work using either template. As much as possible we wanted this to be completed within the academic units as stewardship of their academic work, and support the academic programs in “owning the task.”

While the September 15 goal served as a “date-certain” in terms of focusing on the process and cycle, we knew that in practical terms it would be a floating deadline as all programs would not meet the deadline. The CFG did not exhibit flexibility in terms of publically adjusting the timeline, but did work with programs to submit their reports as close to September 15 as possible. As a pilot process, we knew there would be variability in meeting the date-certain given the range of capacity for engaging in the assessment process and developing assessment reports. Of the reports received, most were submitted by the date requested, but some were posted over approximately the next thirty days.

Also given the variability in capacity and experience, the CFG decided that in the first run through the pilot process, the focus would be on BA/BS programs and graduate programs. The focus in the process on associate degrees and minors would be deferred to the 2014-15 cycle.

After submission of the reports, the CFG established a procedure for engaging in a cursory peer-analysis of the assessment reports, and in the process producing an “audit” of progress. While the more detailed and nuanced intellectual critique and analyses of assessment was conducted within academic, disciplinary program areas, the CFG determined that it was important to have at least a cursory scan of the reports by a faculty member from outside the program area to check for the presence of report elements and to provide an additional layer of feedback beyond that generated within the academic program. CFG members have opportunities to do this in collaborative peer support sessions.

These reviews were conducted on a volunteer basis by members of the CFG, with the vast majority offering to be reviewers. This review step (Technical Instructions for Completing and Submitting Program Report Review Forms [exhibit 23D]) included the following components:

- Nature of the submission (TaskStream Workspace or attached documentation in the TaskStream General Information section);
- Verification through a checklist of the presence (Present, partially present, or not present) of the report elements (Mission Statement; Program Goals; Program Outcomes; Measures for Goals; Measures for Outcomes; Findings for Measures; and Recommendations);
- Each CFG reviewer provided questions about the report that could serve to strengthen the assessment work and the report;
- Each CFG reviewer was asked to provide “lessons learned” from the report that the CFG member could take back to their own program area and program assessment process.

These initial reviews were then posted in the academic program’s workspace in TaskStream to be made available to the academic program faculty and leadership. The compilation of these reviews produced an audit matrix [exhibit 24D] to be used to work with academic leaders and program faculty to identify missing components and focus subsequent work and support efforts to improve the assessment process over the subsequent cycle. The matrix is a working document, used to reflect over time (through updates) refinement work being done within the academic programs. This document is also shared with the Faculty Senate to apprise and update them on the process’s development and improvement.

Through the work of the CFG and the ongoing capacity building and support provided to program faculty and leadership, programs are now supported by a campus-wide system of support for learning assessment, program assessment, and guidelines for an assessment cycle. In 2014 graduate programs for the first time used a common cycle, a common template for program components, and consistent expectations for learning assessment and program assessment. The process, cycle and expectations developed in 2014 were piloted (on a truncated six month cycle) and are being repeated in the 2014-15 academic year. Programs are already involved in this year’s cycle, having participated in the initial reporting process through September 2014.

[Note: During the site visit live program assessment reports will be available in TaskStream.]

### **Next Steps to Improve the Assessment Process**

After initial review of the results of the 2014 assessment cycle work, the VPIAE and the CFG conveners drafted a set of immediate and longer term “next steps” to strengthen the assessment process, supporting templates and documents, and the cycle and preparation of program reports. During the spring 2015 term these next steps have been shared and discussed in draft form with the President and Vice-Presidents, and with the leadership in Academic Affairs. This includes the Provost, Deans, Associate Deans and Chairs/Coordinators. The next steps have also been shared and discussed in the Faculty Senate. These next steps will provide direction for

continuous improvement of the process and structure over the remainder of the 2014-15 academic year and into the next and include the following:

### Immediate Steps

- 1) Convene the original members of CFG members to review status of the reports and reviews. (Subsequent meetings will include the full membership.)
- 2) Reiterate and reinforce the commitment that must come from Academic Affairs and academic programs to use the structures and tools that have been built to engage in assessment of learning.
- 3) Encourage/ strongly recommend to programs that faculty and leadership use existing five-year reviews, accreditation reports or documents, Board of Governors reports to do the following:
  - a. Attach these documents and any related documentation in the General Information space in TaskStream;
  - b. Attach any recommendations or program approval/accreditation letters, other such documentation, and other forms of recognition in the “marks of excellence” or “additional documentation” sections of the annual report in TaskStream;
  - c. Extract (and cut-and-paste) any language from such documents that can be used in program report components such as the mission statement, program goals and outcomes, findings, recommendations, etc. in Program Assessment Report workspaces in TaskStream.

[Any edits or revisions to TaskStream reports can be added to the assessment matrix as completed. This process will also establish TaskStream as a central archive and tool for the range of program review and assessment reports created for multiple audiences and purposes.]
- 4) Share with the deans the (1) full audit matrix, and (2) college/school specific subsets of programs; Reinforce to deans, chairs, and coordinators that they can access reports in TaskStream.
- 5) Review and update as needed program reviews from the 2013-2014 cycle to confirm correct auditing of results.
- 6) Simplify the matrix audit table by removing the “Not Present” column and the “Present” cell in the columns.
- 7) Continue to press programs to fill in missing elements of the 2013-2014 templates and reports; this will facilitate “rolling” the framework of the program assessment plan (outcomes and measures) to the 2014-2015 annual assessment cycle.
- 8) From the summary matrix of report reviews, identify priorities for elements (columns) of the program reports where we will focus program and faculty support (e.g. missions statements, program goals, findings, recommendations).
- 9) Re-map the program list in the audit against the current and 2015-16 catalog to identify majors, minors and other programs that need to be incorporated into the process.

- 10) Revise the CFG reviewer form to include a “Partial” column for report components (rather than “Not Present column). This designation will denote areas where some work or incomplete work has been archived and can provide the basis for ongoing revision and updating. This category will not be included on the audit matrix (the matrix will only denote completed work in the future).

#### Longer Term Steps

- 1) Reinforce the use of University-level goals and learning outcomes language in the design, practice and improvement of the assessment process and development of program practices and reporting.
- 2) Establish in the use of the matrix a CFG-level focus on the “column” elements (i.e. the elements of the program assessment process and cycle) and academic leadership and faculty focus on “rows” (i.e. the content for and process of generating program assessments).
- 3) Reinforce the importance of program level focus and engagement in continuous improvement (“working the assessment cycle”).
- 4) Initiate where necessary and invigorate as needed with faculty the use of “course” space in TaskStream as a design tool, and resource to build and implement course level assessments; reinforce the importance of using the course space as an assessment tool and a tool for building program assessment.
- 5) Design and set up a schedule for a “rolling review” process so that each year program areas review subsets of assessment report elements (e.g. subsets of goals/outcomes) rather than the full set archived in TaskStream (measures and data will continue to be archived each year).
- 6) CFG members will review and revise the assessment cycle templates as needed.
- 7) Reinforce the importance of focusing on three levels of assessment work: University; colleges and schools; and programs and courses.
- 8) Continue to offer professional development activities for CFG members and faculty in general in priority areas identified from 2013-14 cycle reports, and from preliminary information gleaned from the 2014-15 cycle.
- 9) Draft, review, and adopt (through the Faculty Senate) a University statement on assessment of learning; institutionalize the process through this statement.

## STRATEGIC FOCUS ON ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION

### Introduction

As noted earlier in this report in the discussion of institutional challenges and context, Fairmont State University has been experiencing a pattern of enrollment decline. This is in part driven by declining population in West Virginia generating a multi-year decrease in the number of high school graduates in the state. In the fall of 2013, this decline created a negative impact on the University's budget in terms of revenue generation.

The impetus for more refined planning and action also came in part from annual data tracking required by the WV Higher Education Policy Commission (WV HEPC). The University is required to report each fall to WV HEPC on "metrics" related to enrollment, retention, and student academic progress. These metrics include:

<u>Enrollment</u> Fall Headcount Annualized FTE Fall First-Time Freshmen Headcount Fall Low-Income Student Headcount Fall Underrepresented Racial/Ethnic Group Total Fall Adult (25+) Headcount	<u>Retention</u> Full-Time, First-Time Freshmen Part-time, First-Time Freshmen Low-Income First-Time Freshmen Returning Adults Transfer Students Underrepresented Racial/Ethnic Group Total Progress Toward Degree First-Time Freshmen Earning 30 Hours
<u>Four-Year Graduation Rate</u> First-Time Freshmen Low-Income First-Time Freshmen Returning Adults Transfer Students Underrepresented Racial/Ethnic Group Total	<u>Six-Year Graduation Rate</u> First-Time Freshmen Low-Income First-Time Freshmen Returning Adults Transfer Students Underrepresented Racial/Ethnic Group Total

This process with WV HEPC includes "aspirational targets" for these metrics, to be pursued through 2018. (Annual Metrics Pre-2013 [exhibit 24D] and Annual Metrics 2013-14 [exhibit 25D])

Also as noted in the prior discussion of the University budget and the arbitration with and separation from Pierpont Community and Technical College, the enrollment challenge has been exacerbated by the University's relationship with PCTC. PCTC has experienced the same enrollment decline pattern, and the declining enrollment there has negatively impacted Fairmont State through the chargeback agreements. Thus, in the last two fiscal years (FY14 and FY15) the University has faced the dual challenge of effecting budget reductions tied to enrollment at the same time it has addressed budget reductions related to reduced chargeback revenue tied to enrollment and the provision of shared services.

Given these conditions, University leadership determined that, on the basis of fall 2014 enrollment data and its potential impact in the short term and long terms, strategic efforts would focus on changing the pattern in recruitment and admissions, enrollment, and retention as the first steps in building a stronger infrastructure for enhancing the student experience at Fairmont State, with a central goal of reversing enrollment decline. University leadership also concluded that given limited and likely declining resources in the short term (and its subsequent impact on operational support, staff support, and budget flexibility) the best investment in the short term was to focus strategic efforts initially on enhancing the student academic and general University experience, and with that commit to planning and action that would improve enrollment patterns.

### **Campus Collaborative for Recruitment and Retention**

Initial planning went into creating a campus-wide review, planning and implementation process to better integrate roles and responsibilities across Academic Affairs and Student Services. This collaborative strategy would bring to the table and the decision-making process a cross section of stewards of the student experience in student services areas, student life areas, and academic programming. This structure would also serve to address a need on campus to enhance communication and collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Services. This was particularly important in activities, processes and procedures that require direct collaboration such as recruiting, orientations, Welcome Weekend (first-time students), and retention efforts. To ensure the group had an understanding of institutional data, how it is generated, and how to employ it in this process, representatives from Information Technology, including the Vice-President and CIO, participated. CCRR's work would and does include an intensified, campus-wide examination and use of data at the full range of 'touch points' in the student experience. ("Touch points" is a term used in CCRR work to identify the critical events, activities, and process steps where potential and current students are engaged in the student experience continuum.)

To work toward constructive strategies to confront these challenges, and to engage in ways that reflected this collaborative intent, the Vice-President for Student Services and the Vice-President for Institutional Assessment and Effectiveness convened, in November 2013, the "Campus Collaborative for Recruitment and Retention" (CCRR). The central goal of this effort was to establish a cross-University team representing a broad spectrum of roles and functions to focus on:

- 1) Current enrollment challenges facing the University;
- 2) Introductory review and analysis of existing and available data, and determination of needed but not yet existing data; and,
- 3) Creating and fostering campus wide stewardship of the student experience in such a way to enhance recruitment, admission, enrollment and retention.

The group was created to engage and continues to engage in efforts to review, revise, implement and act in reasonable ways – supported by best practices research and evidence – that will enhance enrollment, retention, and student success. CCRR's efforts are also framed by a commitment to designing and implementing a long range plan to support strategic enrollment growth and sustainability patterns. The group engages in strategies that support a collaborative,



cohesive working culture to support the student experience, in particular between Academic Affairs and Student Services, supported by resources based in Information Technology (i.e. institutional data and research). The group also provides an intersection for facilitating coherent working relationships between central administrative roles and faculty and support services within units that are at touch points with current and potential students, with a priority on making sure “things work” at the touch points for students, faculty and staff. CCRR operates from a working assumption that building a stronger , intentionally intersected academic and student support services culture that ensures success – from the first contact with a potential student through the declaration of the major -- will enhance the ability of faculty and academic leadership, in strong collaboration with Student Services, to continue that momentum through completion of the degree.

CCRR believes that it is important that as we as a University plan for and engage in this work we reflect a set of key constructs that are part of our aspirational identity at Fairmont State University. We believe that if we can model and honor these values from our first contact with potential students, through their academic and student life, (and later through their relationships with us as alumni) we will realize greater successes in all aspects of our students’ academic and student life experiences. This will be the foundation of enhanced recruitment and admissions, enrollment and matriculation success. Those key constructs articulated in Fairmont State’s vision and mission statements, and its core values, include:

nationally recognized	acting with integrity	achievement
excellent teaching	respecting diversity	transforming lives
accessible	promoting the common good	full and participatory citizenship
learner-centered institution	responsible citizenship	critical thinking
superior support services	informed worldview	intellectual growth
flexible learning environments	grow, learn, engage and discover	personal and community goals
entrepreneurship	transparency	mutually responsible conduct
employability	discovery & rigorous scholarship	student success

CCRR adopted in its initial steps (November-December 2013) a set of working assumptions to be used by the group, at least in its early stages.

- The group would be convened by the VP for Student Services and the VP for Institutional Assessment and Effectiveness.
- CCRR would be open to, seek out and engage “doers and rain makers,” from across the University who want to take action to support the student experience.
- The work would incorporate as much as possible key point people in the organizational structure of the University (from Student Services, academic leaders, units and programs, and Information Technology).

- Anyone who served on prior enrollment and retention committees would be asked and invited to participate to respect and provide continuity with their work.
- Success with enrollment would be built on the quality of and success in the broader student experience at Fairmont State.
- All kinds of knowledge and all kinds of experiences would be embraced to “do what works”.
- People at different touch points with current and potential students would need structure and resources that work for them in their contexts and that are not “cookie cut” or bureaucratized for organizational convenience.
- Everything could “go on the table” for discussion, with no ideas rejected out-of-hand.
- The status quo cannot be sustained or rejected without at least minimal evidence that it works.
- When we have “enough” evidence that an idea can work we advocate for it and try to implement it.
- When we have enough evidence we should stop doing something we stop (at least temporarily).
- If resources are currently insufficient to the tasks or new resources needed to jump-start an idea (one-time commitments) we make a case for them.
- CCRR members would commit to regular work sessions (initially every two weeks) with full day work sessions when needed and practical (as a matter of schedules).
- The work would need to be supported with help from faculty and staff who can bring research skills to the process, with a key focus on putting existing data to better use and to design and implement needed data collection and analysis strategies.

The early work of CCRR from November 2013 through mid-spring term 2014 focused on the following objectives:

- 1) Identifying immediate actions that could be taken to support enrollment growth, including review of existing data related to different touch points with potential and current students;
- 2) Identifying and implementing preliminary action steps to (based on preliminary review of evidence) increase the size of the incoming first time cohort; and,
- 3) Identifying and implementing action steps to enhance recruitment, admissions, enrollment, retention.

The longer term focus and planning objectives adopted by the group (from its inception to the present) include the following:

- 1) Creating better and more coherent framing of the experiences Fairmont State students have, how we offer and support those experiences and the way we want to brand it;

- 2) Setting and mapping long term goals and benchmarks for touch points in each phase of the student-University interaction and experience (i.e. marketing, applications, admissions, enrollment, and retention);
- 3) Enacting – and designing where necessary – a long-range data collection, management and analysis plan to support enrollment; and,
- 4) Updating and revising practices and benchmarks as needed over time.

CCRR members decided early in the process to review and consider action on existing reports produced by a prior campus-wide task force focused on enrollment and retention. That group had been convened in 2011, and produced three sets of recommendations. When CCRR convened for the first time those recommendations had not yet been considered for possible action by the University. The review of those reports and recommendations included discussion as to how to prioritize proposed actions to be taken (or if any should be taken), any actions that had already been taken (or were in the process of implementation), and any that could be taken immediately. The CCRR group created three subcommittees to review the reports and recommendations, in order to learn what CCRR could learn from the previous committees' analyses, and to implement any short term actions that could be done expeditiously. (Multiple members of the prior committees also serve on CCRR.) These reports focused on the following areas:

- Recruiting and Marketing
- First Year Experience
- Retention

Each CCRR review committee, as part of their review of the existing reports, identified: (1) recommended actions from the reports; and, (2) the data and/or research base supporting the recommendations. Synthesis of the reviews and recommendations from across the reports produced the following list of action areas for consideration by the University:

- 1) Implement re-designed First-year Seminar/University 101 course;
- 2) Support for faculty academic advising;
- 3) Academic support for students;
- 4) Redefine and create objectives for: orientation; advising; scheduling; and, recruiting;
- 5) Active involvement of academic departments in recruiting;
- 6) Faculty development in advising and assessing student needs;
- 7) Diagnostic academic skills assessment; and,
- 8) Concentrated effort to attract more international students.

CCRR reviewed, discussed, critiqued and prioritized the eight potential action areas in terms of each's potential impact on recruitment and admissions, enrollment and retention, and the potential resource issues (both existing and implied new resources) related to implementation [exhibit 26D]. This prioritization served as the basis for providing the President with a summary of the perceptions and analysis by CCRR, and as a tool for determining action steps by the University. The priority list and review of the process were shared in a summary and request for

support sent to the President and the Cabinet in January 2014 [exhibit 27D]. With the President's and Cabinet's support for continued design and planning -- given the potential resource and implementation needs considered -- CCRR chose to focus on four of the action areas noted in that memo:

- Implement re-designed First-year Seminar/University 101 course;
- Support for faculty academic advising;
- Academic support for students; and,
- Redefine and create objectives for: orientation; advising; scheduling; and, recruiting

While CCRR identified a rank order for the priorities, lower priority for a particular area did not imply the University should delete or ignore that area for subsequent planning and action. CCRR continues to discuss those and other aspects of the previous reports as potential and intended work areas. The immediate goal in the recommendations to the President was to begin discussions and implementation steps as soon as possible on items that CCRR believed would have the most immediate and positive impact on students' experiences. Those action areas had the widespread support of the CCRR members based on their constituent perspectives. Upon the President's charge in response to the memo, CCRR organized more specific steps to move toward action, and to intersect their work with related University offices and units (almost all of whom were represented in CCRR participants).

### **General Strategy**

Upon resolution of procedures to consider the work of the prior committees and their recommendations, the new strategic enrollment efforts being designed and framed by CCRR broadened to incorporate the full spectrum of the touch points in the continuum from high school recruitment (the "inquiry" stage) to completion of an academic program. Given the need to create a workable frame of reference for planning and strategy, and to be practical about available resources, CCRR participants and leadership placed particular emphases on the inquiry-to-major declaration phase, initially organizing this into three programming and process phases for students, student services and academic programs:

Phase 1: Recruiting and Admissions;

Phase 2: Orientation, Initial Registration, Transition to College (Acceptance of Admission through Welcome Weekend); and,

Phase 3: Academic and Broader FSU Experiences (1st term through entry into Major).

The initial framing of the key touch points is represented in the following chart. These served as the basis for initial review, critique and creation of common understanding of the student experience continuum across the CCRR membership and their constituent University offices and units.

Initial Working Touch Points Identified (By Interaction Phases)		
Recruitment & Admissions	Orientation, Registration, Transition into College	Student Experiences (1st term through entry into a major)
Inquiry contact	General FSU Orientation	Orientation
Individual Campus Visit	College/School Orientation	1st Year Experience activities
Campus Group Visit	Registration for 1 <sup>st</sup> term	4 week grades each term
Academic Exploration Day	Welcome Weekend -- General	Midterm grades each term
Campus Visitation Day	Welcome Weekend – College/School	Midterm advising
Application to FSU	Enrolled/Matriculation	Final grades each term
Acceptance into FSU		
Admission accepted by student		

CCRR organized the process for discussion, analyses, and recommended action around the following goals:

- Identify, confirm, and create a broader understanding of the touch points in the three phases;
- Frame what is unique in the continuums for traditional, non-traditional, and adult students as warranted;
- Define the key “moments of truth” touch points where we as a University make the most critical differences for the students and potential students;
- Determine who at Fairmont State interfaces (processes, procedures and interactions) with students at each touch point, for what purposes, and how;
- Determine best practices at each touch point, including the experiences we offer, the services that support it, and the brand that defines it;
- Review, revise as needed and establish where necessary processes for data collection, analysis, interpretation, and application;
- Collect data on students who continue at each touch point and those who disengage from the University at each stage, and from that data;
  - Establish the key goals and benchmarks for each touch point,
  - Identify the evidence that tells us how we are doing at each touch point using data such as --

The Clearinghouse and internal data,

Key data points, metrics and benchmarks reported to the WV Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC).

For analyses and to help frame information for a broader, more University-wide understanding of the different roles and responsibilities of those who provide leadership and stewardship to the work, CCRR engaged in a review of the working touch points above that included the following elements:

- The touch point;
- The point person for that touch point (typically an administrator, unit leader, staff or faculty member);
- Data used, available and needed at the touch point;
- Best practices used at that touch point (currently and potentially); and,
- Existing benchmarks for that touch points.

After establishing the working touch points CCRR members deemed it important to incorporate a broader range of potential points of interaction and service delivery to address the full scope of the student experience. This led to a more conscious effort to capture and incorporate elements such as student life, student and University organizations, retention activities, and residential life activities.

Preliminary efforts at analyses of the touch points and how they are organized and delivered included an effort by CCRR members to work with staff and leadership in academic units and student services to determine appropriate information for the touch points and the roles and responsibilities within them. The first step in this process was done in collaborative work sessions. Subsequent analyses done in greater depth around process elements for the different touch points would be moved into a subcommittee, with more direct interaction with the key touch point leaders and staff.

At this stage (January – February 2014) the work focus expanded to include more intensive efforts related to the nature of existing data support informing enrollment, student experience practices, and services. In order to support this, CCRR worked with academic, student service, and information technology units to identify faculty and staff who had expertise and experience in building, managing, and employing data sets. This included institutional data, existing programming data, and identification of needed data and instruments that did not at the time exist. The strategy also included identifying and soliciting participation from colleagues with research skills who may want to assist in creation of data collection strategies, data collection, analyses, and reporting and dissemination of research on different aspects of the student experience at Fairmont State.

In planning for the long term, and to help frame the design and structure of this “in-house” research capacity, the planning included multiple research methodologies and applications, including the following:

- Statistical Analysis and Modeling
- Survey Research
- Interview Research (Individual, Focus Group)

- Case Study
- Qualitative Research

It is important to note that two key contextual factors drove the decision to build this “in-house” strategy and capacity.

- 1) As a result of budget and resource challenges described earlier in this report, the University likely would not have funding to “purchase” services that could provide these forms of data and institutional analyses. The budgets under the Vice-Presidents supporting these efforts did not include these funds, and where they may have existed historically in institutional budgets, they were subject to reduction efforts (or had been eliminated) in ongoing budget decisions.
- 2) This challenge and the work that needed to be done to support the enrollment initiatives (and any subsequent enrollment plan) created an opportunity to focus on engaging and supporting faculty and staff research and scholarship. Many members of the CCRR engage in research and scholarship in their academic disciplines and/or in their professional service roles. This strategy created an opportunity to engage those skills and resources, and to generate institutional motivation for faculty and staff to apply their research skills to these needs. As will be noted later, the benefits of these efforts have already been realized in the creation of a collaborative faculty team from across campus who support the research needs through their knowledge and backgrounds in various forms of statistical analyses.

### **Refined Enrollment and Retention Strategic Focus**

The original analyses and planning discussions described above expanded the depth of focus on enrollment issues at the University, and served to generate additional complexity in the challenges identified and the design and planning for particular strategies. In order to better facilitate that work CCRR created two subcommittees to continue the planning, design and implementation efforts:

- 1) Analyses of the student experiences continuum touch points; and,
- 2) Data and research to support enrollment efforts.

These subcommittees, once established, framed their work as described below, continued to work across subcommittees as needed for each to inform the other of progress, and set benchmark dates for progress. The broader group considered it essential to successful planning and action that the two subcommittees ensure fidelity with each other’s work (i.e. to ensure that planning and subsequent action would be coupled with existing data or to-be-created data strategies). These groups also considered and engaged in strategies to make sure key stakeholder and constituent offices, units and groups at the University were involved. The subcommittees committed to working toward determining actionable items and setting benchmarks on working goals that could be accomplished by the end of the spring 2014 term, the beginning of the fall 2014 term, and the beginning of the fall 2015 term.

## **Student Experience Continuum Subcommittee Strategic Work**

The Student Experiences Continuum subcommittee focused (and continues in a modified manifestation described later in this document) on identifying and articulating the current state of practices the University pursues in the student services continuum and in individual touch points. Subcommittee members created a map by documenting activities and events in the continuum that currently existed or were in planning and development, and articulated as available evidence of successful practices. The process of analysis included examination of components of the continuum, how students move through the continuum, and what they experience. This process would serve to identify the pivotal moments in the continuum where the activities and services were most critical to the student experience (and therefore successful enrollment strategy), and subsequent decisions about further refinement and focus of those components. These analyses would also inform subsequent efforts in the design, planning and implementation of enrollment-related initiatives, and the work being done by the parallel research and data focused subcommittee.

The primary goal of the review of the student experience continuum was to articulate the basics of the current structure and practices as they happen at the key touch points. This would: (1) articulate to a broad audience of University faculty and staff the processes, roles and responsibilities at each touch point; (2) broaden understanding of the continuum for faculty and staff beyond the ways each might see in their individual roles; (3) generate a collaborative process for critique and improvement shared by units and offices across the University. As the review and reflection process ultimately would generate a critique of practices offered by people not typically involved in the application of those practices, the process had to strike a balance between respecting and honoring people who are doing hard work with current practices, and opening up avenues for change, redesign and improvement to be considered for action and implementation.

Ultimately, the subcommittee held to the commitment that any plan would fail if the Student Services and academic interests did not buy into a shared and collaborative plan, seeing each other as colleagues with a collective responsibility and collective stewardship of the student experience (and therefore enrollment patterns). The process for getting to “the plan” had to be about relationship building and capacity building as well as the plan itself.

As the Student Experience Continuum subcommittee conducted their analyses, they were also attentive to how what they learned could inform action on the four priorities gleaned from the University’s prior efforts at supporting enrollment, including:

- Implement re-designed First-year Seminar/University 101 course;
- Support for faculty academic advising;
- Academic support for students;
- Redefine and create objectives for orientation, advising, scheduling, and, recruiting.

The group also engaged in critique of how the process and content of each of the different touch points are defined by:



- Institutional values and commitments, and the way the CCRR work generated emergent themes to help inform the work (and how we keep these “out in front”);
- Principles undergirding “best practices” along the student experience continuum; and,
- Identification and affirmation of the key touch points (i.e. they are what we as an institution think they are) and what we need to know (research and data) about what happens at each one.

The subcommittee also communicated regularly, and at some points held joint meetings, with the Data and Research subcommittee to discuss emerging issues and needs related to existing and to-be-designed data collection and analysis that could support and inform the services and activities at the different touch points.

The expanded touch points list (including subcomponents of activities and events such as Orientation and Welcome Weekend) examined in the process includes:

- Individual Campus Visit/College/School Specific Academic Exploration Day/CVD
- FSU Admissions
- Financial Aid Workshop
- Application to Fairmont State
- Admissions/Processing
- Admission accepted by student

Orientation, Initial Registration, Transition to College

- General Fairmont State Orientation
- College/School Orientations
- Orientation to Student Employment, International Student Office, Career Development Academic Advising Center Deans & Faculty
- Financial Literacy
- Introduction to Dorm Life
- Housing
- Introduction to Student Activities (Intramurals, Clubs, Programs, Greek)
- Welcome Weekend & Greek Life
- Registration for 1st term
- Welcome Weekend – General and College/School activities
- Services during matriculation
- Retention Activities

### Student Experiences (1st term through entry into Major)

- Freshman Orientation
- College/School Specific Orientation Activities
- 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Year experiences activities
- 4 week grades
- Midterm grades
- Term final grades
- Academic Tutoring/Writing Center
- Academic Tutoring/Residence Halls
- Midterm advising/Academic Advising Center
- Survey of students with GPA below 2.5

For each of the activities and events in the continuum, the subcommittee examined practices through three lenses: (1) the current practices at the touch point (including any documents or procedural statements used in the practices); (2) the intent of those practices; and (3) critique and reflection on those practices. Summaries of these discussions and potential action items for improvement were logged by the group to create “Student Experience Charts” [exhibit 28D] to create a more detailed map of the continuum and to correlate with summary statements from the discussions. This feedback was reviewed by the offices and programming units represented in the charts, and considered for changes to processes and procedures at the particular touch points affected.

### Refinement of the Student Experiences Continuum Analyses

After preliminary discussions and planning, the subcommittee focused its design and action steps on strategies and initiatives that would reflect the core constructs and values discussed early in CCRR’s convening (identified in the University’s mission statement, vision and core values language.) The group determined that the continuing design efforts and subsequent programming action should reflect the characteristics we as a University want our students to embody (i.e. the programming we implement should “walk the walk”). These constructs should be embedded in and reflected in all the touch point components, and built into any new design and implementation work. Those constructs should be used to frame and guide the activities at the touch points, modeled in the touch points, and be evidenced in data that inform the practices at each touch point.

As planning moved into actionable items, the subcommittee synthesized the effort into three commitments as to how the design and implementation work would be framed (built on the more expansive list of constructs noted above). Those commitments that the group believes will enhance the likelihood of success in the University improving enrollment and retention metrics include:

- We exhibit evidence that we are an *engaged* University that creates a sense of *community*;
- Building and sustaining *relationships* in our programming are critical; and,
- What we do to engage students, and build and sustain relationships with students, has to be *intentional*, driven by what we say we value as an institution, and reflective of a *University culture* that reflects those values.

The subcommittee also considered basic questions that frame how the University could identify and implement “best practices.” These questions would assist the subcommittee in fine-tuning recommendations it would make for action steps and programming. These questions include:

- What are we trying to accomplish through each of the activities and touch points?
- How do the ways we do each one embrace and actualize the characteristics noted above that are part of the University culture we want to create and sustain?
- To what extent do we create engagement and relationship-building in each one?
- What experiential outcomes, targets or benchmarks do we set for each of the activities and touch points?
- Do the experiences have the elements of practice we implement (that we know lead to successful recruiting, admitting and retaining students)?
- Do the activities and touch points lead to targets or indicators of success we set (related to recruiting, enrolling and retaining students)?

The group engaged in a process to review existing programs and initiatives on other, similar campuses that had generated a positive impact on enrollment and retention, and that were structured in ways that reflected the constructs noted above. On the basis of this review, the subcommittee chose to refine its efforts within the four priorities to adopt the following strategies.

- To design and implement (and refine where activities already exist) a “First Year Experience” (FYE). The FYE would include two major components: 1) a First-Year Seminar; and 2) a Passport Program for first time students.
- To examine, and consider for implementation, “Appreciative Advising” as a model to focus and strengthen advising at the University.
- To continue the process of reviewing and revising as necessary activities, processes and procedures in the student experiences continuum that can enhance the student experience and University success in enrollment and retention.

### General Design of the First-Year Experience

Plans for the seminar and Passport include design elements that will interface with campus-wide offices and services, academic units, community partnerships and engagement/service components. The purpose of the FYE is to assist new students in making a successful transition

to and through FSU, both academically and personally. The use of the term “first-year” is intentional, and is meant to refer to all students new to the University or new to re-entry into the college experience at FSU. The terms “freshman” or “freshmen” are intentionally not used as they are typically not inclusive all of “first year” students.

The FYE design incorporates the following goals for new students at Fairmont State:

1. Promoting academic success;
2. Developing a sense of belonging;
3. Establishing a sense of identity;
4. Fostering citizenship; and,
5. Instilling a global perspective.

[Note: In the subsections below, the Seminar focuses on the first three goals and the Passport on all five. This reflects a strategic decision to design the Seminar to focus more intensively on reinforcing those three goals as part of the FYE.]

The two basic components of the FYE – the Seminar and the Passport – are described below. Each component has a design team, co-chaired by a person from Student Services and a person from an academic unit. Both design teams include representation from academic programs, and offices and units instrumental in delivering Seminars and Passport components. Participating programs, offices and units include:

Admission and Recruiting	Residence Life
Academic Advising Center	University Communications
Career Development Services	
Falcon Center (Recreation Center)	Academic Colleges and Schools
Financial Aid	Liberal Arts
Information Technology	Science and Technology
International Student Services	Business
Student Data & Information Processing	Education, Health & Human Performance
Office of the Registrar	Fine Arts
Office of Retention	Nursing & Allied Health Administration

These design teams are currently in the process of creating their respective components, and drafting procedures and practices to be used. The two design teams also continue to collaborate with each other to maintain coherency in the broader design of the FYE plan.

## First-Year Seminar

As part of a strategy for building the FYE for supporting students' successful transition into college through academic major selection, CCCR recommended the redesign and implementation of a first-year seminar. The design of the seminar structure allows for sections tailored to different student groups' needs and interests. This includes options to tailor activities (built around the outcomes noted above) to the needs and interests of different sub-populations of students.

Planning and design for the Seminar component includes a broad spectrum of University programs that will potentially offer seminar sections, or be directly involved in design core components of Seminar content. As incorporated in preliminary design strategies, academic units participate in the design and potential delivery of seminar options embedded in introductory and special topics courses (e.g. STEM foci, career pathways). Student Services offices and programs will be able to participate through seminar options built through student interests and student life communities, for example residence life/residence hall settings, international programming, and student recreation-based contexts (e.g. the existing seminar "Wilderness Explorer" integrated with Outdoor Recreation). Clubs and organizations, and groups external to the University could also be partners in the design and delivery of seminar options. All seminars, regardless of context, will have common goals and pedagogical commitments.

The seminars will be based in pedagogies that reflect learner-centered, experiential, engaged student development. Different sections (and student choices) will include a range of exploratory emphases (general seminars) and academic/student life sections (special topics/context/academic program specific). Planning examples of different types of seminar sections include:

- Sections for undeclared students who can benefit from a general seminar;
- Sections for students who have chosen to pursue specific academic programs (built into program intro/early courses);
- Sections designed around learning communities;
- Sections based in residential communities; and,
- Special topics sections.

All seminar sections, regardless of the design focus and particular student group around which it might be framed, will integrate the following common goals (from the FYE goals):

- 1) Promoting academic success;
- 2) Developing a sense of belonging; and,
- 3) Establishing a sense of identity.

Each individual section will have course-based assessments that provide data to an aggregate data set on the learning outcomes built around the three goals. At the institutional level, key

data will be: 1) first-year retention; 2) rate of progress toward identification of an academic major; and 3) enrollment trends as cohorts go through the seminar experience and FYE.

During the fall 2014 a small group of faculty in two academic programs (Psychology and Education) began design efforts to revise sections of introductory courses so that they could pilot the intro course-based seminar option in the spring 2015 term. The long range goal is to follow piloting and wider implementation with a goal that all first-year students enroll in a seminar. This decision to move toward mandatory participation will be based on the analysis of data from initial pilot and implementation phases.

A preliminary process for cost estimates for full implementation has already been initiated. This cost estimate is being built on most expensive cost scenarios that assume factors such as: mandatory student participation; maximum number of sections with enrollment caps; instructor costs built outside of existing instructor loads. These initial estimates of worst-case scenarios set the annual cost at approximately \$100,000. Assuming those estimates, but factoring in reasonable in-load support, the cost would be one-half that estimate. Also not built into the estimates is the positive revenue impact from enhanced retention and enrollment. For example, if the University retained thirty students it otherwise would not (without the seminars), the additional revenue would be approximately \$150,000, exceeding likely additional costs and needed investments.

### Passport Program

As part of the strategy for building a first-year experience for supporting students' transition into college and their academic major, the "Passport Program" for all first-year students will provide information access, mentoring and need-specific support, and opportunities to create and engage in peer activities and student learning communities. The Passport is a set of activities, support strategies, initiatives, events, and academic and student life opportunities that provide support for students' transition into college and to academic majors.

Design of the Passport structure allows for activities and events to be tailored to different student needs and interests built around core outcomes. Some Passport components are likely to be mandatory, focused on basic knowledge about the institution necessary for all students. Passport activities may also be designed around focused interests and experiences, and can be designed to support particular areas such as: academic programming; arts and cultural events, athletics (intramural and intercollegiate); career pathways; clubs and organizations; college and school academic extracurricular activities; Fairmont community events, residence life activities and communities; student groups; Student Services activities; and, needs and interests related to unique sub-populations of students. One of the goals of the Passport plan is to create as many mechanisms as can be implemented well that provide students with support and opportunities for relationship-building. All of the entities noted above will be invited and asked to create Passport activities relevant to their contexts, and their connections with students. As practical and relevant, academic units and Student Services offices may collaborate with community partners and external agencies to create Passport options.

The passport design team includes representation from the offices and units that will be instrumental in delivering Passport components. This team is in the process of assessing the slate of current activities that can be incorporated into Passport requirements and options. The design team will also work with offices, academic units, and organizations on campus to design and prepare for implementation of the Passport. The goal is to pilot multiple Passport components and a “stamping” process in the fall 2015.

The Passport’s purpose is to ensure that students have access to information and support services related to the technical, logistical, and foundational skills necessary to successfully “negotiate college.” Coupled with this is the goal of assisting students in building intentional, constructive relationships. As part of the FYE design, the components provided and reinforced through the Passport are intended to reinforce the goals of the seminar.

All Passport components, regardless of the design focus and contexts in which they occur will focus on the following common goals:

- 1) Promoting academic success;
- 2) Developing a sense of belonging;
- 3) Establishing a sense of identity;
- 4) Fostering citizenship; and,
- 5) Instilling a global perspective.

Students will navigate through a set of required Passport activities, and will have choices and options in other areas based on needs and interests. Students will complete their Passport requirements in the first year at FSU. The institution will create mechanism for tracking participation and “stamping” Passports as students fulfill responsibilities. Each event or activity approved as a Passport activity will utilize participation surveys related to its effectiveness. Plans are also in development to be able to map Passport activities participation with other forms of institutional data and metrics. In this plan the University will correlate Passport participation in activities with data such as: 1) first-year retention; 2) rate of progress toward identification of an academic major; and 3) enrollment trends as cohorts go through the Passport experience and FYE.

### Appreciative Advising

As part of an examination of potential strategies to address concerns about student advising noted in the priority issues, CRR and the subcommittee on the Student Experience Continuum conducted preliminary analysis of Appreciative Advising as a potential model for adoption at Fairmont State. Based on data and results generated at other universities that had implemented the model, the strategy appeared to have significant potential for helping to address concerns at Fairmont State related to enrollment and retention.

Appreciative Advising is a model for student support built on the work of Dr. Jennifer Bloom at the University of South Carolina. A foundational component of Appreciative Advising is structuring the process of advising from the needs and contexts of the student, and building the

process from a narrative about the students' context, lives, and successes. Appreciative Advising works from an assumption that the advising relationship and process should be grounded in understanding the student's narrative, and engaging in a constructive relationship focused on intentional action, optimizing educational experiences, and engagement with the students' goals and aspirations. Appreciative Advising grounds the advisor-student relationship in building rapport, working from student strengths, planning, and setting expectations.

Implementation of the Appreciative Advising initiative began in CCRR preliminary planning discussions in the spring term 2014, followed in the fall 2014 with the creation of a book study group (faculty and advising staff). The book study group was facilitated by advising and student support professionals from: the Academic Advising Center; Destination Education in the School of Education, Health and Human Performance; and, the College of Liberal Arts. The book study team includes faculty representatives from five of the six colleges and schools. The group examined materials published by Jennifer Bloom that review the research behind the initiative, impact, and implementation strategies. Based on the recommendations of the book study group relative to the appropriateness of the model for Fairmont State, Dr. Bloom was brought to campus in March 2015 to present a workshop on the model, and to consult with faculty, staff and leadership about implementation. Pending participants' reactions and feedback from her visit, the University will move toward a broad based implementation plan beginning in the fall 2015.

Elements of the model have been piloted in the School of Education, Health and Human Performance through the Destination Education initiative. Advisors in the College of Liberal Arts and the Academic Advising Center also already use elements of the model. Assuming the University moves toward full implementation the initiative will involve the Office of the Provost, all six colleges and schools, and the Academic Advising Center. Implementation of Appreciative Advising as planned will reach students in academic programs across the University, and those who are "undeclared" and supported by the Academic Advising Center.

### **Data and Research Subcommittee Strategic Work**

The Data and Research Subcommittee convened to focus primarily on the following strategic issues:

- 1) The state of institutional data;
- 2) The nature of data collection instruments and practices related to Student Services activities, and enrollment related activities and initiatives;
- 3) What existing strategies and data "tell us" about our practices as an institution;
- 4) What revisions could we make to existing data collection strategies, instruments, and data bases so that we could do a better job of informing institutional practices related to enrollment.

The subcommittee worked (and continues to do so) to create better coherency and continuity across instruments and tools for data collection across services, units, and programming so that the University could do a better job of mapping practices and impact across the student experiences continuum. The group also engages in examination of ways to link institutional data with other forms of data about students and programming on campus.



The subcommittee also engaged in its own recruiting efforts to solicit participation from faculty and staff colleagues who could support the work. The subcommittee requested participation from representatives of student services and academic programming offices who, while not necessarily expert in particular research methodologies, would provide critical perspectives as far as contexts in which the tools would be applied and the resulting data interpreted.

The initial step by the subcommittee focused on auditing existing tools and instruments being used across the University to assess and evaluate activities, events and services identified in the student experiences continuum. At the time this work began, a common assumption was that assessment was not being done and/or data not be collected regularly across the University's Student Services. To address this concern, the subcommittee audited all of the related units and offices to get an informed picture of the state of current practice. The analysis included review of the following issues:

- 1) What tools exist and what data is derived from them;
- 2) Identification of the key points in the student experience continuum where data collection occurs;
- 3) The research integrity of each tool or instrument from a methodological perspective; and,
- 4) The degree of continuity with which key constructs related to enrollment and retention could be tracked across these tools.

Approximately 25 surveys, evaluation forms, and events assessment tools were identified, with variations in some cases on those basic tools and instruments. Examples of these touch point-based tools include the following:

Campus Visit tours evaluation;

Campus Visitation Day evaluation (students and parents);

Day on Campus Program evaluation;

Front Counter Survey (Student Services Center);

Graduate Student Withdrawal Survey;

Leaving the Hall Survey (moving out of a residence hall);

Undergraduate Student Exit Survey;

Mid-Year Institute Student Survey (for students facing academic issues);

Summer Orientation Survey (family and students);

Early Orientation Survey (family and students);

Students Activities Survey; and,

Welcome Weekend Survey (new students' pre-perceptions survey and activities survey).

The subcommittee reviewed a wide range of these kinds of documents, and concluded that the instruments gave the specific office, unit or program helpful perception and satisfaction data about the quality of the event or activity, but little data about the participating students. That data

was also not mapped to or correlated with any other forms of institutional data. In other words, the existing strategies tended to deliver evaluative information about the event, but no information about how the event mapped to student success in terms of how those variables informed enrollment and retention practices. Data gleaned from the tools also could not be correlated or mapped to variables critical to analysis of services and programming experiences in terms of how those variables informed enrollment and retention. The data collection points tended to be concentrated in the pre-enrollment phase and first year of the students' experiences. Also, participation by students in the data collection was limited to students who participated in the event, activity or program, therefore not representative of a cross section of the student population.

As a result of this analysis, the subcommittee moved forward with two major emphases in their work.

- 1) Members of the subcommittee would, where requested, provide technical assistance to help programs and units refine existing events and activities evaluation tools to generate the best data possible to inform the quality and impact of those touch points.
- 2) The subcommittee would direct its primary energy to designing, piloting and implementing data collection tools and strategies that could begin to establish continuity and coherency ("fill-in-the-gaps") in institution-wide data that informed programming practices (academic and services) that could be mapped back to enrollment and retention strategy.

To address the second need above, the subcommittee has worked with Student Services and academic support staff to develop and pilot two survey instruments, with a goal of conducting the pilot implementation of both in the fall 2014. These include:

- 1) "Welcome Weekend" Entering Freshmen Survey (given during the orientation events just before classes start for first time students in the fall) [exhibit 29D];
- 2) "End of Semester" Survey given approximately three to four weeks before the end of the term [exhibit 30D].

These surveys were drafted by the subcommittee, reviewed by the full CCRR committee, and reviewed by academic leadership including the Provost, Associate Provost and Deans. The academic leadership provided an important review in terms of intent and sensitivity of questions given that: 1) the End of Semester Survey would be implemented through classes; and, 2) it contains question related specifically to faculty activities. The draft surveys were also reviewed and discussed by the Faculty Senate for the same reasons. In addition, the surveys were reviewed by area Directors and staff in Student Services as some of the questions pertain to those services.

Key constructs and variables tracked in data from these surveys include:

- (1) "Welcome Weekend" Entering Freshmen Survey (collected at start of fall term in college/school-specific events)
  - Clarity of communication
  - Clarity of information about cost of education
  - Availability of financial aid counseling

Rank order of variables in choosing Fairmont State University

Rank order of activities and impact on the decision to attend Fairmont State University

Sources of information in choosing Fairmont State

(2) End of Semester Survey (collected near the end of the fall and spring terms in classes)

Class Rank (e.g. “senior”)

Ratings of:

Satisfied with progress toward degree

Helpfulness and availability of faculty

Level of challenge in course content

Faculty knowledge in their subject areas

Help in identifying identify an academic program

Quality of academic advising

Appropriate course level that matched my academic preparation

Help with nonacademic questions

Availability of courses required to complete degree

Evaluation of the overall educational experience

Ratings for specific university services and resources (e.g. Residence Life, food services, Financial Aid, campus safety)

Plans to return next semester

If the student select Fairmont State again if given the choice

Identification of the student’s college or school

Both surveys were piloted in the fall 2014 terms. The subcommittee has engaged in preliminary analyses of data, and has used that primarily to refine the two instruments. The subcommittee has completed revisions to the End of Semester Survey based on the fall 2014 pilot, and minor alterations have been made to that instrument in advance of the second implementation of the survey near the end of the spring 2015 term. Preliminary results from both surveys have been shared with key groups including the President’s Cabinet, the Deans Council, and CCRR. In each of these sessions, key stakeholders and constituents who can use the data and emerging findings have discussed how results can impact programming, recruiting, and enrollment and retention efforts.

Some general findings have been generated from the pilot data from the Welcome Weekend Entering Freshmen Survey. Highlights from institution-wide student responses about their decision to come to Fairmont State include, for example:

Item	Percent Responding “Excellent” or “Good”
Quality of communication provided	83%
Quality of Financial Aid information provided	62%
Quality of information about cost	80%
	Percent Responding with Item as the 1 <sup>st</sup> Choice
Reasons for choosing Fairmont State (top reason)	
Program of study	42%
Location	20%
Size of the institution	15%
Affordability	15%
Impact on the decision to attend Fairmont State (top reason)	
Campus Visitation Day	42%
Campus Tour	33%
Visit with a faculty member	16%
Source of information in choosing Fairmont State	
A family member is an alumnus	24%
College Fair	32%
Web search	23%
Know an alumnus (who is not a family member)	

Preliminary analyses of the fall 2015 End of Semester Survey suggest data will speak to critical issues related to the student experience at the University. These analyses show evidence of differences in student responses based on class rank, academic program, resident v. commuter status, and traditional v. non-traditional identification. There is also preliminary evidence to suggest the potential for informative correlational analyses for the relationships between (1) “planning to return to the University” responses, (2) choosing the same institution again, and (3) key student experience variables.

[Note: Data analyses from both surveys can be made available by the time of the May Focused Visit.]

#### Funnel to Enrollment Data Initiative

Two sources of data identified in this process as underutilized but having significant potential to positively impact enrollment-related strategic decision making include admissions funnel data and general enrollment data. Both sources of data are produced on a regular basis at the level of institutional counts, but in the past have not been disaggregated for more micro-targeted uses. The research team has incorporated into their strategic work designing and implementing data analyses to exploit these data bases to support marketing, recruiting, admissions, enrollment and retention efforts. These efforts have included examining variables collected in the application for admissions, coupled with data that can be pulled from FAFSA. These variables can then be clustered into sets of variables [exhibit 31D] that may have predictive qualities and modeling for

admission, acceptance of admission, and enrollment and matriculation patterns. These preliminary clusters of variables [exhibit 32D] include those related to, for example:

- Parental history;
- Financial status;
- Life issues (e.g. veteran status, disability, alumni connections);
- Academic plans;
- Academic history;
- Proximity of support networks (e.g. distance from home);
- Competition from other institutions for enrollment; and,
- Response time -- application-to-acceptance-to-attendance.

The subcommittee is in the process of determining how this data can be used to create models for predictive strategies on building enrollment and enhancing retention. As preliminary plans suggest, the intersection of this data with matriculation data will provide the University with greater decision making capacity about programming and application of limited resources to micro-target resources and supports for a range of student needs and characteristics. In addition, early analysis includes examination of the ways this data can be interfaced with Clearinghouse data to set up predictive models for admissions conversion and enrollment decisions by potential students. If these interfaces between application data and Clearinghouse data can be created and analyzed, the University will have even more complex data analyses informing where students who chose not to attend Fairmont State go, and how that maps to the variables described above.

#### Additional Enrollment and Retention Data Initiatives

Disaggregation of institutional data sets: As noted above, the institution is already in the process of creating data analysis strategies that will support disaggregation of enrollment metrics into program and college/school level reports. This will include, if implemented as planned, the ability to disaggregate the following data sets, and provide them to academic programs and Student Services on a regular basis. These data sets include:

- Enrollment count metrics (headcount/FTE) [exhibits 33D & 34D];
- Metrics on annual enrollment, retention and completion (as reflected in annual reports provided the WV HEPC [exhibit 25D]);
- Clearinghouse data; and,
- Funnel Data (inquiry-to-enrolled process counts) [exhibits 35D & 36D].

Mapping and linking multiple data sets: Connected to the funnel-to-enrollment data initiative discussed above, members of the Data and Research subcommittee are investigating procedures to link data – by student identification number – across the full range possible of institutional data sets. The subcommittee’s goal is to begin manipulating data at the individual level across the student experiences continuum, and – using identification numbers – to be able to micro-

analyze data across the range of data variables for sub-populations of students. The group is working closely with colleagues who manage institutional data and colleagues in processing services (Student Services) to examine how the institutional data sets including can be linked to purpose-specific data (i.e. events participation, perception surveys, withdrawal surveys, Passport participation). This process, if successful, has significant potential for enhancing the way we use data to understand students' academic and college life experiences and the impact and correlational aspects of University programming and student success. Examples of the application of these data strategies include the following.

- 1) Tracking participation in the Passport structure and correlating that with success in other areas such as academic success.
- 2) Tracking student participation in Seminars to analyze the relationships between the Seminar and variables tied to academic success.
- 3) Using correlations between FYE activities participation data to determine which Passport activities and Seminar structures are models for replication, given student success data.
- 4) Linking Funnel data, data from the application for admissions process and FAFSA, enrollment data, and academic data to establish predictive modeling for college success, and translating that into stronger support programming (and better informed investment of programming resources).
- 5) Using Funnel data to support Recruitment and Admissions in refining marketing and recruiting strategies for building the first-time student cohort each year.
- 6) Linking student perception data, linked with academic performance data, to assist colleges and schools in decision-making about investments in programming supports.
- 7) Creating these structure across all data sets, and being able to use student identification numbers across data sets, will establish the ability to construct "persistence-progression" data (cohort headcount data as it matriculates correlated with individual cohort student activities, touchpoints and academic activities participation data). The institution will have greatly enhanced capacity to track cohort data, and map that data with academic data, touch point activities and events data, and any data sets related to the student experience archived by the institution, denoted at the individual student level, that show positive correlation with the activities and the persistence rate of cohorts.

Student Services Checklist Initiative and Data: Student Services, in an effort to improve procedures for conducting assessment of delivery of services, has implemented the University's first "Checklist" process and tool. While the administrative units in Student Services (e.g. Financial Aid, Counseling, Veterans Services, Front Desk Services) have in the past used feedback instruments specific to the different services, Student Services did not have a common tool across all services.

In the checklist process, the Student Services units first created a set of principles to guide the delivery of services and the commitments staff make in how they treat students, colleagues, and visitors to Student Services. Unit directors drafted and vetted a list of these principles, and discussed the draft with their respective unit teams.

Student Services has a mission statement, and some of the subunits within Student Services have mission statements unique to the subunit. The language of the general and subunit-specific statements, noted below, was incorporated into the drafting process:

### Student Services Unit

*The Division of Enrollment and Student Services affirms the philosophy, tenets, and values of the Fairmont State University (FSU) Mission Statement. As the primary source for the development of student leadership and life skills education, the Enrollment and Student Services team creates opportunities for students to develop in a supportive community. We provide comprehensive enrollment and student services that are responsive to individual and community needs, empowering students through mentoring, teaching and modeling*

### Mission Statement for the Financial Aid Office

*It is the mission of FSUFAO to assist students to achieve their educational goals by promoting scholarships, grants, loans, and Federal Work Study. We understand that these opportunities are needed to make college a reality for many students. This mission aligns with Fairmont State University's mission of providing opportunities for individuals to achieve their professional and personal goals and discover roles for responsible citizenship that promote the common good. Specifically, the mission of Fairmont State University is to provide programs needed by those in its geographic service area. The FSUFAO aims to educate, assist, and inform students about financial aid resources available to them in a student-friendly atmosphere.*

### Mission Statement for the Office of Retention

*The Office of Retention seeks to impact the institution's retention and graduation rates and does so by coordinating strategic programs and outreach efforts, all designed to support student persistence. The office's focus is three-part:*

- 1) Transition: facilitating a sound transition into the institution for all incoming students*
- 2) Engagement: fostering a sense of belonging by helping students become connected and feel welcome*
- 3) Success: continuously educating students on and connecting them to both services and strategies which will help them remain on-track and to realize in a timely fashion their academic and personal goals*

*Retention staff recognize that student success is defined in a number of ways and attempts to incorporate all facets: academic, social, personal, etc. for the goal of helping to produce (in a timely fashion) independent, well-rounded graduates who are prepared to launch into society and into well-paying careers. One of the ways in which the Retention Office works to achieve this goal is by connecting students with the appropriate resources when needed. In fact, staff members work to collaborate not only across campus, but also with external constituents (such as families and community members) who are crucial to student success. From helping first-year students transition during annual events such as Welcome Weekend*

*to monitoring grades and reaching out to at-risk students near mid-terms each semester, the office is continually undergoing efforts to help keep students on-track. It is the goal of the office to see students transition well, become engaged, and ultimately succeed.*

From that draft, a “Checklist for Student Services” of the principles and a parallel “Student Services Interaction Assessment” [exhibit 37D] was developed and implemented. The checklist is being implemented in the spring 2015 term, initiated at the start of the term.

Student Services units using the checklist and assessment tool include:

Admissions & Recruitment	Housing & Residence Life
Campus Judicial Affairs	Processing (Application, Credentials, etc.)
Career Development	International Student Services
Disability & Counseling	Registrar
Front Counter	Retention
Financial Aid	

Interaction themes outlined in the checklist and assessed in the accompanying interaction assessment tool include:

- Providing a welcoming environment, engaging in courteous, friendly, and professional, manner, greeting people promptly and starting meetings in a timely manner;
- Treating people respectfully and fairly;
- Respecting privacy and confidentiality;
- Listening carefully and exhibiting a sense of caring and helpfulness;
- Communicating clearly about services provided;
- Discussing next steps, take-aways, follow up and timelines;
- Summarizing and sharing an understanding of the results of the interaction; and,
- Providing a timely response, updates as needed, and an open door policy for additional help.

Each Student Services subunit may use additional complementary questions to address contextual issues that pertain to that subunit, tailoring some questions and feedback to their specific functions and responsibilities. Staff in Student Services all have a publically available copy of the Checklist for Student Services, and refer to the checklist before scheduled interactions with students and other visitors and people who access services. After the interaction or meeting is complete, the staff person provides the visitor with a choice of a hard copy Student Services Interaction Assessment to complete, or with a card with a Quick Response (QR) Code that takes the person to a digital form of the survey.

Having piloted the checklist strategy in Student Services, next steps include developing and implementing similar checklists and assessments in services in Information Technology.



Implementation of the Appreciative Advising model will include a checklist strategy to collect feedback from students on the effectiveness of the model in terms of assessment of the advising sessions. This process has been discussed thus far in terms of “checklist” data as represented in the elements of Appreciative Advising to be noted by students in advising sessions. During the remainder of the spring 2015 term the University will determine whether it will pursue implementation of the Appreciative Advising model campus wide. If the University implements the model, it will include a checklist modeled on the principles of Appreciative Advising and use that as part of the implementation and assessment strategy.

Withdrawal and Exit Surveys: The Office of Retention has worked with Academic Affairs and Information Technology to development more informative tools for addressing students who choose to with draw from a course or from the University. A new “Course Withdrawal Survey” [exhibit 38D] and “Institutional Exit Survey” [exhibit 39D] have been developed to better track conditions and reasons that lead students to the decision to withdraw. Both surveys are online, and in order for students to complete the process of withdrawing from a course or from the University, students must complete the relevant survey as part of the official process. These surveys are being implemented in the spring 2015 term.

The surveys completed when withdrawing from an individual course and exiting the University include questions related to the following:

- Identification of the college or school where the major is located; and,
- Identification of academic major.

The survey completed when withdrawing from a course asks the student to address the following contextual factors influencing the decision to withdraw:

- Course load;
- Other commitments (job, child care, etc.);
- Issues with the instructor;
- Ability to get advice and recommendations from faculty about academic issues;
- Level of challenge in the course;
- Ability to recover from absences, poor grades, etc.;
- Financial problems/financial aid;
- Unsure about major/academic path);
- Uninterested in subject material ; and,
- Accessibility issue.

For withdrawal from the University, students are asked to provide feedback in the following contextual areas influencing the decision to withdraw:

- Academic problems or academic standing;

- Academic problems with a specific course or courses;
- Academic issues with a particular faculty member;
- Ability to get advice and recommendations from faculty about academic issues;
- Ability to handle the level of challenge in my academic work;
- Campus experiences and social opportunities;
- Didn't see others like me;
- Financial problems/ financial aid;
- Family/personal matter;
- Fairmont and the local community were not what I thought they would be;
- Homesickness;
- Uncertain direction (unsure about major/academic path);
- Health/wellness/accessibility issues;
- Campus services and resources (dining, residence halls, support services); and,
- Felt unsafe.

For both sets of contextual factors, students are asked to identify the factor that contributed most to their decision. In addition, students withdrawing from the University are asked to give feedback on their interactions with faculty and/or advisors leading up to the decision. These students are also asked questions about their future plans, and the likelihood that they would consider returning to Fairmont State. Finally, these students are asked to provide feedback on what they think the University does well given the experience as a student.

The withdrawal processes from both a course and from the University are also used as a mechanism to direct students to key people and services that may be helpful as they consider or reconsider their decision. In the case of students withdrawing from the University, information about readmission and reenrolling is provided.

### **Next Steps in Enrollment Initiatives**

As part of ongoing efforts to improve practices that will enhance and sustain enrollment at Fairmont State, CCRR will continue to work as the core planning and design group. As current initiatives are implemented, moved toward implementation, and planned and designed, CCRR will work with University leadership and administrative units across the University to translate strategic initiatives into action steps and institutionalized practices. The group will also take the lead in collaborative efforts to continue to refine, design and implement as needed improved data strategies. Following are major areas of focus for continued efforts at improving enrollment and retention practices and results for student success.

- 1) Continue to focus on implementation of continuous improvement strategies in enrollment and retention (e.g. checklists, Passport, Seminar, Appreciative Advising) that have

emerged from analyses of touch point practices. These initiatives are in process and should be moved toward implementation in the next three to six months. These initiatives will also be clearly mapped to appropriate data sources and benchmarks for progress.

- 2) Move pilot and start-up initiatives generated through the ongoing CCRR process into institutionalized practices informed by the use of institutional data, using the analysis-planning and design – implementation structure that has led to current initiatives being implemented.
- 3) Continue to work toward implementation, and additional planning and design work as needed, for priorities identified in the review of enrollment and retention and noted in the January 2014 recommendations on enrollment and retention to the President. This will include continuing review, critique, and redesign efforts as reflected in the strategic processes described above. Those action areas include:
  - Active involvement of academic departments in recruiting;
  - Faculty development in advising and assessing student needs;
  - Diagnostic academic skills assessment; and,
  - Concentrated effort to attract more international students.
- 4) Continue to work with administrative units that provide services and supports in developing checklist principles and assessment tools as modeled by Student Services.
- 5) Continue efforts toward implementation of data mapping and alignment across all data sets, with a goal of structuring all data sets at the level of individual student collection and analysis. This will focus on the use of digital resources to capture data at the level of student identification numbers to allow for the most sophisticated level of microanalysis and application of findings in programming and strategic decision making. Initial applications of this data and analysis infrastructure will include:
  - Marketing and recruiting in admissions;
  - Predictive analysis in building the first-time cohort in each annual admissions cycle;
  - Focusing investment of support programming resources through a more sophisticated analysis and understanding of the student population and the needs and interests of different subpopulations (e.g. traditional v. adult students; residential v. commuter; issues unique to different academic areas).

## INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ACTION

### **Integrating Assessment, Enrollment and Retention, and Institution-wide Strategic Planning**

As noted in the institutional context section at the beginning of this report, factors related to budget and to the ongoing separation from Pierpont Technical and Community College led to decisions to fine-tune the institution's strategic focus in the short term to:

- 1) Building, piloting and implementing structures to support assessment of learning and program assessment; and,
- 2) Emphasis on enrollment and retention initiatives to support a stronger student experience continuum, more refined data and data management structures to inform institutional practices, and consequentially success in enrollment and retention.

As this initial strategic work in assessment and enrollment has taken form, and action steps have been initiated and implemented, intersections across the two main emphases noted above have laid a better foundation for reinvigoration of University-wide strategic planning and action. The process strategies used in both areas have cultivated and sustained a stronger sense of collaboration and shared responsibility across a range of University programming, offices and units. There are now more consistent and more focused points of activity involving understanding about and use of institutional data in intentional ways to analyze, plan, design and implement practices. There are also more robust structures to use services data, enrollment and retention data, and student experiences data to inform academic program assessment as well as delivery of services and experiences for students across the University.

The immediate focus on assessment of learning and enrollment served to reinforce structure and process for moving to broader, long-term strategic planning, design and action. The structure and process in assessment of learning and of academic programming has reinforced attention to the University's mission, vision and core values. Within the enrollment and retention strategies, participants have engaged in a parallel commitment to use the mission, vision and core values constructs to guide and frame their efforts. Given how these efforts have been framed, and have integrated efforts across Academic Affairs, Student Services, and Information Technology, the University is in a stronger position to reenergize institution-wide planning, design and programming activities.

As the structure for institution-wide strategic work continues to be refined, the following data categories and sources to inform institutional effectiveness around strategic planning are and will be available. For each source, current status for the data is noted: (1) in place; (2) in development toward implementation; or (3) in planning toward implementation. This structure will be central to supporting the planning process, and tracking the impact of the plan's action steps.

#### 1. Academic Programs Assessment Data

Assessment of/for Learning -- Course Level (structure in place and in process of implementation/use)

Program Assessment -- Program Level (structure in place and in process of implementation/use)

2. Administrative and Services Program/Unit Assessment and Evaluation

Student experience continuum activities and events surveys (in place)

Checklists and Survey (points of services delivery data)

Student Services (in use)

Administrative and Fiscal Affairs (to be developed and implemented)

Advising: Faculty, College/School Supports, and Academic Advising Center (to be developed and implemented pending adoption of Appreciative Advising model; a more general version will be developed and implemented for general advising)

Communications (to be developed and implemented)

Information Technology (to be developed and implemented)

3. “In-house” Research-generated Data

Welcome Weekend and End-of-Term Student Surveys (in use)

Student Sub-Populations data (e.g., veterans, adult learners, first-year students, commuters; to be refined within existing data collection instruments and institutional data access)

Persistence -- Progression Research (Cohort data correlated with student activities, Touchpoints and academic activities data) (institutional data from matriculation exist; some activities and events tools and data exists; remaining touch point activities assessments to developed)

Research on student decision making, marketing/recruiting, and college choice/satisfaction (Current and potential students; students who went elsewhere) (proposed; design efforts have not yet begun)

4. Institutional Data

Clearinghouse Data (in place)

Enrollment Report Data (in place)

Funnel Reports (in place)

HEPC Metrics (in place)

[Note: Information Technology is engaged in redesign efforts to make these data sets available at the major/program level for academic programs, and therefore more user-friendly within academic assessment at the program level.]

## **Institution-wide Strategic Planning**

In April 2015 the University will have a clearer picture of the impact of separation issues with PCTC, and how that will affect structure, operations, and resources in multiple University units. The two operational areas likely to see the most impact in the current negotiations are Student Services and Information Technology. These negotiations have the potential to impact position support, operational support, scope of unit responsibilities, and programming capability. As part of the separation process and arbitration procedures, this stage in negotiations will be followed by a longer term agreement in January 2016. The resolution that occurs in April 2015 will give a clearer sense of direction and strategy relative to the separation, and position the University to engage in longer term planning with more confidence.

The President and VPIAE have initiated a discussion about transitioning over the next three months from the specific assessment and enrollment strategic initiatives discussed above to broad-based, university-wide strategic planning involving the full range of the University's programming, stakeholders, and constituencies. These discussions have included members of the President's Cabinet, and have included considerations of organizational dynamics created by the separation from PCTC, and budget and resources dynamics discussed earlier in this document. In addition to these discussions within the Cabinet, discussions have also been held with academic leadership relative to the caution being exercised in the strategic planning work, and the emphases over the last two years in the assessment and enrollment strategic areas.

In addition to the above issues, the University has been working with the WV HEPC on the roll-out of the "Leading the Way" master plan for higher education in West Virginia [exhibit 40D]. The initial version of this plan was presented in early 2013. WV HEPC held a conference in April 2014 to provide institutions an overview of the planning and reporting process. Implementation of the plan began following the conference with a call for institutional reports as to how the campuses would address the purposes of the Leading the Way plan. Those drafts were submitted to the HEPC in November 2014. (As of submission of this report, the University has not received a pending review of and recommendations for the Leading the Way report.)

During the roll-out and capacity building stages, Fairmont State worked from an assumption that at least in the initial stages, it would be important to map the following: 1) the existing Fairmont State University Strategic Planning document; and, 2) the main goals of the Leading the Way plan. That map (August 2013) [exhibit 41D] provided a crosswalk between the two strategic planning structures. As the Leading the Way process took shape – and just prior to the WV HEPC professional development conference noted above – a second map with the FSU Plan was created, incorporating sub-goals from the Leading the Way process (February 2014) [exhibit 42D]. The initial report, due November 1, 2014 called for identification of or plans for campus initiatives that would address the purposes and goals of the Leading the Way Plan. A third map (November 2014) was created that now incorporates the FSU Plan, the Leading the Way Plan, and the initiative examples (mapped to the two strategic planning frameworks) in place or in planning at Fairmont State [exhibit 43D].

A main question that has been part of these discussions has been the dispensation of the existing Fairmont State University Strategic Plan (2010) [exhibit 09L]. The consensus among University leadership and stakeholders has been to keep the structure of that document intact initially, with alterations and adjustments to be considered as more broad-based strategic planning moves forward. This plan has served as the parallel document for the mapping with the WV HEPC Leading the Way plan noted above. At the present the plan is to do the following:

- 1) In each of the steps below, critique the integrity of the language and commitments articulated in the University's existing Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and core values, and the degree to which the embedded construct are emblematic of the University;
- 2) Engage the University community in analyses of current, key contextual strategic challenges, updating and revising the existing planning language as warranted;
- 3) Summarize key successes and accomplishments, and opportunities that have been created in the last five years;
- 4) Examine and come to consensus as a University community on current strategic priorities incorporating as warranted progress already achieved in the strategic areas of assessment and enrollment (and related improvements in institutional data structures);
- 5) Revisit the Redefined Goals, and alter as needed to accommodate strategic elements that emerge in the process outlined above; and,
- 6) Upon adoption of the revised structure and language of the strategic planning framework, engage University units and subunits in a robust planning process framed by a timeline with reasonable benchmarks for accomplishing articulation of unit and subunit articulation of the plan.

[Note: As this planning process develops, adaptability will be essential as subsequent PCTC separation issues and challenges emerge. This will be particularly critical as these decisions alter organization structure, provision of services, and operational resources.

The University now engages in a regular process to articulate a clear structure around organizational frameworks at the University, Presidential Cabinet units (led by Vice-Presidents and the Director of Athletics), and subunits as appropriate to the particular contexts. These organization charts are updated each term, and provide the framework for academic and administrative units of the University.

An important element of this planning process will be to maintain the flat organization structure that supported the strategic initiatives development in assessment and enrollment. Both of these processes placed a premium on participatory strategies including faculty and staff from the full range of appointments and administrative authority. This process also had fidelity with the University's leadership and administrative structure while working through organizationally flat, grassroots mechanisms. This structure was vital to ensuring the process modeled the constructs embedded in the University's values language (e.g. core values, mission statement).

To support the planning process, the University is in the process of designing a "University Leadership Council." This group, tentatively will include the President, Vice Presidents, direct reports to VPs (Deans and area directors), the Senate President, a Student Government representative, and external stakeholders in the University community. While this framework would create a large group, it will ensure a structural commitment to participatory processes and open accessible communication. The Council will be convened by the President and a co-convenor. Plan plans also include ensuring that one of the external stakeholders has a background in strategic planning.

The current plan is to initiate the broader planning process in the summer 2015 so that campus-wide activities can be framed for activity at the start of the fall 2015 term. The transition to institutional strategic planning activities in the fall will also be integrated with Sesquicentennial celebration and commemoration events.

Given the potential for either reconstituting or revising the existing strategic planning document, mapping to the state's Leading the Way plan will be adjusted accordingly so that planning participants can use the

map to work across the two plans' components. The structure of the map will also be useful as University units and subunits identify data and evidence that can be mapped and benchmarked to the plans' goals, planning components, and action items.

To give more critical emphasis to the strategic planning work, attention in of the VPIAE office will shift more directly to supporting, facilitating and leading strategic planning. Currently, the work of the VPIAE office incorporates six sets of responsibilities and supports:

- 1) Assessment of learning and program assessment;
- 2) Assessment and evaluation of services and non-academic programs;
- 3) Interfaces with enrollment management;
- 4) Interfaces with institutional data management for user access, general access, and strategic/programming applications;
- 5) Strategic planning; and,
- 6) Coordination of institutional accreditation activities and processes.

The President and VPIAE have engaged in discussions to prioritize time and resource commitments to ensure working structure behind strategic planning in the same way the prior efforts in assessment and enrollment strategic initiatives were supported by the VPIAE office and budget. A framework for re-prioritizing these commitments should be available by the time of the site visit in May 2015.