Wheaton College

HLC ID 1171

OPEN PATHWAY: Reaffirmation Review   Review Date: 4/8/2024

Dr. Philip Ryken
President

Stephanie Brzuzy
HLC Liaison

Nelson Bingham
Review Team Chair

Susan Kehl
Federal Compliance Reviewer

John (Tim) Knight
Team Member

Stefanie Niles
Team Member

Amy Pilcher
Team Member

Carol Ziegler
Team Member

Context and Nature of Review

Review Date

4/8/2024

Review Type:
Reaffirmation Review

Scope of Review

- Reaffirmation Review
- Federal Compliance (if applicable)
- On-site Visit
- Multi-campus Visit (if applicable)

There are no forms assigned.

Institutional Context

Since its founding in 1860, Wheaton College has consistently maintained its identity as an excellent liberal arts college that fully embraces its mission "for Christ and His Kingdom.". Accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, the institution has recently been accorded Open Pathway status, as part of which, a mid-cycle Four Assurance Review was conducted in 2018. The present review is an Open Pathway Year 10 Comprehensive Evaluation Visit.

The institution's Introduction to the online Assurance Argument offers a clear and effective overview of the identity and mission of Wheaton College The institution is described as "a private, residential, and multidenominational Christian liberal arts college." Within that framework, Wheaton seeks to offer a holistic, integrative educational and developmental experience that serves a diverse population of Christian students. It is largely an undergraduate college but with some mission-appropriate graduate programs. Together, the academic and co-curricular opportunities at Wheaton not only equip its students for a wide range of careers, but also to participate in broader processes of building the church and benefiting worldwide society.

Located on a beautiful 80-acre campus just west of Chicago, the College offers a blend of suburban life with easy access to a large urban setting that may serve as a context for experiential learning and recreational activities.

Since the 2018 Mid-Cycle HLC visit, Wheaton has continued to embrace a commitment to continuing assessment and improvement while remaining deeply-rooted in its mission and vision as a model of Christ-centered liberal education. This is evident in many places, but an outstanding example is Wheaton's focus on its Christ-centered Diversity Commitment.

Wheaton College is a financially-strong and well-managed institution with a substantial endowment. The strength of its donor base is demonstrated by the success of its current fund-raising campaign entitled Faithfully Forward.

The team was able to see and affirm a number of important strengths of Wheaton College. These include: clarity

and consistency of mission, strong leadership of its Board and senior administration, a talented and passionate faculty, a very effective set of academic and co-curricular programs, and its reputational status. Overall, the team came away with a very positive feeling about the College's future.

The only issue worth noting regarding the team's review was the fact that one team member contracted COVID just before the visit and, therefore, had to participate remotely in the visit and in team deliberations. That situation was well-managed and did not detract from the effectiveness of the visit.

Interactions with Constituencies

President

Wheaton Board of Trustees (6 members)

Provost

Chief Financial Officer/Vice President for Finance and Operations

Vice President for Advancement, Vocation, and Alumni Engagement

Chief Enrollment Management Officer

Chief Intercultural Engagement Officer

Director of the Center for Vocation and Career

Chief Alumni Officer

Director of CATC GenEd Program

Director for Ministry and Evangelism

Director of Institutional Research & Effectiveness/Accreditation Liaison Officer

Research and Evaluation of Student Learning Committee

Vice-Chair of the Faculty

Director of Student Care Services

Academic Advising Office (4 staff members)

Chief Facilities Officer

Department Chairs

Open Meeting with Students/Student Government (15 students)

Open Meeting with Staff (45 staff)

Open Meeting with Faculty (40 faculty)

Additional Documents

Annual Program Assessment Reports (3 examples)

Assessment Webpage

Budget-to-Actual Expense Reports (FY 21, FY 22, FY23)

CATC Assessment Process

Computer Science Assessment 2022-2023

Graduate ILO's with Performance Indicators (March 2024)

HESD Program Illustrative Evidence of AssessmentI

HIST311 HOP Syllabus

HIST311 Argumentative Essay Instructions

HIST311 Outline Instructions

HIST311 Republic Notes

ILO-1 Examples of Measures

Illustrative Evidence of Assessment for HESD Program

PhD Rubrics

SPN343 Archival Research Project Rubric FY 24

TESOL Assessment

UG BTS Assessment 2022-2023

URBN233 Final Group Project Spring 2024

URBN233 Vosberg Chicago Syllabus Spring 2024

URBN496 Example of Learning Contracts (3)

URBN496 Vosberg AQTS Syllabus Spring 2024

1 - Mission

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution.

1. The mission was developed through a process suited to the context of the institution.
2. The mission and related statements are current and reference the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission and related statements identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides.
4. The institution's academic offerings, student support services and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
5. The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.

Rating

Met

Rationale

As noted in the Assurance Argument and verified through conversations on campus, the mission of Wheaton College has deep historical roots to the founding of the institution in 1860. Last reviewed and revised by the President and the Board in 2013, the current statement of the mission is: "Wheaton College serves Jesus Christ and advances His Kingdom through excellence in liberal arts and graduate programs that educate the whole person to build the church and benefit society worldwide."

The spirit of the mission statement infuses a number of important foundational documents which, together, are part of the orientation of new members of the Wheaton community. The Assurance Argument describes this process, which includes the Community Covenant (affirmed by all community members annually), the Statement of Faith (affirmed by all Board members, faculty and staff annually), and the Christ-Centered Diversity Commitment (emphasizing diversity, inclusion, justice and unity). Examples of Wheaton's pervasive missional commitment include (as noted in the Assurance Argument and in on-campus conversations) the Academic Prioritization process and the 2021-2025 Thunder Stronger Institutional Plan. All academic programs and courses, likewise, reflect the mission and other foundational documents as seen, particularly, in the Christ at the Core general education program and in the Passage program for orientation of students. Equally important, the mission and foundational documents guide the ongoing creation of the human community of

Wheaton College through their framing of recruitment of students, faculty, staff and trustees.

The 2023 Enrollment Profile demonstrates that Wheaton is successful in enrolling a diverse body of students in terms of Christian affiliations, geographic residence, race/ethnicity, gender, and academic interests while maintaining a high level of academic ability among these students. At the same time, even the most talented students often require institutional support, both within and beyond the academic setting. Accordingly, Wheaton College offer support services appropriate to students' needs (e.g. as noted in the Assurance Argument, support in relation to academics, mental health, physical health, and spiritual matters).

While the primary purpose of Wheaton College is teaching in the Christian liberal arts, it is expected that faculty scholarship, as well as the future careers and lives of its students, will contribute to the mission-rooted aims of building the church and benefiting society. In 2022, Wheaton's Board and senior administration developed an Institutional Primer of Institutional Commitments that has been made available to all Wheaton constituents via the website. This document provides a thorough explication of how the College enacts its educational mission with a deep commitment to its theological purposes. Wheaton's commitment to fostering holistic development of its students is clearly articulated in its document entitled "A Vision for Wheaton College Graduates," which is part of the College website. This holistic process is built into engagement with students from the recruitment/application phase onward (e.g. requiring student applicants to write an essay regarding their Christian faith as central to their personal future growth).

Taken as a whole, these foundational statements establish Wheaton's identity as a Christian liberal arts college that provides a transformative educational and spiritual experience to develop future leaders. As noted in the Assurance Argument, the College motto, "For Christ and His Kingdom," embodies the widely-understood identity of this institution.

Conversations with students, faculty, staff and Board members confirm that constituents of the College understand and support the mission commitment and that this commitment guides planning and execution of Wheaton's academic and co-curricular programs as well as attracting an ongoing stream of students, faculty and staff who embrace the ideals of Christian intellectual and character development.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Rating

Met

Rationale

As noted in the Assurance Argument and its associated links and confirmed in various meetings with faculty and staff, the mission of Wheaton College focuses on providing a high-quality, Christian liberal education and, thereby, preparing its students for successfully pursuing careers. This is demonstrated, for example, through the administration of a First Destination Survey to its graduates. The College website contains examples of the outcomes of a Wheaton education (e.g. 99% of graduates from the immediate preceding year report either being employed or in graduate study). As noted in the Assurance Argument and linked foundational documents, the mission commits the College to broader aims, namely "building the church" and "benefiting society." Hence, through its graduates, Wheaton serves the public good. Examples of alumni career and service paths demonstrate that Wheaton graduates not only achieve personal career success, but also are prepared and motivated to fulfill roles as "active contributors and thought leaders" in the church and in society at large.

In a more immediate sense, Wheaton and its community members participate in a wide range of volunteer efforts in the local, Chicago metropolitan, regional and worldwide settings (described in the Assurance Argument). These include the Community School for the Arts, the Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Aequitas Program, the Human Needs and Global Resources (HNGR) program, and more. This array of programs integrate experiential learning for students with service that addresses needs of external communities. The Assurance Argument explains that this outreach effort continues to grow, most recently with the re-creation of the Environmental Sustainability Committee to help create and/or coordinate avenues for additional environmental initiatives. There are a number of other examples cited in the Assurance Argument that exemplify Wheaton's role as an institutional citizen of the local community, including the Wheaton Prayer Breakfast, participation of students, faculty and staff in local churches, and the work of the Chief Intercultural Engagement Officer in connecting with African-American pastors.

As confirmed by the Assurance Argument and interviews with the Board of Trustees. Wheaton College has no fiduciary ties with any other entity. Its core purpose is that of providing a Christian liberal arts education to its students, but that purpose is inseparable from its larger goals of building

the church and bettering society. In general, gifts and grants to the College are only accepted if their intent is consistent with the mission of the institution.

As with any institution, relations with external entities can affect the faithful pursuit of the mission and care must be taken to avoid detrimental effects. Wheaton College's Board has developed a set of "Principles and Practices" to guide Board members in thinking and acting in relation to such external interactions. These principles (honoring Christ in culture, honoring outside constituents, and honoring the campus community) reflect the core Christian identity of the College. That identity does not include the option of isolation from the societal landscape that surrounds it. As the Assurance Argument notes, the American evangelical landscape, in particular, is increasingly fragmented, creating tensions for Wheaton, with its "centrist theological positions." The need to address these tensions is both missional (i.e. working for a better society) and pragmatic (i.e. sustaining recruiting and fund-raising). Wheaton does not shy away from difficult issues where faithful persons may disagree, but Wheaton is also clear about its own commitments, as articulated in the 2022 Primer for Wheaton College Constituents which integrates reference to many core foundational documents and clear statements developed by the College (ranging from the Community Covenant to the Gender Equity Vision Statement).

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

1. The institution encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.
2. The institution's processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.
3. The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.

Rating

Met

Rationale

As noted in the Assurance Argument, and confirmed through conversations with the President, staff and faculty, Wheaton College has a long history of producing successful graduates. At a minimum, graduates do attain meaningful employment, as documented by the First Destination Survey which showed that the vast majority of the most recent class of graduates reported having secured gainful employment or graduate program enrollment in the year following graduation. Materials published by the Center for Vocation and Career and a recent survey of alumni show that Wheaton graduates find employment with a wide variety of top-notch companies or enroll at a broad array of highly-acclaimed graduate programs. More than this, there are many stories of successful alumni (noted by the President, the Vice-President for Advancement and some faculty) which credit their career and life success to their undergraduate experience at Wheaton College.

Wheaton College has identified five Institutional Learning Outcomes that guide its assessment of student learning. While all of these ILO's contribute to preparing students for informed citizenship and workplace success, the Assurance Argument gives special attention to the ILO related to diversity, stating that Wheaton aims to "develop a grace-filled, Christ-centered understanding of diversity." This intended outcome is, itself, rooted in the 2019 Christ-Centered Diversity Commitment that emphasizes the Biblical basis for commitments to diversity, inclusion, justice, and unity. These commitments are given focus and meaning through the creation of a Diversity Strategic Plan, with progress monitored by the Chief Intercultural Engagement Officer and the Diversity Council, with annual progress reports issued each Spring.

With a commitment to insuring equitable treatment for all persons, Wheaton has created (as noted in the Assurance Argument) a policy, a procedure, and an Equity and Title IX Office which receives and processes complaints regarding bias. That office also provides mandatory training for new students and all employees

Given Wheaton's status as a Christ-centered liberal arts college, it follows that these commitments to diversity are enacted in the academic and co-curricular arenas. Accordingly, the general education

program, Christ at the Core" includes courses with a diversity focus (e.g. "Diversity in the United States" and "Global Perspectives"). The topic of diversity continues to play out in the Advanced Integrative Seminars taken in the sophomore or junior year. Educational opportunities regarding diversity in the global realm included 391 students registering in 2022-23 for study in 54 countries (cited in the Global Participation Report). Additional opportunities for engagement with global diversity noted in the Assurance Argument include the Human Needs and Global Resources program, the Global Studies Certificate, an Intercultural Engagement Endorsement, and minors in American Ethnic Studies or Asian American Studies.

In keeping with the holistic nature of the Wheaton educational experience, support is provided for those with diversity related to differences of ability, neurodiversity, and members exploring questions about sexuality and/or sexual identity.

The Assurance Argument describes co-curricular offerings that aim at preparing students for a life of informed citizenship. These include the Chaplain's spiritual formation framework entitled "Life with God together," service and ministry opportunities offered through the Office of Ministry and Evangelism, and internships and vocational guidance provided by the Center for Vocation and Career.

Through a variety of means, Wheaton College works to create a diverse community of students, faculty, and staff and to promote a climate of respect between and among these groups. The Chief Enrollment Management Officer, for example, reported a dramatic increase in applications from Hispanic student. The Assurance Argument admits that there has not been as much success in recruiting diverse faculty. However, the Chief Intercultural Engagement Officer (a position created in 2018) is working with faculty search committees to improve recruitment strategies. Moreover, the CIEO is also providing training and education for faculty and staff to help create a more positive diversity climate.

The Assurance Argument describes (confirmed through interviews with the CIEO and others on campus) a significant effort since the 2018 Mid Cycle Review to move beyond raising awareness of the complexities surrounding diversity to foster greater intercultural competency (i.e. beyond cognition to actions). One positive indicator of progress is the data from the Best Christian Workplace survey which showed evidence of positive experiences for faculty/staff who identify as Black/African-American, Asian-American, or Hispanic/Latino. A number of activities aimed at supporting particular student diversity groups have been arranged. Beginning in 2019, an initiative by women members of the Board led to a fuller and clearer focus on gender equity. The Chief Intercultural Engagement Officer also initiated a series of alumni consultations regarding diversity. The CIEO has also worked with the Diversity Council to monitor progress on the Diversity Strategic Plan: Flourishing for All with special attention to "developing a welcoming campus climate with a sense of belonging for all its diverse members."

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

Rationale

Wheaton College has developed, articulates, and is faithfully guided by its mission and associated foundational documents. Evidence was presented in the Assurance Argument, associated material, and in conversations throughout our visit that key stakeholders understand and support the mission. Programs and policies are in place (e.g. the Christ at the Core general education program), to enact the mission. The goals and spirit of this mission may be seen in the lives of its graduates who not only achieve career success but contribute to building the church and bettering society.

Wheaton College is deeply committed to its mission of bringing its distinctive form of Christian liberal education to its students. It is especially committed to creating a diverse community, guided by its Christ-centered Diversity Commitment document, that enacts its ideals of diversity, equity, justice and unity, while fostering intercultural competency in its students. Moreover, the holistic integration of academic and experiential learning lends distinctiveness and effectiveness to the Wheaton experience. .

The college has presented evidence that it has satisfactorily met all Core Components of Criterion One.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution establishes and follows policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty and staff.

1. The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission.
2. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources and auxiliary functions.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Wheaton College has demonstrated commitment to its institutional mission as indicated in the array of evidence provided to the visiting team. A comprehensive review of the institution's mission occurred just prior to the last accreditation visit, and the administration and Board of Trustees have periodically reviewed the statement in subsequent years. In 2021, the Board added a committee whose focus is to ensure continued mission alignment, particularly as it relates to Wheaton's commitment to its religious heritage and current practices.

Wheaton College operates with integrity throughout its operations, which is demonstrated in abundant ways through the evidence provided. The Employee Handbook offers college employees guidance on expectations, particularly considering the college's faith-based mission. The Community Covenant, a document referred to numerous times in the evidence shared with the visiting team, is a further testament to Wheaton's commitment to integrity-based practices. All parties, including staff and faculty, administrators and members of the Board of Trustees adhere to a Conflict of Interest Policy, accessible to them through appropriate mediums. Faculty and staff members also have access to grievance procedures through the appropriate handbooks.

Wheaton requires its employees to complete regular training on Title IX and Sexual Harassment Prevention, Discrimination Awareness in the Workplace and Youth Protection. Title IX policies have been reconsidered in the past six years to ensure they are accessible to all members of the campus community. Offices are mandated to follow the standards set by the national organizations that govern their best practices.

An Academic Integrity Policy provides students with guidance regarding expected behaviors, and grievance policies are also in place to provide students with an outlet to express concerns both in and outside of the classroom. Outside of the academic setting, the campus has designed an anti-hazing

policy in response to a football hazing incident in 2018, and has continued to monitor the situation, as demonstrated in the evidence provided.

Wheaton College also offers its community access to a third-party agency to serve as an external resource to manage complaints; this information is available on the college's website. The college also provided evidence that it adheres to a duty of integrity in its finances, making its audited financial statements available on the website.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public.

1. The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships.
2. The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Wheaton provided the visiting team with evidence regarding how it ensures accuracy in representing itself to internal and external communities. The college utilizes its website to make information available. Online resources include the course catalog (which included extensive information on costs and services offered by the college), degree requirements and the course schedule. The website is also a resource for information about admission and financial aid, including the Net Price Calculator. The website also provides evidence of all of Wheaton's accreditation relationships and statuses and affiliations with other professional consortia, such as the Council of Liberal Arts Colleges and the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities, among others.

Wheaton's marketing materials also provide evidence of the college's desire to provide relevant and accurate information to prospective students and their families. The Office of Institutional Research reviews these documents for accuracy before they are published. Wheaton also provided the visiting team with evidence of its compliance with mandatory reporting requirements such as the Clery Report and the materials submitted to IPEDS.

Wheaton provided the visiting team with substantial information regarding how the educational experience is fostered through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development. Research opportunities are available to all students during both the traditional academic year and during the summer. All research projects are displayed for an audience, and opportunities are provided for the researchers to engage with attendees who have questions. Wheaton also offers several internal grants and ensures appropriate protocols concerning laboratory work and research practices, as applicable.

Wheaton has a long-time relationship with a community organization in Chicago that provides one opportunity for substantive community engagement. A residential experience called the Shalom Community offers students a multi-racial living and learning experience. Wheaton also offers the Community School of the Arts, which provides music lessons to hundreds of students in the community.

Wheaton College is also committed to offering experiential learning opportunities as part of its educational mission. As reflected on their website, Wheaton offers students leadership opportunities through clubs and organizations, service-learning experiences, ministry teams, and its Student Government Association. Athletics, residence life and other co-curricular activities also provide opportunities for students to lead. Study abroad options provide experiential learning and culturally immersive opportunities. Wheaton's NSSE data, as shared with the visiting team, demonstrates the positive effect of high impact practices on its students.

An important learning outcome for Wheaton College students is to cultivate their Christian faith and character. Multiple offices at Wheaton support this endeavor through extensive campus programming and providing students with direction to affiliate with a church in the area. Wheaton provided survey evidence that indicated there is a high level of "spiritual vitality" among its students.

Wheaton offers an Entrepreneurship Minor and a certificate in Human Needs and Global Resources to provide students with an international perspective and the chance to study economic realities in various markets. Additional facilities, such as the Center for Faith, Politics and Economics, the Center for Faith and Innovation and the Innovation Lab, each offer students the chance to develop their understanding of the intersection of faith and marketplace economies.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution in compliance with board policies and to ensure the institution's integrity.

1. The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions with respect to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
3. The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
4. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties.
5. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution's administration and expects the institution's faculty to oversee academic matters.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Wheaton's processes regarding the election and term limits of their trustees are clearly outlined in the Trustee Manual, as is the New Trustee Orientation process. Evidence was provided that demonstrates the ongoing development opportunities for members of the board, including interactions with the Board chair annually for evaluative purposes, a yearly Executive Development session, and attendance at the AGB national conference on Trusteeship. Wheaton's legal counsel presents annually to the board on their fiduciary and legal responsibilities; many of these responsibilities are carried out through the work of the Finance and Operations Committee and Audit Committee. The Board does regular self-evaluations of the work of the committees, and personal evaluations of their own performance as a trustee. The Board is also cognizant of the cultural diversity of our society and, while sharing with the visiting team that this effort is a work in progress, makes a concerted effort to ensure diverse voices and perspectives are shared.

One interesting fact noted by the visiting team is that board members have final approval in the hiring decisions of full-time, permanent faculty members, which is somewhat atypical in higher education. Conversations with the Provost and members of the Board indicated that they regard this step as "another set of eyes" on the candidates. The provost shared that Board members often ask good questions, and everyone sees this as "how things are done;" it is not viewed as a negative by the community. It is evident that board members demonstrate care in their range of involvements and working with faculty is no exception. Trustees devote time to hearing from faculty members so they can be informed on issues, as they also offer final approval on changes to the faculty handbook or the faculty governance structure and approve programs that require new funding sources. The Board of Trustees also work to ensure that the college maintains its commitment to its mission, as they reaffirm annually the college's Statement of Faith and Community Covenant.

The 2018 Mid-Cycle Review highlighted the need for "more internal controls and accountability to prevent Board overreach into the College's operations." A number of steps have been taken to realize improvement in this area, such as ensuring appropriate communication with staff, the trustee self-assessment and the mid-term five-year assessment by fellow trustees. Trustees must adhere to the Conflict of Interest Policy and sign the form annually, with the Board Chair holding the responsibility of appropriately managing any identified conflicts. During the visiting team's meeting with trustees, they indicated they take a "noses in, fingers out" approach to their work. They want to understand what is happening on campus, but don't intend to manage it. The evidence presented, in person and on paper, suggests that Board overreach is not a concern.

Wheaton's Board of Trustees works to ensure that institutional voices are represented in discussions on a range of issues, particularly through faculty and administrative representation on Board committees. The College also works to ensure that board members are selected with an array of professional backgrounds so they can bring a range of experiences (business, ministry, social service, etc.) to the board. Additionally, the College has several advisory boards to ensure that a wider range of perspectives are considered. These include the Board of Visitors and the Alumni Board of Directors.

The Board of Trustees annually reviews top risks identified as potentially impacting the college, such as cybersecurity issues, student harm and other safety concerns. The College also maintains a "Risk Register," assembled annually by the senior administration, so that they can collaborate with the board to identify potential risks and assess contingencies.

The assurance argument detailed the structures in place for faculty governance, and the evidence and interviews supported this information. Wheaton's faculty have purview over the curriculum and personnel matters within the faculty. The vice chair of the faculty explained that they are actively discussing their current committee structure, as they believe they may have too many committees given the reduced number of full-time faculty following the academic prioritization process. That process itself, described by both the provost and vice chair during the visiting team's discussions with them, provides another example of Wheaton's effective shared governance model.

The Dr. Larycia Hawkins incident in 2016 led the College to effectively work to clarify shared governance, conflict management and faculty handbook policies, resulting in the president and his cabinet working to implement the resulting recommendations within the college. The evidence provided to the visiting team indicated that the Board played a key role in the external review process following this public controversy over the departure of Dr. Hawkins.

While Wheaton College maintains a faith-based mission, it is not affiliated with a specific denomination, and therefore not subject to regulatory control by any third-party entity or religious organization.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.D - Core Component 2.D

The institution is committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Wheaton is committed to its faith-based mission and therefore regards academic freedom as part of the manifestation of Wheaton's commitment to its faith tradition. Faculty do have academic freedom "within the College's theological commitments," a statement reiterated by the provost during the visiting team's meeting with her. The primary policy that provides guidance to this construct was reviewed and revised by a task force and affirmed by the faculty in early 2023. After additional, collaborative revisions by representative faculty and members of the Board of Trustees, the final policy was approved in October 2023. The Vice Chair of the faculty described this process as collaborative and helpful, which was evidenced in the assurance argument.

Wheaton's Social Media Policy is another example of its commitment to freedom of expression. It cites the important role of open discussion in online settings, while still noting Wheaton's commitments to its Community Covenant, Statement of Faith and other faith-focused commitments. The provost mentioned that, at times, faculty members have asked for clarity on how the social media policy and the academic freedom policy interact with each other. She indicated she has worked to provide that clarity, also ensuring that faculty members feel supported in the classroom.

The evidence suggest that the College also uses its catalog to affirm its commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression, while remaining committed to its Christian values. The institution also has shared its demonstrated freedom of expression by hosting lectures on campus representing a range of expressions of faith.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.E - Core Component 2.E

The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, staff and students.

1. Institutions supporting basic and applied research maintain professional standards and provide oversight ensuring regulatory compliance, ethical behavior and fiscal accountability.
2. The institution provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff and students.
3. The institution provides students guidance in the ethics of research and use of information resources.
4. The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Wheaton has several structures in place to ensure that it conducts research in accordance with appropriate professional standards, including an Institutional Review Board, an Animal Care and Use Committee and a Biosafety Committee. Wheaton also complies with federal and state regulations for research. Wheaton's Community Commitment makes certain that academic scholarship is performed with a high degree of integrity. All students are provided with and agree to adhere to the Academic Integrity Policy. Wheaton's Office of Legal Affairs and Risk Management and the Sponsored Programs Office both play a role in ensuring fiscal responsibility and accountability internally, and Crowe, Wheaton's audit firm, Moody's and the Department of Education provide external oversight.

Wheaton offers a number of resources to its community to ensure integrity within academic work, including collaborative research experiences for faculty and students, adherence to grant protocols, departmental seminars, the Writing Center, Learning and Accessibility Services, and an array of services through the college's library.

The college shared evidence with the visiting team of the approach they take to ensure students understand ethical academic behavior from the beginning of their collegiate experience. The First-Year Seminar, introductory courses throughout the curriculum, and the library's instructional sessions are a significant part of this effort. Towards the end of a student's time at Wheaton, their Capstone or Senior Seminar defines an objective to foster ethical decision-making. Importantly, Wheaton offers policies on academic integrity that apply to each degree level and hold students accountable to these policies. Wheaton provided evidence of clearly delineated consequences for violation of academic integrity policies. The Student Development Office is also involved in addressing any policy violations that may ensure action on the institutional level.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Rationale

In the evidence provided to the review team, including the written materials and interviews, Wheaton College demonstrated how their practices are ethical and responsible, and they act with integrity in their operations. The employee handbook, Community Covenant, practice of requiring regular training of their employees, Academic Integrity Policy, and other documents and practices demonstrate this standard. Wheaton also works to ensure its students practice integrity through their commitment to enhancing their Christian faith through the curricular and co-curricular experiences offered. Trustees are held to a high standard of accountability through their adherence to the Conflict of Interest policy and ongoing evaluation of their practices. Wheaton is committed to academic freedom within the context of a Christian education. This is demonstrated through the standards set by their Institutional Review Board, Biosafety committee, and other committees that ensure that academic scholarship is performed with a high level of integrity. Students are also taught to understand academic integrity through their participation in the First-Year Seminar, library instructional sessions and other introductory courses, and their Capstone experience is designed to foster ethical decision-making.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The rigor of the institution's academic offerings is appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

Rating

Met

Rationale

The visiting team found the committee organization that guides the curriculum at Wheaton to be very rigorous. As noted in the Assurance Argument and verified in conversations with faculty during the site visit, Wheaton utilizes a highly structured committee configuration to ensure that all curriculum meets the goals and objectives at both the undergraduate and graduate level. At the undergraduate level, course and program goals and any proposed modifications are reviewed annually in October by department chairs, program coordinators, deans and the registrar. Once approved, these move to one of four subcommittees of the Curriculum Committee: Shared Core Subcommittee, the Thematic Core Subcommittee or the Non-major Internship Subcommittee. These subcommittees consider all modifications for the general education component of the institution. The fourth subcommittee is the Program Curriculum Subcommittee, which evaluates all proposals outside of the general education component. All substantial changes are then brought to the full faculty for approval.

At the graduate level, the Graduate Council has oversight of all graduate program modifications and all proposed new graduate degree proposals.   The November 1, 2023, Wheaton document "NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAM APPROVAL PROCESS – Graduate Degrees and Certificates" outlines the required analysis to create a new program and then moves the proposal forward through the appropriate approval processes. Once the Academic Dean or Department Chair approves the proposal, the Registrar provides the CIP code, and the proposal moves to either the MA Academic Affairs Committee (MAAC) or the appropriate Doctoral Committee. The Provost then grants approval and sends the program to the Graduate Council (GC). Once the GC approves the new program, the Board of Trustees grants final approval.

Minutes of all curriculum actions are archived according to the guidelines of the Faculty Handbook. Faculty may appeal graduate curriculum decisions to the Faculty Council if any concerns arise with regard to how new programs contribute to Wheaton's Institutional Learning Outcomes and overall mission.

In various meetings with faculty and administration, it is evident that the committee structure coupled with course evaluations promotes a continuous practice of annual assessment of the curriculum. Course Evaluations are mandated for every course each time it is offered. Course evaluations are also used in the regular faculty evaluation process, including Classroom Evaluation Form, Annual Faculty Progress Form, 3rd Year Review, and Promotion and Tenure Application. Wheaton also provides an opportunity for all programs to annually assess their dean.

The Assessment Component Template is utilized by each program for annual assessment reporting. These reports feed into 10-year, mandatory review for all programs following the Academic Division 10-Year Program Review Schedule. A Program Self-Study Manual provides a template to ensure that disciplinary, departmental, and institutional goals and outcomes are being met. Faculty indicated during the site visit that this is followed rigorously with several mentioning that in discussions they even had to justify individual assignments as having contributed to meeting learning objectives. Additionally, at the 5-year mark, half-way between successive 10-year reviews, programs are asked to review their progress on the previous 10-year review identified goals. Several examples of the 10-year program review mechanism were provided. Faculty interviews indicate that this is a heavy workload, but all seemed to value the effort in ensuring Wheaton meets its stated mission and learning objectives in each program.

As noted above, the careful oversight by faculty ensures the appropriate learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral level degrees. Pages 8-9 in the College Catalog note the broad Educational Objectives for the undergraduate and graduate programs. An analysis of the two lists confirms the developmental differences as appropriate to each level. Additionally, the 22-page Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) document articulates the specific PLOs for each program at the three degree levels. The Assurance Argument noted students see PLOs on course syllabi.

Consistency across modes of delivery is not a significant concern for Wheaton or its faculty currently. Two graduate programs are fully online. A few programs are offered in a hybrid format. An examination of materials for online courses and conversations with faculty and staff confirm that there is an equality across modalities and that all modes of instruction are subject to policies and procedures to ensure appropriate rigor. The College does offer multiple sections of the First-Year Seminar (FYS). All sections adhere to a shared course design, including required reading assignments focusing on thematic questions shared across the FYS sections.

The Assurance Argument (AA) noted that Wheaton offers the Honey Rock summer intensive experience in Wisconsin and a summer science curriculum at Wheaton's Science Station in the Black HIlls of South Dakota as well as study abroad programs during the summer. Consistence with Wheaton's academic policies and procedures is ensured through the usual process of approval and review. The AA points out that these courses have improved in consistency in credit hours offered in relationship to program length, and currently use best practice guidelines for contact hours, rigor, and student engagement over time. This attention to course rigor is important. The team suggests that the oversight committee confirm that the Learning Outcomes are the same for the courses with the same college course number and title whether different sections, different delivery format, or intensive courses.

As a member of CCCU, online partnership in Acadeum students have the opportunity to complete summer transfer courses, but these must be pre-approved by Wheaton. Like many other primarily residential institutions, students at Wheaton have not participated in high numbers with Acadeum. Wheaton also participates in Christian College Consortium to provide even more variety available to students. Like Acadeum, small numbers of students participate in this opportunity, and these must be pre-approved as well.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings and degree levels of the institution. The institution articulates the purposes, content and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements.
2. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.
4. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.

Rating

Met

Rationale

As was evident from both the Assurance Argument and interviews with faculty, the Christ at the Core (CATC), Wheaton's general education program, is unique and was designed specifically to meet the mission of the institution. It speaks to the spiritual formation and habits of mind while encouraging students in the development of moral convictions and thoughtful, civil discourse. The core learning outcomes are well stated and divided into three categories: holistic learning, wisdom, and Christian character. These are specifically derived from the Wheaton mission. Structurally, the coursework is divided into the Shared Core, Core Competencies, and Thematic core. The Shared Core consists of courses that all students are required to complete. The Core Competencies consist of competencies that all students must demonstrate, and the Thematic Core consist of outcomes that every student must achieve. The Shared Core includes the First-Year Seminar and Advanced Integrative Seminar, both of which are the building blocks of a scaffolded general education program. As described in 3A, all courses including those in the general education program are evaluated yearly. Within the Christ at the Core program, faculty are asked to report the percentage of students meeting the CATC learning outcomes and follow up with suggested revisions for specific courses. Faculty are also expected to reflect on their individual experiences with each course. Faculty do have the option to make assessment revisions, course readings revision, faith and learning revisions or pedagogical revisions. The Research and Evaluation of Student Learning Committee (RESL) reviews this data and uses it as part of the annual report to the faculty.

The team found that the Christ at the Core general education program described in the Assurance

Argument is very well designed. It is built on a Statement of Purpose that is explained in both the catalog and on the website. Verified by interviews with faculty, the CATC was designed through a collaborative process engaging both faculty and administration. Design of the program was initiated with a vision statement, learning outcomes, and a conceptual framework. Using "best practices' as identified by the AAC&U Value Rubrics and the Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile, eleven program-wide learning outcomes in the three categories were created previously described in 3B1. The RESL then mapped the outcomes, and the program was approved by the faculty in Spring, 2022 minutes. Beginning with the question, "What is the Good life?' in First year Seminar through the capstone course within the major, students are pushed to meet the learning objectives of the program. The Thematic Core portion of the CATC program is based on 10 knowledge domains. Commonly referred to on campus as "tags,' these address the skills needed both at Wheaton and in life after graduation.

In Section 2: Student Learning Outcomes of the Institutional Learning Outcomes, there are identical statements for both undergraduate and graduate students: Develop a grace filled, Christ-centered understanding of diversity. In July, 2022, Dr. Vanessa Wynder Quainoo was appointed as Chief Intercultural Engagement Officer. Dr. Vanessa Wynder Quainoo reports to both the President and the Provost and serves as a member of the Senior Administrative Cabinet. The First-Year Seminar includes a focused study on Diversity in the United States and Global Perspectives, encouraging students to respect and embrace other cultures by participating in cross-cultural experiences. Wheaton also offers a Human Needs and Global Resources certificate. This certificate is built on a six-month internship. Finally, Wheaton offers an Urban Studies major and international study abroad programs.

Student scholarship and the discovery of knowledge are important to the Wheaton College community. For both undergraduate and graduate students, Wheaton strongly encourages student and faculty collaboration. Opportunities such as Wheaton College Summer Research funds student work, usually resulting in student presentations at the Annual Student Poster Session. The fall 2023 Wheaton Homecoming weekend website noted the research Poster Awardee Session with photos and notes about the three student who received the top place recognition and those who received honorable mention for their research. At the doctoral level, Wheaton notes in its evidence that since 2002 over two dozen of the students' doctoral dissertations in Biblical and Theological Studies have been published.

Located at the heart of Wheaton's campus, the new Amerding Center for Music and the Arts invites musical participation and artisitc engagement of all students, faculty and staff. The Dean of the School was delighted to provide a tour for the visiting team including visits to the recording studio, private practice rooms, and the large concert hall. Clearly, Wheaton is attentive to mastering modes of both intellectual and creative work.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.C - Core Component 3.C

The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution strives to ensure that the overall composition of its faculty and staff reflects human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.
2. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance, assessment of student learning, and establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff.
3. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual and consortial offerings.
4. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
5. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
6. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
7. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising and cocurricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained and supported in their professional development.

Rating

Met

Rationale

As noted in the Assurance Argument, the Human Resources department is heavily involved in ensuring that the faith-based ethos is apparent in all job descriptions and advertisements. Advertisements, monitored by the Office of Intercultural Engagement, are designed to encourage diversity in a candidate pool. Additionally, the Human Resources staff prepares an employee turnover analysis every two years. The primary objective of this analysis is to look closely at potential race, ethnicity, and gender issues. Multiple policies provide clarity on a variety of faculty and staff issues; these include an Immigration Sponsorship Policy, parental leave, leadership and interpersonal relations, 360 Reviews, and anti-bias training. The Office of Human Resources also provides interviewing guidelines and Guidelines for Lawful Pre-employment Inquiries for search committees.

Wheaton has maintained their commitment to hiring full-time, tenure track, faculty for the majority of the curriculum, as evidenced by 95% of the full-time faculty holding a terminal degree. Data provided in the Assurance Argument indicate that reliance on adjunct faculty has not exceeded 18% in more than ten years. The student faculty ratio is currently at 12:1, and even with recent financial challenges Wheaton seems to be striking a healthy balance between total faculty numbers, workload and service expectations, and employing faculty that adhere to the mission of the institution. Evidence, including the CATC Review Task Force and other committees, indicates that the majority

of faculty are engaged in the committee structure and dedicated to the Wheaton mission. The institution's mid-cycle review in 2018 included their participation in an HLC Assessment Academy and the development of a Quality Initiative Project, furthering active assessment by faculty in the curricular aspects of the institution.

The team found that the Faculty Handbook includes a thorough evaluation process for faculty, from initial hire through Post-Tenure Review. Following tenure, this process requires that "faculty members submit a Professional Development Plan from his/her most recent Post-Tenure Review (with an accompanying self-assessment of accomplishment in light of that plan followed by a Professional Development Plan for the coming five years." The policies and procedures at Wheaton provide assurance that faculty are current in their field.

The application for promotion and tenure policy clearly guides those seeking tenure and promotion. Non-tenure track faculty are subject to annual reviews by their division dean. For non-tenure track, tenure track, and tenured faculty, student course evaluations contribute to the faculty evaluation process Faculty Policy. The institution indicates that there is rarely a disagreement in the promotion and tenure process between faculty, the Faculty Personnel Committee, and administration.

The institution provided evidence of Aldeen Grants, Alumni Association Grants and Faculty Achievement Awards indicating significant faculty support. Additionally, faculty have support from the Sponsored Programs Office and the Faculty Development Committee for grant support and faculty workshops respectively. Newly hired faculty are provided release time during the first two years of employment to participate in "Faith and Teaching Seminars." Faculty participating in the CAATC general education program receive additional training under senior faculty colleagues resulting in a paper or project that must be completed prior to tenure application.

NSSE data was provided to indicate that Wheaton faculty score high on Student Faculty Interaction and Effective Teaching Practices. Faculty are expected to maintain a minimum of six office hours per week and on campus at least four days per week. Faculty are strongly encouraged to interact with students outside of class as evidenced by the student involvement program, "Dine with a Mind." A significant number of faculty are engaged with incoming freshmen in the pre-matriculation Passage Program.

Evidence was provided to indicate Wheaton has a thorough on-boarding process New Employee Orientation for staff. Staff are encouraged to maintain memberships in professional organizations, and several staff currently hold leadership positions in these organizations. In our meeting with staff, the team detected that in several areas, staff are tired, whether from the timing of our visit end of spring semester/academic year or from understaffed areas from recent realignment and budget cuts.

The institution identified academic advising as a weakness in the 2018 mid-cycle review resulting in the creation of the Academic Advising office and purchase of Degree Works, a software package to assist students in being proactive in planning their education. Not identified as a weakness in 2018, yet very important, the financial aid office, overseen by the Student Financial Services Director, provides assistance in educating students on the details of aid in Financial Aid 101 and loan counseling. The team found that the Academic Advising staff seem not only engaged, but extremely passionate about their role in developing students early in their educational journey. The Assurance Argument notes that Admissions and Financial Aid staff members along with the Athletic Department are members of national organizations. "Nearly all departments on campus have funding sources for on-campus and off-campus professional development opportunities for staff employees." This kind of institutional support is so valuable for quality student support services.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and resources for effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its offerings and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites and museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).

Rating

Met

Rationale

Wheaton provides support for students and faculty in a wide variety of ways from dedicated buildings to online tutoring, to a range of on-campus student support services. The College has strengthened it support services for students since the mid-cycle review in 2018. Noted in the Assurance Argument, Wheaton enjoys high retention and graduation rates, however they recognize the need for increasing student support due to pandemic learning loss, relatively high numbers of first-generation students, and increasing mental health needs. In light of this, the institution has added an Accessibility Specialist and a Peer Coaching Program. The institution also hosts a Student Success Series that provides the opportunity for students to learn about these programs as well as the Writing Center and the Library. Faculty may refer students to the CARES link if issues arise. One-on-one tutoring is available. Graduate students in the Flex graduate programs have Tutor.com available to them through the institutions LMS.

The Student Wellness Office has oversight of Student Care Services, the Counseling Center, and Student Health Services; they work with Learning and Accessibility Services and Graduate Student Life and coordinates between these to support students. These support services also coordinate with Academic Advising, Residence Life, and the Chaplain's Office in an effort to prevent any student from falling through the cracks. Interviews with staff in these areas during the site visit provided further evidence that these offices coordinate well with each other. The team recommends, however, that the administration should continuously emphasize the importance of this communication. At the same time, the administration should continuously emphasize the importance of this communication between and among various offices. Staffing issues, especially if the office is understaffed, or turnover of staff in these areas, will make maintaining effective cross-communication a continuous challenge. Like the Academic Advising staff, the team noted the passion exhibited for their job by the Student Wellness and Student Care staff.

In addition to the Writing Center, Wheaton has a Language Resource Center that together aids

students in writing, critical thinking, and multilingual competencies. The institution provided data for the Writing Center in the form of a Client Satisfaction Survey Analysis and the Writing Center – Annual Report 2023. Graduate student support falls under the Director of Graduate Student Life which coordinates with the dean of the respective graduate programs. The institution has recently changed the Passage transition program from optional to mandatory based on pre and post testing results.

Wheaton attracts academically strong students, with an average SAT of 1351, nearly 300 points over the national mean. Following national trends, many of these students enter with AP or IB credits. With regard to transfer students, the institution has recently established a new Academic advisor position with expertise in transfer students in the Academic Advising Office. After identifying students that lack college-level math skills, the institution began requiring the Applied Abstract Quantitative Reasoning requirement. For students needing calculus, the Calculus Readiness Exam is used to assess student readiness for calculus.

As mentioned earlier and identified by the 2018 Mid-Cycle Review, Wheaton created the Academic Advising Office which provides academic advising for all first year and transfer students. The objective was to increase quality control of advising for all new students. Once a major is declared, students move to being advised by faculty. However, the Academic Advising Office is still available as a resource to students. For students with specific professional objectives like law or medicine, the institution has dedicated advisors to help students navigate the requirements to both graduate and prepare for application to graduate or professional programs.

Since 2010, Wheaton has constructed the Meyer Science Center, the Armerding Center for Music and the Arts, and the Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic. Additionally, to further support the institutional infrastructure, Wheaton began the Faithfully Forward capital campaign. Evidence of forward planning, the Campus Facilities Priorities provide both short and long-term plans for infrastructure. As revealed by our tour of campus and speaking with key people, it is readily apparent that Wheaton is committed to maintaining quality facilities. This was also demonstrated in our discussion with administration and their desire to have facility endowments to reduce the impact of deferred maintenance in the future.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Rationale

The attention to detail in the Wheaton Assurance Argument, coupled with our discussions with Wheaton personnel, clearly indicate that they have met the objectives of criterion 3. The infrastructure is in place to guide administration, faculty, support staff and students in meeting the vision of the institution. The assurance argument provides evidence that Wheaton offers students a transformative educational experience, in a distinctive Christian, liberal arts environment.

The institution should strive to maintain clear communication across the committees and offices that make up the fabric of Wheaton. We had no indication that communication was lacking, but the key to maintaining the effectiveness that Wheaton enjoys, will be based on thorough communication across the institution.

Wheaton clearly satisfies the Core Components of Criterion 3.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It ensures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Wheaton College provides multiple examples of the efforts, policies, and processes in place, and evaluated regularly to ensure the quality of its educational offerings. From the 10-year Program Review process, to clear and regularly vetted transcript policies, to the annually published reports on graduate success, Wheaton furnishes evidence of their consistent attention to excellence.

Program Review A review of the narrative and evidence in core component 4A confirms that Wheaton College established and carries out policies, practices, and program reviews that ensure the quality of its educational offerings. Wheaton's Program Self-Study Manual, originally created in 1997 and updated regularly, outlines a very clear process that each program must follow in preparation for a review of the program. The self-study report needs to include the following elements:

1. Statement of the department or program mission. Please also include a description of the department or program contribution and alignment to the College's overall Christian liberal arts mission.
2. Academic Catalog. Copy of the relevant section of the academic catalog.
3. Program Learning Outcomes as aligned with institutional outcomes.
4. Faculty Qualifications and Staffing.
5. Assessment of Learning Outcomes
6. Program Vitality.
7. Intercultural Competencies.
8. Balance is a unique element of the Wheaton program review process. In light of the purpose of higher education, Wheaton's understanding of "balance" is considered within its various academic units. So that "'balance' refers to a breadth of representative views which lead to a dynamic equilibrium, Details of balance are noted in the Faculty Handbook.
9. Alumni Surveys.
10. Facility and Other Resources.
11. SWOT

The examples of program review and the internal analysis of those reviews, including suggestions for improvement, confirm the consistency and seriousness of the program review process practiced at Wheaton. The assurance argument also notes that "each department also produces an annual report for its dean, director, or vice president in the Academic Division." Faculty in both a small group session with the Research and Evaluation of Student Learning (RESL) committee and in the larger faculty session confirmed the institution's commitment to quality assessment.

Transcripts, Transfer Credits Wheaton outlines in a number of documents the scope of work that faculty and the registrar oversee in granting credit and accepting transfer credits. The Faculty Handbook notes that the "Academic Policies Committee is responsible for (a) setting overall academic policies in relation to such matters as course credit and contact time, academic requirements, grading policies, incompletes, and final exams." The College does not provide credit for life experience, experiential learning, or other forms of prior learning.

A team approach seems to mark a good deal of the academic work accomplished at Wheaton. For example the Registrar, the Academic Advising Office, and the Academic Committees in conjunction with the Chief Enrollment Management Officer oversee pre-matriculation credit policies for incoming students. In addition, a trained advisor evaluates all credits from other institutions coming into Wheaton. Of note in the Assurance Argument is the transfer the Wheaton Summits initiated in the Spring of 2023 by the Chief Enrollment Management Officer. Four Summits were held throughout 2023 to evaluate with academic leadership, advising staff, and the Registrar to consider methods of improving the transfer process for prospective students.

Course and Program Rigor While Wheaton does not offer any dual credit courses at any of the local high schools, the College does offer high school students the Wheaton College Summer Institute. According to the website, "the Wheaton College Summer Institute (WCSI) is a premier pre-college program where you'll join outstanding high school students like you for academic study, artistic expression, and spiritual development with world-class Christian faculty -- all on the beautiful campus of Wheaton College." High school students can earn two credits across of range of courses including but not limited to English, philosophy, music, and science. Faculty members, in the large group session confirmed the value of WCSI and a Bridge program, non-credit bearing, to help prepare high school students for college work and to support the institution's enrollment.

Two Wheaton opportunities offer students time to carefully prepare for and engage in the academic and spiritual culture of Wheaton. The first opportunity, the Bridge Program noted above, is a non-credit bearing experience "designed to expand access to college, this two-year summer program prepares Christian high school sophomores and juniors for college through a curriculum that fosters intellectual, leadership, and spiritual growth. Each summer for two years, students spend four weeks living on campus, eating in our dining hall, and learning at the college level." The second opportunity, called Vanguard Gap Year, offers individuals an intense immersion experience where they can earn up to eight College credits in one of three different tracks: Journeys, Adventure, or Equestrian. Wheaton is clearly selective and careful in offering college credits.

Course and program approvals involve confirmation that the institution possesses the range of academic and technology resources required to support any new initiatives. If a new program requires significant resourcing, the Strategic Initiative Funds Committee will evaluate that program. Programs or departments are expected to define and list any prerequisites in their course sequencing to support student success.

Departments are expected to define prerequisites in all cases where the sequencing of courses is critical or where success in one course depends on the content or skills derived from another. An analysis of the Wheaton College Catalog 2023-2024 confirmed multiple examples of co-requisites or prerequisites.   The Assurance argument notes that defined prerequisites are coded into the College's Student Information System (Banner) as a tool to prevent registrations where prerequisites have not been met. The prerequisite can only be overridden by the permission of the instructor.

Program quality and rigor at Wheaton is evident in the professional accreditation's maintained by several programs including: the American Psychological Association, the Commission on Accreditation of Marriage and Family Therapy Education, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, and the National Association of Schools of Music

Graduates' Success Wheaton employs multiple methods, instruments, and professional reports to evaluate the success of its graduates in the undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate programs. Wheaton's Center for Vocation and Career oversees the annual First Destination Survey and the Alumni Survey to track graduates' success. The assurance argument confirms the consistency of this data as evidence that Wheaton's success in preparing students for their professional lives. Of note is the 2022-2023 Health Professions Annual Report where "currently Wheaton graduates have a 75% acceptance rate to medical, dental, and optometry schools, noting that three wait-listed students, if admitted, would increase the acceptance rate to 78.5%." Additionally, the publication "Life After Wheaton: The Undergraduate Class of 2022" communicates graduates' success.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.

1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.
2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Wheaton College has in place plans, policies, and practices to engage in the assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational success of each of its graduates. Faculty members and students confirmed the value of assessment in their respective areas. Faculty see assessment as enhancing their program work and delivery. Students see that assignment rubrics and course evaluations can be effective tools for promoting their personal success or making course changes.

Wheaton assessment policies and timelines are outlined in documents found in the assurance argument and on the College website. The Assurance Argument notes the Wheaton College Institutional Assessment Plan was updated in Fall 2022. The focus of this seven-page document appears to primarily be the Institutional Learning Outcomes at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The document specifies the five Institutional Learning Outcomes, in some cases the measures that will be used to evaluate students' progress are listed along with the parties responsible for oversight of specific ILO. As noted a few places in the Assurance Argument, the three learning outcomes that focus on spiritual growth: cultivating Christian faith and character, developing a grace-filled understanding of diversity, and integrating the liberal arts with biblical and theological belief are fairly difficult to measure given the personal nature of those outcomes. However, the faculty is quite committed to measuring these outcomes particularly as they shared the seven-page assessment document of Christ at the Core (CACT) curriculum.

The College did provide examples of course assignments that try to probe those more challenging areas. The URBN 233 Final Project that takes place in a Chicago neighborhood serves as a strong, authentic assessment. a meeting with a number of faculty who were members of the RESL committee confirmed the care with which, over time, the faculty has crafted thoughtful and meaningful assessment of the institution's ILOs and of their programs. The small group talked about the institution's participation in the HLC Assessment Academy. One faculty member stated they have come, "to a common understanding of the power and value of assessment as meaningful, manageable, sustainable."

Later, in Core Component 4.C, the Annual Institutional Assessment report notes Wheaton's findings on the Students' Spiritual Vitality for both the undergraduate and graduate students. As with other Wheaton assessments, considered analysis follows the report on findings.

The team noted that a special Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) documents is posted for Wheaton's programs. Faculty members are attentive to the PLOs and in some cases map course assessments in their program to the ILOs especially when the "thematic core is evaluated". In the large faculty meeting, a faculty member commented that the the RESL committee was very discerning when accepting an assessment from a particular course for one of the thematic core outcomes. The RESL committee has worked consistently over several years to be consistent in their practices, uses, and analysis of various assessments. Faculty pride was evident in their attention to assessment over the years.

The assurance argument also provides examples of annual assessment feedback to faculty in various departments from each of the deans. The Assurance Argument provided a three-page list of assessment actions from selected graduate and undergraduate programs from 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. Some of the examples provided included:

- In the English program, "revised rubric, provide models, and refined how we teach integrating sources."
- In the German program, after reviewing exam scores, "revised vocabulary materials to better align with lexical frequency; added reading quizzes in various formats to promote reading comprehension.
- In the MA program on Humanitarian Disaster Leadership, "faculty provided additional advising 2/3 into the project timeline to highlight areas for revision. The additional advising provided more constructive feedback that increased performance compared to last year."

As noted above in 4 A, collaboration appears to be a consistent hallmark of the academic efforts planned and overseen by faculty and administrators at Wheaton. Not only are faculty members using results from assessment to enhance student learning, but assessment results are also used to plan faculty professional development. RESL offered individual development sessions, especially for new faculty, as well as providing "a copy of the Assessment Glossary to all department and program chairs to establish a common understanding of assessment practices at Wheaton."

The Wheaton assessment efforts reflect best practices in higher education assessment. Strong assessment begins with clear statements of student learning outcomes evident at the program level and the institutional level as is evident in the Wheaton document, "Student Learning Outcomes by Program". Assessment needs to occur on a regular basis and typically includes direct and indirect measures. The Wheaton assurance argument as well as the evidence provided confirm both. Finally, an effective assessment program uses results from assessment to improve a program. Wheaton clearly engages in an ongoing and comprehensive process of assessment of student learning.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence and completion that are ambitious, attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Rating

Met

Rationale

Wheaton College has a track record of being deliberate and intentional in setting and monitoring retention, persistence and completion rates across its degree and certificate programs. The Executive Dashboard noted in the Assurance Argument is updated regularly for the tri-annual Board of Trustee Meetings. The Executive Dashboard summarizes the current undergraduate data and includes a brief "trend" comment noting the relationship of the current persistence or graduation rates to the target rates set for those areas. The institution's 4-6 year completion rates, as recorded in 2022, are very strong, particularly in programs with a specific vocational outcome. Board members reported on the value of these dashboards for them in staying current with the most recent data and the importance of monitoring retention and persistence considering the demographic realities in the United States related to college age students.

As noted in Core Component 4.B, Wheaton's Institutional Learning Outcomes articulated for their undergraduate and graduate degree programs flow from the institution's mission statement and the institution's efforts to meet the needs of a varied student population. The persistence, retention, and graduation rates coincide almost naturally with that strong emphasis on mission by faculty and student services staff. The College is also proud of the fact that the persistence and graduation rates of Black, Hispanic and Asian student match or exceed the rates of peer institutions for those same populations. As the College's Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness has probed the retention data, risk indicators for specific sub-populations of Wheaton students better inform the College's student life team on various approaches to sustain student success.

This kind of analysis of the risk indicators has led to the College's commitment to early intervention

with students encountering academic or personal challenges. The Student Development area coordinates a Student Wellness Team that includes professionals from four areas. The Assurance Argument noted that staff in these areas confirm the regularity of their interaction. Student Care Services (SCS) communicate regularly with the Registrar to follow up with student receiving low mid-term grades. The Learning and Accessibility Services team provides ADA accommodations and responds to other student needs including mental health issues. The Counseling Center as well as the Student Health Services area work collaboratively to serve students' needs by using predictive analytics and then staff members follow up on those needs if they resurface during the academic year.

Data from the 2023 Graduate Student Focus Groups proved particularly interesting. The Graduate Forum spanned questions that probed practical concerns like helping graduate students find a place to live to more personal issues like graduate students' feelings of belonging at Wheaton, supports for their individual health issues, and appreciation for cultures different from the student's own. The forum recorded summary notes indicated many positive comments by graduate students; at the same time students voiced some concerns. In the team's conversation with the student group, the graduate student president indicated the ongoing efforts of the institution to address their needs, particularly the needs of international students.

Wheaton's effort to monitor and improve its retention, persistence and completion rates is synthesized in the extensive and comprehensive Annual Institutional Assessment (AIA) report. The AIA report includes the most recent statistics as well as valuable historical data and trends. The AIA table of contents notes seven specific areas that are tracked in detail:

- Undergraduate Admissions
- Pricing & Financial Aid
- Student Demographics
- Finance
- Academic Resources
- Educational Outcomes
- Graduate School

The Educational Outcomes for the undergraduates span pages 197-260 and the graduate programs pages 261-279. This annual report is valuable because the data and the discussion of that data provide cogent examples of some of the best practices in data analysis. For example, Wheaton uses National ETS subject test in the sciences, business, and music. As scores are analyzed over time, the College interprets results in relation to its context as a liberal arts college. Finally, Wheaton effectively uses visualization in the AIA report to identify patterns, correlations and/or outliers as the document considers fluctuations in some scores from year to year.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Rationale

Wheaton consistently demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services. The faculty members are particularly proud of their ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of student learning in academic programs and in their Christ at the Core general education program.

5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

The institution's resources, structures, processes and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

5.A - Core Component 5.A

Through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution's leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. Shared governance at the institution engages its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff and students—through planning, policies and procedures.
2. The institution's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents.
3. The institution's administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy and processes through effective collaborative structures.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Wheaton College employs a comprehensive system of shared governance involving faculty, administration, and students in decision-making processes. This governance structure encompasses various committees and task forces, ensuring transparency and inclusivity. This was evident through meeting minutes, policy manuals, their strategic planning process, and the implementation of the Orange Belt program which empowers staff to find process improvement in their daily work. Wheaton's assurance argument was validated through comments made during faculty, staff and student listening sessions. Faculty, students and staff indicated that they feel heard and involved in governance activities. Students shared their experiences serving on institutional committees.

The Board of Trustees at Wheaton College are highly competent, committed professionals who all bring their expertise, experience and passion to their work. Every member of the trustees who attended the team meeting expressed commitment to the mission of the institution. They responded to all of the team's queries, including a question about the 2018 Mid-Cycle Review report indicating board overreach. Although the 2018 report considered this an area for additional monitoring, the Board of Trustees answers to the question indicate that this has been resolved and is no longer a concern.

Wheaton College uses data to reach informed decisions. In addition to external surveys, the college also collects and maintains extensive data on their activities and regularly benchmarks against peer

institutions. They have utilized data dashboards to communicate with board members, faculty, staff, and students. Additionally, they create an annual report sharing data and analysis for key metrics over a several year period. Their robust program review and assessment of student learning allows for changes to programs that benefit the institution. For example, their current data analysis has encouraged them to make changes to their engineering program that will benefit the institution and its constituents.

Despite disruptions caused by COVID-19, strategic planning efforts remain inclusive and focused on ensuring the institution's long-term financial sustainability. Overall, Wheaton College prioritizes collaboration, responsiveness, and adherence to its mission and values in its governance practices.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.B - Core Component 5.B

The institution's resource base supports its educational offerings and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

1. The institution has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The goals incorporated into the mission and any related statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources and opportunities.
3. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring its finances.
4. The institution's fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Wheaton College's Human Resources department ensures staff alignment with the institution's mission through rigorous hiring protocols and ongoing professional development opportunities. Positions are categorized based on qualifications, with most requiring a bachelor's degree and experience. The college supports employee growth through initiatives like educational grants and access to professional development resources like LinkedIn Learning. Employee retention is closely monitored, with actions taken to address voluntary departures. Overall, Wheaton College prioritizes staff development and well-being to sustain its mission effectively.

Campus facilities and Academic Information Technology (AIT) play vital roles in supporting operations, maintaining physical spaces, and managing technology infrastructure. College policies require endowments for infrastructure maintenance and direct operating budget surplus to AIT which allows them to ensure that infrastructure is sufficient today and into the future. The college recently changed their enterprise resource planning (ERP) system from Banner to Oracle. They have moved all operations to Oracle and have a two-year staged roll out plan to move all systems, including student tools and supports, to Oracle. Staff commented that they can already see opportunities for increased collaborations and process improvements from the adoption and implementation of the new ERP system.

Our conversations with administration, faculty and staff, in addition to assurance evidence, demonstrated that Wheaton is focused on institutional growth and success. Annual operational goals, set by the President and the Senior Administrative Cabinet, undergo regular evaluation by the Trustees. Strategic planning emphasizes identifying efficiencies to save resources while maintaining effectiveness, monitored through metrics like program vitality. The college adapts to market demand by modifying programs and implementing alternative delivery modes, which have led to increased graduate enrollments. Strong projection models aid in anticipating changes in enrollment demand and financial viability and support recruitment strategies focused on meeting enrollment and revenue goals while maintaining affordability. Wheaton maintains a low loan default rate among students,

reflecting its commitment to financial responsibility. Conversations with constituents indicated that Wheaton is aware of the changing landscape of higher education, the shifting demographics of the student population, the impact of change in the external environment and the need to adjust to these changing conditions. At the same time, it was clear that they are deeply proud and committed to their mission and seek to sustain it in the changing world in which higher education operates. Wheaton's commitment to mission and character balanced with adapting to the changing landscape of higher education is and will continue to be critical for success.

Wheaton College adheres to financial principles set by its Board of Trustees, aiming for a balanced operating budget supported by a five-year financial plan, using a mathematical model that includes inflation adjustements. The annual budgeting process, informed by financial forecasts, involves careful consideration and oversight, leading to clean financial audit opinions. Faculty and staff are invited to contribute to the budget process and cost savings measures through contributions in town halls, process improvement planning, and the college's lean Orange Belt initiative. Conservative budgeting practices and contingency funds mitigate unforeseen expenses, with any surplus directed towards infrastructure maintenance. Their policies pertaining to maintaining a balanced budget and maintaining little to no debt have helped the institution to remain financially strong. Overall, Wheaton maintains financial stability and prudent resource management.

As a standalone, non-profit private institution, Wheaton College can readily focus its resources on core educational activities without competition from other entities. An IPEDS analysis comparing Wheaton to similar colleges shows it ranks among the top ten in per-student investment in instruction, academic support, and student services. Despite challenges in sustaining net tuition revenue growth in a competitive market, Wheaton's strong endowment reduces its dependence on tuition fees. The college reports that 20% of its operating budget comes from endowment funds. The college addresses enrollment challenges with admissions and financial aid initiatives, overseen by a Chief Enrollment Management Officer. External measures like Moody's rating and Forbes' financial fitness rating reflect Wheaton's financial strength and stability.

Meetings with the VP of Advancement indicated that they are in year three of their "Faithfully Forward" capital campaign. This campaign is a planned 5-year campaign including funding for scholarships and facilities upgrades, including a revitalized library space with additional student support services. The campaign has currently raised 64% of its $225 million goal, with plans to move from a silent phase to a public phase when they reach 70%. Positioned well with its "Faithfully Forward" capital campaign, Wheaton is poised to sustain and enhance its academic programs and strategic initiatives.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes and affiliated centers.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity, including fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.
5. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.
6. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Wheaton College prioritizes its resources for core educational activities, with no competing businesses or entities. It focuses on undergraduate and graduate education, evaluating new programs based on their alignment with the college's mission.

Wheaton supports eight academic centers and institutes that serve the broader mission, each undergoing annual financial analysis to ensure sustainability. While not all directly offer courses, they contribute to the educational mission by providing intellectual resources. Funding primarily comes from restricted endowments, grants, or user fees, ensuring financial self-sustainability. These centers receive minimal direct funding from the college but may utilize shared resources. Overall, they complement Wheaton's academic initiatives without competing for budget resources.

Wheaton College utilizes various evaluative tools to inform budget priorities, such as the Strategic Budget Review (SBR) and Academic Prioritization, which are integral components of the ThunderStronger Plan. These tools consider factors like "Student Experience" and "Student Impact" to guide budgetary decisions, aligning with the college's mission. Wheaton recently engaged in an academic program prioritization exercise utilizing feedback from faculty, staff, administration, board members, and external constituents such as the alumni association, parents, and the Board of Visitors.

While efficiency measures lead to cost reductions, Strategic Investment Funds (SIF) stimulate growth in mission-centric areas like student enrollment and academic programming. Program vitality indicators aid in curriculum updates and resource management, facilitating sustainable futures for academic programs. As evidenced in 4B and discussed with members of the committee, the Research

and Evaluation of Student Learning Committee (RESL) ensures continuous improvement through assessment plans and utilizes institution-wide assessment protocols to measure learning outcomes. Additionally, Wheaton has a robust program review process.

Budget planning in the academic division employs analytic tools to measure enrollments, efficiencies, and program vitality indicators, informing decisions regarding faculty hiring and curriculum adjustments. Additionally, operational support priorities, such as Campus Facilities Priorities, reflect Wheaton's strategic vision of globalized education. They recently remodeled McAlister Hall from a conservatory to an academic building supporting languages and offices working with global communities. They also have a current capital campaign focused on improvements to their library and athletic facilities.

Their planning process incorporates feedback from multiple parties, including students, alumni, faculty, staff, and board members. They have been proactive in planning for an uncertain future with changes in enrollment and student demographics. Utilizing their five year budget process, they noticed an impending gap between revenues and costs that they termed the "red wedge" when working with campus constituents on plans to avoid a budget shortage. The entire campus community mentioned involvement in the planning processes to avoid future budget shortfalls.

Wheaton College focuses on data-driven decision-making, facilitated by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness. They produce an Executive Dashboard Compendium with key performance indicators (KPIs), updated and presented to the Board of Trustees regularly. The Annual Institutional Assessment (AIA) report complements this by providing a comprehensive overview of academic indicators and assessment data, including strengths and weaknesses.

Over the past decade, Wheaton has faced challenges in meeting enrollment targets, compounded by increased uncertainty due to COVID-19. Strategic planning efforts have been intensified to address these challenges, focusing on financial stability and maintaining academic quality. Despite fluctuations, Wheaton's brand reputation and strong academic profile have helped maintain enrollment and rankings. While yield rates have declined, Wheaton remains competitive, focusing on increasing inquiries and applications to sustain enrollment and meet admissions objectives.

While undergraduate enrollment remains stable, the college is adapting its graduate programs to meet evolving demands, including hybrid formats. Investments in educational technology support these changes. Wheaton has also invested resources, most notably staff time, in the implementation of Oracle, their new ERP system. As noted in 5A, staff said they can already see process improvements from the change. Wheaton evaluates pricing and aid policies to stay competitive. While the institution has historically focused on need-based aid, their "Faithfully Forward" campaign has dedicated significant funds to the creation of merit scholarships. The ability to support students financially with help them to navigate future enrollment shifts. Despite challenges, Wheaton remains committed to its mission while navigating industry shifts.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

The institution's resources, structures, processes and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Rationale

Wheaton College operates under a robust system of shared governance involving faculty, administration, and students, ensuring transparency in decision-making processes. Their commitment to data-driven decision-making is evident through comprehensive data collection and analysis, informing strategic planning efforts for long-term financial sustainability and academic quality. The college prioritizes staff, faculty, and student development and well-being, maintains financial stability through prudent resource management, and focuses on its mission amidst the changing higher education landscape. The institution's strategic planning efforts adapt to challenges such as enrollment fluctuations and demographic shifts, with a focus on maintaining competitiveness and academic excellence. Investments in technology and infrastructure support program adaptations and efficiency improvements. Their proactive focus on future enrollment issues have encouraged them to adopt process improvement initiatives such as Orange Belt. Overall, Wheaton College demonstrates a steadfast commitment to its mission while effectively navigating industry changes and challenges.

FC - Federal Compliance

Rating

Met

Federal Compliance Filing Form

- FedCompFiling_2023_FRM_final_with_appendicies

Rationale

Federal Compliance Rationale Template
Effective September 1, 2023–August 31, 2024

Instructions: When an evaluation that includes a Federal Compliance Review is released to the peer review team in the Assurance System, copy and paste the text below into the Rationale section of the Federal Compliance tab.

1. **ASSIGNMENT OF CREDITS, PROGRAM LENGTH AND TUITION**

Conclusion

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale: Wheaton College clearly publishes policies that follow federal definitions and guidelines. The policies reviewed are related to credit hour expectations for standard on-ground courses, as well as, undergraduate and graduate non-traditional and intensive courses. Specific policies related to online courses were not noted. The compliance with the standard written policies was verified in review of the course schedules accessible by the appropriate term. The on-ground class times and credits were listed, and were found in compliance with the Wheaton standard credit hour policies. Although, the credit policies for undergraduate and graduate non-traditional and intensive courses provided detailed instructions, the course schedules lacked detail to verify. As a result, twenty syllabi of non-traditional (including online) and intensive courses were reviewed. There does not appear to be a syllabus template that is followed, but essential elements of the syllabi were present. The syllabi did not consistently outline the credits earned or provide clear instructions on the expectations related to courses listed as variable credit. To improve clarity of compliance, the credit hour assignment, time expectations and course requirements of non-traditional and intensive courses could be required in the syllabi. However, some variable credit syllabi were clear.

On syllabi review, the courses had rigorous expectations with detailed instructions for assignments, and seemed to support the credit hours assigned. Select hybrid and online course syllabi were reviewed. In one course, both the on-ground and online syllabi were reviewed concurrently. Course

objectives and requirements appeared equivalent, and were appropriate for course modality. The evidence of planned and substantive faculty and student interaction in an asynchronous course was not detailed.

The course and program substantive change process was presented. A Comprehensive Calendar Review Task Force provides input on the calendar. The Curriculum Committee considers changes in the courses related to the credit hour policies. The Program Committee reviews all proposals, and directs recommendations to the Curriculum Committee. Both undergraduate and graduate costs (tuition and fees), refund policies, degree plans and program lengths are accessible on the Wheaton College website under the tab, Academics. This information was confirmed without the request of further program materials. Both undergraduate and graduate program lengths were reviewed, and met or exceeded minimum expectations related to the degree earned.

2. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR HANDLING STUDENT COMPLAINTS

Conclusion

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale: In the 2023 2024 Wheaton Student Handbook, the academic appeals is presented. The academic appeals process in the student handbook describes the rationale, the chain of command and the time line expected. The final group for evaluation of the panel is the Hearing Panel. If the student is not satisfied, the appeal moves to the Provost. The detail for procedure of the Hearing Panel is found further in the handbook. Further panel procedures, and instructions for hearing on sensitive matters are also addressed. The date of the catalog revision is visible on the catalog, but not on the student handbook.

The equity in athletics disclosure act is explained in the student handbook. The webpage and information on the Family Rights and Privacy Act (Student Records Access and Protections) was presented.

The Wheaton faculty handbook also describes the roles and responsibilities of faculty with student issues and appeals. The steps, timeline and chain of command are explained. The date of the current faculty handbook is October 2023. The cycle for planned review was not provided.

3. PUBLICATION OF TRANSFER POLICIES

Conclusion

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale: Wheaton appropriately publishes its transfer policies to students and the public. The college reserves the right to evaluate the acceptability and applicability the degrees or credits earned at other institutions. A transfer student is one who attended full-time at another college or university, and completed at least 24 credits. The student should have a B average, and the student may transfer up to 62 credit hours. A maximum of four liberal arts themes may be completed with transfer credit. A maximum of 40 credit hours may be earned via dual credit in high school. Wheaton accepts credit for distance learning or online course work when the institution is accredited except for labs, foreign language and public speaking courses. Higher level courses specifically meeting degree requirements are under separate consideration. Transfer students are expected to meet all degree requirements in alignment with the policy statements. Transfer students will be assigned an admissions advisor to

assist their navigation with transfer policies at Wheaton.

Wheaton publishes a web page titled, How-to Transfer Credit. On this page are contacts and scheduling links. There is a list of 2023 - 2024 Transfer Guidelines for Christ at the Core (Liberal Arts), College of DuPage, Elgin Community College, Joliet Junior College and Waubonsee Community College. Each transfer guide provides specific course equivalencies for the core competencies, thematic core and instructions related to the major courses.

Details of a joint program agreement with Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) and Northern Illinois University (NIU) are as follows: Wheaton students undergo three years of coursework at Wheaton, then two years at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) or Northern Illinois Universitiy (NIU). During those first three years, Wheaton students are also permitted -- in addition to their Wheaton courses -- to enroll in classes at the College of DuPage (COD) -- for classes not offered by Wheaton. This culminates in a BA or BS in Liberal Arts Engineering and a Bachelor of Science in a specific engineering field from an ABET accredited engineering program. The five year degree plan in Biomedical and Neural Engineering was presented.

4. PRACTICES FOR VERIFICATION OF STUDENT IDENTITY

Conclusion

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale: Wheaton confirms the College offers distance or correspondence courses. To verify student identity, it uses authenticated access to the Banner student information system to enroll in courses. This automatically enrolls students in the Learning Management System (LMS) Canvas. Canvas uses authenticated access for every student access to the course system. In all courses with final exams, these exams are proctored by a staff who certifies the student identities. All work is subject to College policies related to academic honesty.

Wheaton uses reasonable efforts to protect student privacy. These efforts include, but are not limited to personal information is only used for academic and philanthropic purposes, and employees only respond to requests and need for services. There are no additional costs or fees associated with test proctoring charged directly to the student. There are no additional costs disclosed to the student prior to enrollment in a distance or correspondence course.

5. PROTECTION OF STUDENT PRIVACY

Conclusion

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale: Wheaton has developed procedures to ensure the privacy and security of student data that includes student records. The Privacy Policy pages discloses information gathering and dissemination practices for all College websites and servers. External links on the Wheaton website are explained, and the risks involved with viewing. Site analytics are completed without identifiable data. Wheaton users are informed about the life and use of cookies in web browsing. Unless required by law, Wheaton will not share any personal information unless by consent, to service providers, if required by law and de-identified and aggregate data. Instructions on Adobe and Google Analytics Opt-Outs are provided to users. Finally security, retention and destruction of data, rights, contact information

and methods of updates are all explained on the page.

Wheaton requires all employees to complete AIT-managed cybersecurity training annually. The modules include, but are not limited to FERPA, Data Security, Physical Security, Email and Browser Safety and Social Engineering. Third party contracts are reviewed and modified to ensure they comply with Wheaton's security and privacy standard.

6. **PUBLICATION OF STUDENT OUTCOME DATA**

Conclusion

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale: The Wheaton filing provided links to the required student outcomes data accessible on the website. Wheaton by the numbers provided information of current enrollment, finances, graduation rates and residence life statistics. The six-year graduation rates are presented in total, by gender, ethnicity/racial group, and socioeconomic status related to federal grants. The financial implications of a Wheaton education are presented on a page delineating the value of a Wheaton education. Links on the page include affordability and value, rankings, scholarship and aid, retention and landing outcomes and debt. The average student debt incurred and a low loan default rate are published. After Wheaton is a publication showing clear info graphics related to characteristics of graduates of the College. The Center for Vocation and Career and the Alumni Association assist graduates with their milestone choices at graduation.

7. **STANDING WITH STATE AND OTHER ACCREDITORS**

Conclusion

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale: Wheaton clearly publishes on the website the recognized accreditors which include the Higher Learning Commission, National Association of Schools of Music, American Psychological Association, the Council of Counseling and Related Education Programs, Commission on Accrediting for Marriage and Family Therapy Education and the American Chemical Society. The affiliations are also listed which include the Consortium of Liberal Arts Colleges and the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. Currently, there are no pending or final actions by any recognized accreditor to withdraw status or impose sanctions, Show -Cause Order or adverse action.

8. **RECRUITING, ADMISSIONS AND RELATED ENROLLMENT PRACTICES**

Conclusion

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale: The mission statement and code of conduct for the Undergraduate Admissions Office at Wheaton College updated in 2023 is presented as evidence. Seven principles are written to demonstrate their commitment to authentically present the College, and follow ethical recruitment practices in all aspects of daily operations. The code of conduct for Wheaton's Student Financial Service Professionals dated October 2014, is presented. Seven principles are explained. The final evidence outlines the sufficiency of staffing to administer the Title IV programs at the College. The College office, reporting structure and staff functions are listed. These areas presented include the

Office of the Registrar, Admissions Personnel, Student Financial Services Personnel, Fiscal/Accounting Office Personnel, Human Resources Office Personnel, Public Safety Personnel and Student Development Personnel.

APPENDIX A: TITLE IV PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

Complete this section **only if** the institution has submitted an Appendix A. Review any negative actions taken against the institution since HLC's last Federal Compliance review and identify any implications for the institution's current compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation or other HLC requirements. Provide a detailed rationale for any Core Components identified as Met with Concerns or Not Met.

Rationale: There was no submission of Appendix A to this filing.

MANDATORY REPORTING: FRAUD, ABUSE OR FAILING TO MEET TITLE IV RESPONSIBILITIES

Federal regulations require HLC to notify the U.S. Department of Education related to the following item. Do not skip this section.

In the course of the peer review team's evaluation of this institution, have the reviewers encountered any reason to believe that (i) the institution is failing to meet its Title IV, Higher Education Act program responsibilities (if the institution participates in Title IV, HEA programs) or (ii) that the institution may be engaged in fraud or abuse?

Answer (Choose one response and delete the other)**:**

No

Rationale (If the team responded "Yes," explain the reasons for concern in detail. Otherwise, leave this section blank.)**:**

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

Review Dashboard

Number	Title	Rating
1	Mission	
1.A	Core Component 1.A	Met
1.B	Core Component 1.B	Met
1.C	Core Component 1.C	Met
1.S	Criterion 1 - Summary	
2	Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct	
2.A	Core Component 2.A	Met
2.B	Core Component 2.B	Met
2.C	Core Component 2.C	Met
2.D	Core Component 2.D	Met
2.E	Core Component 2.E	Met
2.S	Criterion 2 - Summary	
3	Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support	
3.A	Core Component 3.A	Met
3.B	Core Component 3.B	Met
3.C	Core Component 3.C	Met
3.D	Core Component 3.D	Met
3.S	Criterion 3 - Summary	
4	Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement	
4.A	Core Component 4.A	Met
4.B	Core Component 4.B	Met
4.C	Core Component 4.C	Met
4.S	Criterion 4 - Summary	
5	Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning	
5.A	Core Component 5.A	Met
5.B	Core Component 5.B	Met
5.C	Core Component 5.C	Met
5.S	Criterion 5 - Summary	
FC	Federal Compliance	Met

Review Summary

Conclusion

Wheaton College is clearly guided by its mission and associated mission documents. Evidence was presented in the Assurance Argument, associated evidence material, the institutional website and in conversations throughout our visit that key stakeholders understand and support the mission.

President Philip Ryken brings a passion for Wheaton, a commitment to its mission, significant experience with the institution and a vision of integrating traditional strengths with the innovative approaches needed for the 21st century. He enjoys a positive relationship with members of the Wheaton community. He embodies deep Christian faith, leadership skills, strategic thinking, and dedication to serving the students and to fulfilling Wheatont's identity as a learning community in which faculty and staff participate in preparing students for future careers as well as for roles in building the church and creating a better society.

Wheaton is committed to its distinctive mission of Christian liberal education. Firmly grounded in its religious traditions, the College has embraced its Christ-centered Diversity Commitment, both as a means of preparing its graduates to live in a world where diversity is increasingly salient and as part of its role in modeling the application of the model of Jesus in integrating deep faith with respect for differences. This commitment is reflected in student recruitment, in the hiring of faculty and staff, and in the curriculum and co-curriculum.

The assurance argument and the team's review have provided evidence that it has effectively met all Core Components and Sub-Components of Criterion One.

Wheaton provided sufficient evidence to indicate that it acts with integrity and that its conduct is ethical and responsible. Students are educated about academic integrity and ethical academic practices in courses, library instruction and through College policies. The institution has necessary policies in place covering relevant matters. Wheaton is committed to academic freedom within the context of a Christian education.

Appropriate Board and shared governance practices are in place. The members of the Board of Trustees demonstrate an enduring commitment to independence from undue influence through the development of appropriate bylaws, policies and practices. The Board is well-aware of the challenges facing the institution, with Board committees being actively engaged with the life of Wheaton College. The Board is committed to ongoing development of members' understanding of both the national context of higher education and the ways in which Wheaton enacts its mission. The Board respects the autonomy of faculty in playing their role in educating students.

The assurance argument and the team's review have provided evidence that it has effectively met all Core Components and Sub-Components of Criterion Two.

Wheaton provided sufficient evidence to indicate that it provides academic offerings appropriate to its role as a Christian liberal arts institution. The curricula for the respective programs are offered with consistent quality. Students and faculty engage in activities and academic pursuits that enact the mission of the College. The assurance argument provides evidence that Wheaton offers students a transformative educational experience, in a distinctive Christian, liberal arts environment. Contributions to scholarship and creative work are in evidence through faculty publications.

The assurance argument and the team's review have provided evidence that it has effectively met all Core

Components and Sub-Components of Criterion Three.

Wheaton consistently demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services. The faculty members are particularly proud of their ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of student learning in academic programs. As a result of participation in the HLC Assessment Academy for its Quality Initiative Project, members of the Academic Division and Student Development designed a new institution-level assessment process with a set of Institutional Learning Outcomes. Also noteworthy are the curricular changes with the Christ at the Core general education program which incorporated assessment directly into the design of the curriculum, representing a foundational reform that improved the culture of assessment on campus.

The assurance argument notes that Wheaton's, team-based, early intervention approach to student success is informed by risk indicators for specific sub-populations. As a result, the institution maintains high graduation and retention rates, and uses institutional research data to support student success by monitoring these data.

The assurance argument and the team's review have provided evidence that it has effectively met all Core Components and Sub-Components of Criterion Four.

The institution's resources, structures, processes and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The foundational evidence provided to assure compliance with Criterion 5 includes the institution's recent Academic Prioritization and Strategic Budget Review processes,

as well as its commitment to making data informed decisions. One area of attention is the continued implementation of changes based on student learning outcomes assessment.

College guides consistently rank Wheaton College as one of the best values for an exceptional college education. Still, one of the most important challenges facing Wheaton College is that of maintaining its enrollment of a student population that can benefit from the rigorous Christ-centered liberal education that characterizes this institution. Their proactive focus on future enrollment issues have encouraged them to adopt process improvement initiatives such as Orange Belt.

Wheaton is fortunate to have a strong and stable resource base comprising its economic resources such as endowment, physical plant and a strong donor base that gives both to the annual fund and long-term capital initiatives. The College's financial forecasting is based on multi-year planning with a robust set of financial, enrollment, and academic program vitality indicators. Wheaton is also strong in its human resources, with a well-qualified faculty and staff committed to the College's enduring institutional mission of Christian liberal arts.

The assurance argument and the team's review have provided evidence that it has effectively met all Core Components and Sub-Components of Criterion Five.

The team concludes that Wheaton College fulfills all of the HLC criteria for accreditation and, accordingly, recommendation continuing accreditation. Moreover, Wheaton College is characterized by the following features: 1) clarity about and commitment to a distinctive Christian mission, 2) embodiment of ethical integrity, 3) an excellent educational and co-curricular program in the liberal arts tradition, 4) the existence of a culture of assessment that ensures effectiveness of achieving well-defined learning outcomes and ongoing curricular improvement and 5) a solid base of financial and human resources that, coupled with a careful planning process, can ensure that the College can continue to fulfill its mission. On the basis of this appraisal, the team recommends that Wheaton College be eligible to choose its HLC Pathway.

Overall Recommendations

Criteria For Accreditation
Met

Sanctions Recommendation
No Sanction

Pathways Recommendation
Eligible to choose

Federal Compliance
Met

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

INTERNAL

Institutional Status and Requirements (ISR) Worksheet

Review Details

Institution: Wheaton College, Illinois

Type of Review: Open Pathway - Comprehensive Evaluation Visit

Description:

Review Dates: 04/08/2024 - 04/09/2024

✓ No Change in Institutional Status and Requirements

Accreditation Status

Status: Accredited

✓ No Change
☐ Recommended Change:

Degrees Awarded: Bachelors, Doctoral, Masters

✓ No Change
☐ Recommended Change:

Reaffirmation of Accreditation:

Year of Last Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2014 - 2015
Year of Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2023 - 2024

☐ No Change
✓ Recommended Change:2033-2034

Accreditation Stipulations

General:

The institution is approved at the following program level(s): Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral

The institution is not approved at the following program level(s): Associate's, Specialist

The institution is limited to offer the following program(s) within the approved program levels listed above: Doctor of Psychology, Ph.D. in Biblical and Theological Studies, Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology, and Doctor of Ministry.

✓ No Change
☐ Recommended Change:

Additional Locations:

Prior HLC approval required.

✓ No Change
☐ Recommended Change:

Distance and Correspondence Courses and Programs:

Approved for distance education courses and programs. Approval for correspondence education is limited to courses.

✓ No Change
☐ Recommended Change:

Competency-Based Education:

✓ No Change
☐ Recommended Change:

Pell-Eligible Prison Education Program:

✓ No Change
☐ Recommended Change:

Accreditation Events

Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation: Open Pathway

☐ No Change
✓ Recommended Change: Eligible to Choose

Upcoming Reviews:

No Upcoming Reviews

✓ No Change
☐ Recommended Change:

Upcoming Branch Campus or Additional Location Reviews:

No Upcoming Reviews

✓ No Change
☐ Recommended Change:

Monitoring

Upcoming Monitoring Reviews:

No Upcoming Reviews

✓ No Change
☐ Recommended Change:

Institutional Data

Academic Programs Offered:

Undergraduate Programs		
Associate Degrees:	0	✓ No Change ☐ Recommended Change:
Baccalaureate Degrees:	46	✓ No Change ☐ Recommended Change:
Graduate Programs		
Master's Degrees:	16	✓ No Change ☐ Recommended Change:
Specialist Degrees:	0	✓ No Change ☐ Recommended Change:

Doctoral Degrees:	4	✓ No Change ☐ Recommended Change:
Certificate Programs		
Certificates:	4	✓ No Change ☐ Recommended Change:

Contractual Arrangements:

No Contractual Arrangements

✓ No Change
☐ Recommended Change:

Off-Campus Activities

Branch Campuses:

No Branch Campuses

✓ No Change
☐ Recommended Change:

Additional Locations:

Honey Rock Camp, 8660 HoneyRock Rd., Three Lakes, Wisconsin 54562 United States

Lumina College, Breakthrough Centre, 191 Woosung Street, Kowloon, 00000 China

✓ No Change
☐ Recommended Change: