Institutional responses to the recommendations of the evaluation team from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) who visited Wittenberg University, March 11-13, 2007.

**Progress Report to HLC:** “We recommend that the University submit a progress report on student enrollment and net tuition revenue. The report should be supported by appropriate data and be due December 2010. We also recommend that the University submit a progress report on assessment of student learning. That report should provide information on how the data collected are being used for improvement of the evaluation of programs and be due December 2010.”

“Wittenberg University continues to be challenged with under-enrollment and insufficient net student revenues. These challenges lead to other challenges such as deferred maintenance, staffing uncertainty, and unfunded computer replacement. The University is attempting to implement a plan to deal with these challenges. The report should contain data expressing how well it is meeting enrollment and net student revenue targets and whether the University is able to meet its budget goals.”

“The University has collected a lot of data, but not satisfactorily analyzed that data to see if it is meeting the goals for general education nor provided evidence that the University is effectively using that data in making key academic decisions. The report should include information on how well students are meeting general education goals and how data is used in continual improvement of the academic program.”

**Update of December 31, 2008**
Compiled by Provost Ken Bladh with input from Senior Staff

**Academic Programs**

“The University will benefit from more careful and creative macro-level thinking about how programs might integrate resources so that time and people are not scattered in too many directions. The creation of new programs and the accompanying diffusion of resources undermine the strategic plan implementation. Some programs may have outlived their usefulness and may need to be terminated so that resources can be directed to more important programs.”

*The Strategic Plan Implementation Task Force A was reconstituted in January 2008 after the Curriculum Review Committee delivered its report to the Educational Policy Committee and disbanded (May 2007). This task force has established a webpage, meets biweekly, and is soliciting proposals and making recommendations on academic program enhancements to the SPIG for funding. So far, proposals to rejuvenate the Torch, initiate a summer screenwriting institute, and implement the ‘Geek House’ have been funded by the President on recommendation from Task Group A and SPIG.*

*The Provost initiated conversations with the Faculty Executive Board and Budget & Compensation Advisory Committee, during the 2008-2009 academic year, on structures and*
processes to discuss possible program eliminations in the context of budget discussions and the need to reallocate resources to the institution’s most important programs and strategic initiatives. This discussion and analysis will continue.

“...the institution may want to consider the creation of a Center for Community Engagement. The staff and students in this center would coordinate service learning, help initiate curricular and co-curricular service involvement, record and assess service, be sure a reflective component is part of service, and be a conduit for service with the local area.”

This recommendation was considered by a planning task group which submitted a proposal for establishing a Center for Civic and Urban Engagement to the SPIG in spring 2008. The Wittenberg Center for Civic and Urban Engagement was established fall 2008 with the appointment of its first faculty director (Professor Warren Copeland), Administrative Director (Stephanie McCuistion) and Assistant to the Administrative Director (Matt Lynch ’08). The Center has also established a Community Advisory Board, which has helped to identify four specific areas of initial focus for the Center. The four initiatives include: Renewing the Core and the Creek; Strengthening After-School Programs; Preparing for Future Jobs; and Improving Housing Quality. A 2008 Federal earmark for afterschool programs awarded to Wittenberg is managed through the CCUE. Proposals seeking funds for these projects are being developed and submitted.

“The University may want to consider whether the Provost has sufficient administrative staff members to whom he can assign attention to academic matters.”

The Provost completed broad scale reorganization of the Assistant and Associate Provost positions in the 2008-2009 academic year to more closely align academic administrative work to support the Strategic Plan. Evaluation of the need for additional administrative staff in the academic area awaits completion of the reorganization and associated hiring.

“The current structure of the study abroad programs on campus does not provide appropriate opportunities for global education. On-campus curricular requirements and the lack of financial aid inhibit student participation.” “The campus needs to identify the types of study-abroad sites that lead to significant student learning and that are affordable to the institution. In addition, students studying off campus need to be part of an overall enrollment management plan since the time that they spend away they are not on campus. ...if they are replaced with on campus students of similar academic quality and discount rate, the University may be able to provide this important academic experience while achieving reasonable financial equilibrium.” “...the university should undertake a study to determine the impediments to increasing such study. One problem may be the inability to “take” institutional financial aid abroad. Another might be the overly-structured curricular requirements for general education or major requirements, precluding or making a semester off campus impossible.”

A pilot study on first year international experience funded by Transformational Investment fund is being implemented and evaluated fall 2008 with only limited participation by faculty and students.
The departure of Associate Provost Gaffield, who had responsibility for oversight of study abroad programs and strategic initiatives to achieve increased student participation, has delayed progress on these initiatives at a time when global financial pressures have made study abroad less possible for most American students.

Continued analysis of financial models that allow greater participation will await the appointment of a new Associate Provost for International Engagement and Experiential Learning. This new position, made possible by the resignation of Associate Provost Gaffield, has been defined to be more focused on study abroad and experiential learning than was possible under the former administrative structure.

EPC is considering how the general education program and nature of academic majors might encourage and enable increased study abroad opportunities.

“... it is important to ensure that the School (of Community Education) remain a valued part of the university and not relegated to the periphery, as it will continue to serve students in accordance with the university’s stated mission.”

Dr. Elma Lee Moore and her staff completed a strategic plan (November 2008) and are currently in dialogue with senior administration on future initiatives and marketing opportunities. Articulation agreements with regional 2-year institutions are under development to increase transfer enrollments through SCE for students over 26 and through Admissions for all others.

Assessment of Student Learning

“For many departments and programs, assessment of student learning occurs at the Capstone level, but there is no evidence of regular and systematic collection and use of data before this end point in a student’s career.”

This was to be referred to the faculty Committee on Assessment of Student Learning and Associate Provost Gaffield. The committee will review best practices for developmental assessment (at course or program level) currently in place on campus and evaluate methods used on other campuses. This will now be a shared responsibility of the newly appointed Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and Planning, Dr. Jeff Ankrom, and the new Associate Provost for International Engagement and Experiential Learning. The first part of this process will begin spring 2009 under Dr. Ankrom’s guidance.

“Learning goals for courses in general education are stated, but data relevant to goals are not systematically collected, maintained and disseminated. Because those data are nonexistent or incomplete, assessment does not effectively and consistently inform curricular change.”

Provost has advised the Educational Policies Committee to include metrics for assessment of the new or revised general education program in its report to the faculty. Provost also assigned the
oversight of general education assessment to the Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and Planning.

The Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and Planning will evaluate the potential of current instruments (e.g. NSSE, IDEA, CIRP, CLA) as institutional-level measures of student learning. Dr. Ankrom participated in the Teagle consortium workshops held at Wittenberg June 2008 and is a member of the institutional research director team in that project evaluating alternate approaches to institutional level outcomes assessment.

The new Director of General Education, Dr. Tom Taylor, initiated a systematic analysis of faculty perceptions of each general education learning goal through surveys and focus groups fall 2008. After consultation with the Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and Planning the preliminary results are being revised and additional input from faculty sought to increase the initially low response rate.

The Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and Planning, Director of General Education and the General Education Advisory Committee will evaluate approaches to course-level assessment of general education learning outcomes.

Branding and Marketing

“While Wittenberg’s newly-articulated mission clearly highlights its aspirations and outcomes for student learning, the University’s documents are inconsistent in publicly articulating the institution’s commitment to that mission statement. The mission needs to be consistently stated in some publications to reflect the newly-articulated mission in a consistent fashion.”

We are in the process of initiating a search for a Vice President for Integrated Communications and Enrollment who will take the lead in addressing this issue. This search is possible through a redefinition of the vacant VP for Enrollment Management position.

Senior Staff has not yet assigned responsibility for a review of all publications and web pages.

“The goal to be among the top 75 schools in the nation may, however, require an unrealistic increase in student academic profile and in the endowment for the time period in which it is to be achieved.” ...

“The University may want to reconsider that goal to consider whether that particular ranking is the best measure for the carefully considered vision that it has for its students and its programs.”

While we understand the caution of the HLC regarding our aspiration to be among the top 75 schools in the nation, we plan to proceed toward that goal. Many of the schools with that ranking have endowments no larger than our own.
Budget, Compensation, Deferred Maintenance

“Insufficient resources are allocated to provide for improved physical accessibility, computer replacement, and library acquisitions, resulting in inadequate services for some students, faculty and staff.” “It will be important for Wittenberg University to develop a means of budgeting for critically important expenses like computer replacements and deferred maintenance.”

“It is, however, very important for Wittenberg University to reduce its endowment payout if the endowment is to maintain its real value or (hopefully) grow.”

“We note that tuition benefits and health care in retirement are unusually generous. Sabbatical leaves are supported at a high salary level as well. The student-faculty ratio is not high compared to similar institutions. We recommend that appropriate faculty leadership and administration engage in a discussion and develop a plan which provides a sustainable approach to student-faculty ratio, faculty salary and benefits, and leave policy. In doing this, it would be worthwhile to compare total compensation (including tuition benefits) as well as salaries to peers.”

Faculty Budget and Compensation Committee is working with members of Senior Staff (namely the Vice President for Business and Finance and Provost) to address these challenges and achieve the goals articulated in the University Strategic Plan.

Church Relationship and Lutheran Identity

“The affirmation of Lutheran identity in the new mission statement/strategic plan appears to be inconsistent with recent changes in the representation on the Board of Directors and the President’s Senior Staff. This apparent inconsistency may undermine shared understanding of the institution’s identity by its constituents.” “The institution’s affiliation as a university of the ELCA and its referenced in the mission statement to its Lutheran heritage necessitates attention to and acknowledgment of this heritage by members of the board, administration, faculty, students and staff.”

Wittenberg’s 2006 Lutheran Identity Study (LIS) defines a meaningful and contemporary relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a relationship that not only honors our historic roots as an institution of the church, but one that also provides important moral and ethical validation for key components of Wittenberg’s mission. Following is a brief update on actions taken in response to recommendations put forth in the LIS report:

1. Wittenberg’s Lutheran heritage is prominently featured as part of many programs and public speaking opportunities for campus administrators and admission staff. Additionally, University Communications and the Director of Church Relations are in the final stages of development of a new brochure that discusses Wittenberg’s Lutheran heritage and the relevance of this heritage to Wittenberg’s mission today (LIS R-1).

2. Wittenberg continues to actively consult with Region 6 Bishops in our recruitment of Lutherans to serve on the Board of Directors. Additionally, the Board has acted on the
Lutheran Identity Study’s recommendation to appoint a Bishop from Region 6 to the Board (LIS R-6).

3. As an embodiment of Wittenberg’s commitment to service, the Center for Civic and Urban Engagement is quickly becoming an important tool in connecting the University more closely with Springfield and Clark County. The opening of the Center also fulfills a key recommendation from the Lutheran Identity Study. Additional centers recommended by the LIS are under study at this time (LIS R-7).

4. The restoration of the full-time Director of Church Relations position was among the first actions taken in response to the LIS (LIS R-12).

5. All major religious holidays and observances have been incorporated into the college’s master planning calendar. Major campus programs and activities are now scheduled around these dates when possible. Wittenberg also hosts an iftar observance, now in its third year, that brings members of the local Muslim community together with members of the campus community (LIS R-13).

6. The University received a gift for the permanent endowment of the Pastor to the University position (LIS R-16).

7. Several actions have been taken related to our recruitment of Lutheran students, including the restoration or the Director of Church Relations to full-time, the reengineering of the Luther Scholar-Leader Scholarship, and the development of a comprehensive multicultural student recruitment plan that includes minority and majority Lutheran students (LIS R-20).

8. Wittenberg’s sustainability initiatives are consistent with and responsive to LIS recommendation number 19.

Taken together, these and other activities and initiatives should provide ample evidence of Wittenberg’s ongoing commitment to its relationship with the Lutheran church.

Diversity

“The University must continue to pay attention to all matters of diversity, including greater representation of women and persons of color on its Board of Directors and in the upper ranks of administration, to achieve the goals of its mission and strategic plan, as well as to provide accomplished individuals as role models for students. This need is recognized by key leaders.” “The inequality of titles within the President’s Senior Staff sends a message related to the women of the university, i.e. women are not as important since they are Associate Vice Presidents, and also place the Student Development Division in a second-class citizenship.”

Since the HLC visit, two senior administrative positions – both members of senior staff (Vice President for Advancement and Associate Vice President for Student Development) became
vacant. Female candidates were appointed to both positions after national searches and one title and job description (student development) was changed from ‘associate vice president’ to ‘vice president’. Currently, the University’s senior staff of eight individuals is comprised of five men (including one African-American) and three women, and may represent the most diverse senior staff in Wittenberg’s history.

The University continues to closely monitor the demographic composition of the Board of Directors and actively seeks to identify and appoint a broad representation of directors as Board seats become available.

“Based on interviews with faculty and administrators, programs that support diversity initiatives and students are not coordinated in ways that optimize their impact on students.”

A comprehensive assessment of campus climate was completed by Dr. Sue Rankin of Rankin & Associates Consulting in April 2008. The results were reported to the campus through a series of open meetings October 29-31, 2008. The Diversity Task Force is working with Dr. Rankin to develop an action plan with specific recommendations to address the most critical issues identified by the study.

In addition to its work with Dr. Rankin, the Diversity Task Force and individual members of the group have also:

1. Developed a comprehensive multicultural student recruitment plan to guide admission and recruitment activities toward the goal of enrolling a more diverse student body.

2. Redesigned and achieved reinstatement of the Broadwell Chinn Scholarship as a tool in the recruitment of students of diverse backgrounds and students who have demonstrated a clear understanding of and appreciation for Wittenberg’s commitment to diversity.

3. Provided advising support to Alpha Phi Alpha, the historically black fraternity that reactivated its chapter at Wittenberg during the 2007-2008 academic year.

4. Initiated work on the development of a comprehensive recruitment plan targeted at faculty and staff.

5. A new-student scholarship for former Upward Bound participants who enroll at Wittenberg was initiated this year (2008-2009).

Facilities and Environmental Issues (sustainability)

“In compliance with the goals of the new Strategic Plan, the University has failed to attend to environmental issues, such as providing adequate receptacles and education on recycling and building in accordance with “Green” principles.”
President Erickson initiated a campus recycling program Spring 2008 in collaboration with faculty and student advocates. Student groups - the Parliament of the Wittenberg Environmental Revolution (PoWER), Students Taking Action Now Dammit! (STAND) and Student Senate have been instrumental in starting this and other Green initiatives. Plans are underway for an Eco-House themed living environment in a university-owned rental property.

“Green Wittenberg” – a group of Wittenberg University faculty, staff members and students – has introduced the “Wittenberg Green Guide”, "Green Week," a food co-op and campus-wide recycling in the last two years. The food co-op has been assigned space in a convenient central location in a newly renovated university-owned building. The “Wittenberg Green Guide” is an informational Web resource dedicated to a more environmentally sustainable way of living. The brainchild of Ken Irwin, Assistant Professor, the site is a wiki, meaning that users can freely create and edit Web page content using any Web browser.

Associate Professor Rick Incorvati assumed the role of campus recycling coordinator. In Rick’s words... “The job involves coordinating the efforts of student groups (which they’ve already been doing on their own, actually), identifying problems as they arise in the program, working with John Poulsen at the Physical Plant and other people in the campus community, making some recommendations for future improvements, and, perhaps most importantly, seeking answers to questions that anyone has about Wittenberg’s recycling program.” Under Rick’s leadership recycling receptacles are now single-stream and located in all buildings. A recycling awareness event and sale of “dorm room” receptacles were featured in New Student Days Move-in fall 2008 through the cooperation of Student Development.

President Erickson and Provost Bladh have met with student and faculty leaders during fall semester 2008 to consider the establishment of a campus sustainability committee. These conversations continue with the goal of appointing a committee by mid-semester, spring 2009.

“The organization does not ensure access to facilities for people with physical limitations; newer facilities are compliant with ADA and welcoming to those with physical limitations, but older facilities and the grounds are not. The University should develop a plan to rectify the limitations.”

All renovation projects included in the Historic Heart component of the Comprehensive Campaign will bring those academic buildings in full compliance with ADA regulations. So far, the schematic designs for the first two projects, Blair and Carnegie Halls, meet this expectation.

“The team found campus signage not successful.” ... “Even when adaptations have been made (there is a lift to access the first floor of Recitation Hall), no signs direct individuals to the entrance with an accessible entry.”

No action.
Faculty Governance

“We heard some faculty frustration with faculty processes taking inordinate lengths of time and consuming much faculty time. It would be worthwhile to assess the faculty governance structure to see if there is a way to retain the needed while eliminating that which is no longer effective.”

The process of modification of the faculty governance structure began in the 2007-2008 academic year with consolidation of several committees and will continue under the guidance of the Faculty Executive Board.

Institutional Research, Planning & Record Keeping

“Wittenberg University, while collecting much data, does not effectively analyze that data in informing the institutional review process. The team found that the self-study was remarkably devoid of data-based analysis and review. Filling a newly established position in Institutional Research should aid that process.” “The creation of a task force to accompany the Institutional Research Director, charged with educating the institution regarding the priorities of data usage, may help motivate folks to consistently use data for change and improvement purposes.”

After consultation with the Faculty Executive Board the institutional research advisory responsibilities will be folded into the duties of existing committees to be identified in conversation with FEB.

“ (the advancement team) still needs to build an appropriate data set, clean up discrepancies in records of gifts, and put in place appropriate practices in both fundraising and record-keeping.”

Rose and Tuck Consultants reviewed the Advancement operations (June 2008), including the integrity of data sets and processes and recommended remedies to prepare for the comprehensive campaign. Through fall and spring 2008-2009, staff of Wittenberg Computing Services, Advancement and contract consultants integrate Advancement data into the institutional administrative data system (Colleague) and verify the integrity of all data. Data entry protocols are also being modified as necessary. Training of Advancement staff is also a part of this project. Most of the cost of these improvements is funded by the President’s Transformation Investment Fund.

“The University has not yet developed a reliable system for recording data about service done by University students and employees.”

Refer to Director of Community Service and Faculty Director of Center for Civic and Urban Engagement.
Student Development & Student Life

“It appears that the level of staffing in residence hall (3 for 7 halls) and counseling services (1) are very low for a university of the size and mission of Wittenberg. The University has not done an appropriate review to determine whether it is delivering the services needed by its student body.”

The 2007-2008 staffing plan included a net increase of one fte (4 for 7 halls) in the professional residence hall staff (in 2008-2009 these positions were redefined as ‘Area Coordinators’ with the requirement of masters-level professional credentials). A seasoned residence life professional was named as the Associate Dean of Residential Life and serves as the VP/Dean of Students chief of staff. A new Director of Greek Life joined the staff also with a clear mandate to improve the quality of the system and integrate Greek programming with the entire campus. In order to meet the growing demand for services, a part-time counselor (10-15 hours per week) joined the staff in health and counseling.

The new Vice President for Student Development and Dean of Students, Dr. Sarah Kelly, brings a strong commitment to data-based evaluation of student programming and activities and is in the process of developing comprehensive learning outcomes for division programs and services and an assessment plan to accompany them to allow administrators to determine whether co-curricular learning goals are being met. Further, the learning outcomes and assessment plan will facilitate the redistribution of division resources to those areas that are making the most difference.

“It is recommended that an Institutional Task Force be established and charged with the development of a complete retention plan. After institutional “buy-in” is received regarding everyone’s responsibility for retention, then the plan should be operationalized.” “A revision of the organizational structure, to include changes in titles, would be helpful in terms of having those with responsibility, working relationships and reporting aligned together, i.e. enrollment management should include admission and retention.”

The President assigned Dr. Sarah Kelly, Vice President for Student Development and Dean of Students, with the responsibility to chair a new broadly-empowered task force on student retention (fall 2008). The recommendation to align retention with admissions (under the title ‘enrollment management’) was not implemented, in part, given the vacancy in the vice president for enrollment management position and presidential decision to redefine the responsibilities of this vice president and the institutional approach to enrollment management. The task force is a small group made up of the director of admission, director of financial aid, budget director, Assistant Provost for the First Year Experience, Associate Dean for Residential Life and Assistant Provost for Institutional Research

“Based on conversations with faculty and administrators, the University has not yet developed sufficient coordination between the contributions of academic affairs and student development in terms of the holistic education of students.”
We recently reorganized our Board of Directors committee structure to address this issue. The work of the former Academic Affairs and Student Life committees we merged into one committee called “The Student Experience”. This committee models the seamless coordination we need in addressing the holistic nature of student learning. In addition, the working partnerships between faculty, academic administrators, and student development staff in the contexts of first year experience, retention task force, new student days, summer new student orientation, and Strategic Task groups A and C are building these acknowledgments and habits of seamless coordination of effort. There is more intentionality in cross-divisional communication. The Student Development division now handles the “early alert” system and communicates closely with individual faculty members about student concerns. The newly created “Students in Distress” group is comprised of both student development and academic support services staff in order to more readily identify students who have academic, physical, psychological or social concerns and to work collaboratively to resolve them. All of the residence life Area Coordinators have collateral assignments for 15 hours/week outside of the division: One works closely with the academic first year experience program; one works with the community services program; another with conferences and event planning; and the last with the campus judicial system.

“We with the changing life style expectations of students, it behooves Wittenberg University to develop a “life-style” improvement budget so that the Residential Life department has the ability to make yearly improvements in housing units which enhance the quality of student living area[s].”

Student Government agreed to a fee increase (2007-2008) that is being used to improve student life facilities (student center cosmetic improvements last year and renovation of the game room currently). Ferncliff Hall, a residence hall housing 230 students, was completely renovated in the summer of 2008. A comprehensive housing plan is being developed so that the residence halls may be managed as auxiliary enterprise, with an annual percentage of revenue re-invested in the physical and cosmetic upgrades to current residence hall inventory.

Technology & Library Services

“IT and the library have begun to engage in discussions about appropriate collaborations. ... it is essential to collaborate and not waste funds or staff time on duplication and to get as much synergy as possible from efforts.”

Computing Services opened a ‘solution center outpost’ in the Thomas Library reference area (fall 2008). Additional collaborations are under development.

“Wittenberg needs to monitor the situation (shrinking budgets for acquisitions balanced by resource-sharing through Ohio-Link) to assure that the library provides the resources needed for the academic program.”