

**REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM  
EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW**

To

**Claremont McKenna College**

November 8-11, 2011

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
Reaffirmation of Accreditation

**Team Roster**

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The evaluation team in conducting its review was able to evaluate the institution under the WASC Commission Standards and Core Commitments and therefore submits this Report to the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for action and to the institution for consideration.

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## **SECTION I. OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT**

### **A. Description of the Institution and Visit**

The WASC Educational Effectiveness Review Visit to Claremont McKenna College (CMC or the College) began when the visiting team met on Tuesday evening, November 8, 2011 to discuss key issues and review the schedule. On Wednesday and Thursday the team met with approximately 100 CMC people including the president, senior staff, six departments, a sample of students, faculty and staff. The visit concluded on Friday, November 11 with the Chair describing the team’s findings first to the president and then to a meeting with the key participants in this review including the president, her senior staff and members of the College’s WASC Steering and Assessment Committees.

CMC’s stated mission is “to educate its students for thoughtful and productive lives and responsible leadership in business, government, and the professions, and to support faculty and student scholarship that contributes to intellectual vitality and the understanding of public policy issues.” Originally founded as Claremont Undergraduate School for Men in 1946 as one of the Claremont Colleges consortium institutions, the College became coeducational in 1976 and changed its name to Claremont McKenna College in 1981 in honor of its founding trustee, Donald C. McKenna. In September 2007, Robert A. Day pledged a \$200 million personal gift to establish the Robert Day School of Economics and Finance and the College’s first master’s degree program.

The College is a highly selective institution (the median SAT for the 305 freshmen entering fall 2011 is 1400; only 14% of applicants are admitted) with 1292 undergraduate

students (611 women, 681men) and 20 master’s students. CMC has 222 faculty of whom 149 are tenured and tenure-track. The 9-1 student-to-faculty ratio means that class sizes are small and that students develop strong relationships with their teachers. All students live on or near campus.

CMC is a private institution, with a total cost of attendance at \$55,865 (AY 2011-2012). The College has a \$78 million annual operating budget and a \$466 million endowment. One result of the relatively large endowment is that only 60% of the operating budget comes from tuition and fees. Another result of the large endowment is that CMC can support policies of need-blind admissions and a no-loan financial aid package. For the fall 2010 cohort of 314 students, 165 students had financial need (the average need-based scholarship or grant was \$31,070).

The College’s mission that unites the professional with the liberal arts (or, “civilization and commerce” as many on campus say) reveals itself in its top eight undergraduate major fields of study of economics (342 majors), government (175), international relations (164), psychology (109), biology (98), economics-accounting (72), history (70), and literature (51). CMC offers one graduate degree, a Master of Arts in Finance. CMC does not have off-campus or distance education programs as defined by WASC. CMC’s participation in the Consortium (five undergraduate and two graduate institutions) means that some programs are offered either jointly or cooperatively across institutions. The W.M. Keck Science Department offers 12 majors and the non-joint science cooperative programs involve an additional five majors. Participation in the Consortium allows greater choice and flexibility for CMC’s students, but does pose challenges when it comes to the assessment of student learning.

The CPR visit occurred October 5-8, 2009 and was subsequently followed by a March 2010 Commission action letter that made three principal recommendations: building a shared sense of institutional mission and character, creating a positive climate for diversity, and assessing and improving student learning. The EER visiting team’s review of CMC’s responses to these recommendations is included in Section C below.

### **B. The Educational Effectiveness Review Report: Alignment and Rigor**

CMC’s Educational Effectiveness Review report returned to the two themes chosen in 2007 in its Proposal. The first theme, Assessing Student Learning, deals directly with educational effectiveness and is the major focus of this report and visit. CMC’s EER report describes the approach and activities in which it has engaged over the last two years since the CPR visit. It identifies the student learning outcomes (SLOs) for general education and for all major fields of study including those offered through the Consortium (e.g., W.M. Keck Science Department). The CMC EER report discusses the College’s approach to assessment that includes both direct and indirect measures of the SLOs. Significant progress has been made in student learning assessment since the CPR visit. While still in the early stages of operating a mature and comprehensive assessment and evaluation program, a first cycle has been completed for all programs, an accomplishment requiring the articulation of SLOs for general education and each major, identifying and implementing a range of direct and indirect instruments to assess these outcomes. The Assessment Committee overseeing this work is in place and functioning, and Program Reviews have a formal protocol that includes an evaluation by outside consultants and beginning in 2010-2011, inclusion of learning goals and student learning

outcomes is required. Much has been accomplished since the CPR visit. The College is now at the point of being able to assess the results of these efforts, to refine their structures, learn new and more sophisticated ways to measure desired outcomes, and to utilize the results in ways meaningful to them. Theme Two, Planning for Growth, has been put on hold since the national financial downturn in 2008 that had a significant effect on the College's finances and fund raising. At this time, there are no plans to return to enrollment growth as a means of strengthening the College. The College's strategic plan is periodically "refreshed" by in-depth analyses of timely issues led by ad hoc college-wide groups of faculty staff and students, as appropriate. This work typically includes a campus audit of how the issues under study impact the College, identification of best practices and a report to the College president that includes recommendations for action. These groups often, but not always, work for a year. A recent initiative focused on global education and presently the focus is on campus climate.

The CMC EER report discusses activities undertaken to address the two additional areas noted in the WASC action letter of March, 2010: building a shared sense of institutional mission and character, and creating a positive climate for diversity. The College has taken several steps in each of these areas and demonstrates positive outcomes for each area.

The institution's EER report is clear, well organized and appropriately portrays the status and condition of the College.

### **C. Response to Previous Commission Action Letter**

The WASC Commission's letter to President Gann dated March 3, 2010 identified

three visiting team recommendations:

- Building a shared sense of institutional mission and character;
- Creating a positive climate for diversity;
- Assessing and improving student learning.

Building a shared sense of institutional mission and character.

CMC’s values have been forged through a healthy debate about its mission, a debate about uniting professional education with the liberal arts that has been ongoing since the College’s founding. CMC was founded to build a bridge across what they term “civilization and commerce” areas often seen to be in fundamental disagreement as the focus of higher education. Since the last CPR visit, faculty meetings have provided another forum for discussion of the mission and the team found that there is now a much better understanding, engagement and support for its mission rather than the concern found in our earlier visit. In addition, the president and dean of the faculty reference the College’s mission when recruiting faculty and during their new faculty orientation program. Especially, but not exclusively, the newer faculty with whom we spoke were enthusiastic in their support of the mission, often reflecting that it was one of the reasons for their choosing to join the CMC faculty. The College leadership remains committed to its mission and is comfortable with the inherent tension that it may sometimes generate among some faculty, recognizing that such tension is rarely found among the students or alumni and that debate on prevailing orthodoxy is healthy and productive. (CFR 1.1)

Creating a positive climate for diversity.

Over the last decade, CMC has taken important steps to develop a diverse campus: 36-42% students of color, 46.3% female; 16.2% faculty of color, 25.6% female; and 42.4% staff of color. It recognizes that sustaining and strengthening these gains requires ongoing attention and effort; continued building in all areas but especially for women faculty and a multicultural staff; and ongoing auditing of the environment, using the findings to ensure the most positive climate for diversity. This work is coordinated and directed through the CMC Diversity Committee with added focus presently provided through a Campus Climate Task Force.

The most recent 2011 survey of campus climate and student life supports their view that overall the campus climate is positive and in key areas, such as in perception of tension or treatment of students, it has improved over the time period in which the survey has been implemented (2002-2010). More detailed analysis of the data looked at response by racial category and found the greatest variability in responses from Black students and the most negative views being those related to issues of gender and sexual orientation. Based on these findings and in an effort to best focus their activities in Spring 2010, the CMC Diversity Committee identified a set of eight questions to more thoroughly investigate areas of concern and conducted semi-structured interviews with a random sample of students (n=53). As a result, key areas were targeted for improvement, most - but not exclusively - issues related to gender and homophobic tensions. These results served as the focus for diversity initiatives and activities.

In addition, specific steps are being taken to better utilize the hiring process to bring a more diverse faculty across racial/ethnic and gender lines to the campus. These steps include direct oversight by the Dean of the Faculty of the candidate pool prior to on-site

visits, outreach to professional academic organizations and, in some cases, independent search agencies. Still, CMC's attraction for under-represented ethnic and racial faculty and for women remains a challenge that is compounded by the disproportionate attrition of women as compared to men. The College is aware of this pattern, continues to investigate its reasons and address them. Steps have been taken such as providing better child-care options, speakers who are role models of diversity, some of whom also speak to multicultural issues and adjusting campus meetings to better accommodate a variety of family responsibilities. Throughout our meetings with administrators, faculty, staff and students, the team observed and heard many positive comments about the environment for diversity at CMC.

In addition, following from interest expressed by the Diversity Committee, a one-year Task Force on Campus Climate, co-chaired by the Dean of the Faculty and the Dean of Students is now at work to provide a broad understanding of the CMC climate through data gathering and analysis, to investigate best practices in and out of the College, and to provide a report with recommendations to the president of the College for further actions by the Diversity Committee and others. These many and diverse efforts are providing a strong, vibrant, and diverse, learning environment. (CFRs 1.5, 2.2a, 2.10, 3.1, 3.2)

#### Assessing and improving student learning.

Since the CPR visit, much has been accomplished to assess student learning. Most importantly for the next steps in this process, good will and interest in assessment was evident throughout, from administration through faculty and staff. Not surprisingly given the short time period, the landscape of knowledge and skills is uneven. Some

departments and faculty find assessment practices straightforward, others are just learning the concepts and strategies. Still, to have come this far since our last visit in developing and implementing a system of Student-Learning assessment and evaluation is evidence of the commitment of top institutional leadership, faculty and staff to work together to build an effective system of assessment. Important steps have been taken: a system is in place, the faculty Assessment Committee is established and functioning; and baseline data for future analyses have been collected across all academic and residential life areas of the College. In this process, CMC has taken the lead in working with their sister institutions in Claremont to develop a means of assessment and evaluation of consortium programs jointly operated and over which no single institution has complete control. These are significant steps towards building a meaningful system for assessing student learning in ways that can reflect the strengths and expertise of an outstanding faculty and staff. (CFRs 2.3,2.4,2.6,4.6-4.8)

Attention to this area constituted the major focus of our EER visit and is reported at length in Section II below.

## **SECTION II. EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

### **A. Theme 1: Assessing Student Learning**

Claremont McKenna College chose student outcomes assessment as the first of two themes for its reaccreditation process. Previous WASC reviews had noted a lack of student learning assessment and strongly recommended its systematic implementation. The College accepted the challenge, proposing to define student outcomes for all its academic programs, to find instruments to assess those outcomes, and to perform at least one round of assessment of each program by the EER visit, then closing the loop by acting to remedy any deficiencies assessment might reveal. The Team report will consider each area of assessment in turn: general education and assessment in the major.

#### General Education Assessment

Claremont McKenna College has taken major steps to further its assessment of student learning outcomes for general education since its CP review in fall, 2009. At that time, it had identified four general student learning outcomes: these related to analysis of arguments, written and oral communication, integration of materials from different sources, and use of information technology. It proposed to assess these outcomes by studying student responses on a variety of questionnaires—the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Senior Survey, and its own Student Life Survey—and also, more directly, by use of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) instrument, a normed series of reasoning and writing tasks. The College had only recently received the CLA results for its freshman

students: they had scored in the 98th percentile on these tasks, leaving little room to demonstrate learning in the future. (CFRs 2.2-2.4)

Because the College’s mission focuses on preparing students for leadership in business and government, both its trustees and WASC recommended adding a fifth general learning outcome related to leadership. Since the CPR visit, the College accepted this recommendation and formulated the fifth outcome as follows: “Graduates will be knowledgeable about the attributes of responsible leadership.” It also appointed an Assessment Committee, consisting of four faculty members and the Director of Academic Planning and chaired by the then Senior Associate Dean of the Faculty, with major responsibility for general education outcomes assessment. Because the CLA had proved so unpromising, this Committee decided to use the senior thesis required of every student as a vehicle for assessing the original four general education outcomes, and further decided to use rubrics developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) for each of the outcomes. To assess outcome #4, proficiency in using information technology, the Committee also employed rubrics to apply to exercises developed in-house. For oral communication, Committee members and the Office of Institutional Research applied in-house rubrics to 157 student presentations in a variety of classes. (CFRs 2.2-2.4)

To assess the leadership outcome, the Committee chose the Assessment Center Workshop system, a day-long exercise in simulated real-life situations that is used in the business world to select applicants for managerial jobs or promotions. It also considered using, in the future, the Kravis Leadership Institute’s Undergraduate Leadership Education Study, a work in progress. The Committee decided to continue to scrutinize

the various student opinion surveys as supplemental information on CMC student achievement of all five general education goals. (CFR 4.6)

It should be emphasized that deciding on these methods of assessment was in itself a huge task, but the Assessment Committee went further in pursuit of CMC’s assessment goals. Not only did it rate the student oral presentations and exercises in the use of information technology, but it applied the AAC&U rating scales for the first three general education outcomes to a random sample of 10% of recent senior theses—31 in all—and reviewed relevant items on all recent student opinion questionnaires. It also contracted with the LA consulting firm *All about Performance* to augment their thesis assessment of student learning outcomes relating to general education. This step allowed them to compare their students’ performance to students from other Claremont Colleges who did slightly less well on average. Conducted by *All about Performance*, the Assessment Center Workshop on leadership documented that students performed very well. This assessment allowed CMC to compare its students to students from the other Claremont Colleges, who did slightly less well on average. The CMC student success encouraged the Assessment Committee to consider modifying its Leadership SLO from requiring graduates to be “knowledgeable” about leadership to requiring them to “exhibit” it. The requirement to “exhibit” is likely to be much more significant in regard to student achievement than the requirement to be knowledgeable. As assessment in ethical development has shown, it is not enough to know what is right to do: one must also have a propensity to do it. One may know the characteristics of a good leader while being a miserable leader oneself. (CFRs 2.2,2.3,2.6,2.7,4.4)

The Assessment Committee’s dedication and commitment of time to this

assessment work cannot be sufficiently commended. In general, it found the results of all its assessments of general education to confirm the high achievement of CMC students. However, some of the Committee's work might have benefited from a more critical approach to its sampling methodology. For example, the sample of students it used to assess the CMC leadership SLO consisted primarily of applicants for the Robert Day Scholars Program, a highly selective senior-year program for students with a clear interest in leadership roles in business, finance, government and not-for-profit organizations. Eighteen of the 19 CMC students in the sample were economics majors, half of these students were also dual or double majors in disciplines such as Italian, mathematics and history. These students are scarcely an unbiased sample of CMC juniors because leadership interest and high GPA were requirements for applying. While other CMC juniors might be equally proficient as leaders, the case is far from proven. More meaningful results may come from the Kravis Institute leadership survey, which follows cohorts of students from their application to CMC to their activities after graduation. The graduates will be surveyed for the first time in 2012. One interesting feature of this survey is that it includes a comparison group of students who applied but were not admitted to CMC. The Institute is willing to be involved in assessing general education leadership outcomes, and its data may prove helpful, though it is based mostly on student self-reports about activities and motivation or attitudes. (CFRs 4.6,4.7)

A second example of assessment that would benefit from a more critical approach relates to the questionnaires CMC examined as indirect assessment of its general education outcomes. All yielded similar results. The students reported their achievement of the learning outcomes favorably, generally scoring a little higher than the comparison

group of Far West private colleges. However, there is reason to believe that the data from these questionnaires is not nearly as useful for general education outcomes assessment as the other measures the College is using. In the first place, CMC is likely to be more highly selective than the comparison group average, so it is hard to interpret the differences in scores, even where they are statistically significant. In the second place, self-reports may express overconfidence: CMC faculty appear not to agree with the students' view of their writing. For example, the EER notes that writing continues to be a primary concern among faculty. With regard to leadership, since CMC selects applicants partly on their leadership achievements, it is not surprising that students rate themselves more highly on leadership than do students in the comparison group, and the fact that they participate in more internships, field experiences, etc. says nothing in itself about their leadership skills in those placements. In general without longitudinal data which they have not yet had time to collect, CMC has no way of knowing how its freshmen would have rated themselves on the same general education outcomes. (CFRs 2.10,4.6,4.7)

The application of the Assessment Committee's findings to the general education program is not yet in place and evident. CMC has recently made some changes to that program based on other considerations. For instance, it has reduced the laboratory science requirement from two courses to one as a result of student dissatisfaction and resource problems at the Keck Science Center. It has changed the nature of the required humanities course as a result of faculty dissatisfaction with its former character. The change in the required freshman English course and the introduction of freshman mentoring funded by a Mellon grant preceded dissemination of the Assessment

Committee’s findings on senior writing. This is not to say that the Assessment Committee findings will not influence the general education program in future. Although the Assessment Committee’s findings have been made available to the faculty and to the CMC community at large through the EER report which was announced to the campus and posted online in fall, 2011; thus far, these results do not appear to have yet entered the campus conversation. (CFRs 2.7,4.4,4.6,4.7)

The Assessment Committee plans to repeat its assessment of general education every year, with the exception that since CMC rotates its normed questionnaires over three years, the Committee will have fresh indirect assessment evidence only from one every year. As in some other instances, this plan to assess every year also seems to reflect the Committee’s lack of deeper background in assessment. When asked about it, the Committee said that it must assess all the general education outcomes every year in order to establish a database. But good assessment practice can accommodate longer schedules especially when linked to specific changes to its general education program, in this way allowing those changes to take effect before it looks again at the relevant senior skills. Moreover, it is doubtful whether the six-person Assessment Committee charged with assessing general education and supervising the entire student outcomes assessment process could sustain an annual assessment of theses, oral performances, computer exercises, and leadership abilities. CMC might consider rotating the general education outcomes it assesses using a systematic schedule over a suitable number of years. (CFRs 4.6,4.7)

At present, aspects of the Committee’s charge and status are unclear. It is chaired by a part-time administrator who has proven an effective ambassador for student

outcomes assessment on campus but who, since July, is present one to two days per week. There seems to be some confusion as to the Committee's reporting relationship. Beyond general education, the Committee is charged with oversight of student outcomes assessment in the majors. The Committee sees its role here as offering advice about available methods when asked and making sure that all the academic departments have outcomes, assessment time lines, and persons identified as responsible. It is not clear whether the Assessment Committee is also responsible for evaluating the measurability of the student learning outcomes chosen or the effectiveness of the assessment processes in the departments and the intercollegiate programs that CMC faculty lead. (CFRs 3.11, 1.8)

Before the WASC team's EER visit other questions arose. The first concerned the degree to which faculty was interested in or knowledgeable about or approved general education assessment and considered its results in connection with their programs in the major (CFR 2.4). The second concerned the degree to which CMC was providing in-service education for faculty, staff, and administrators about student outcomes assessment, since this is a field in which many academic personnel have had no training and little experience (CFR 3.4). Yet a third looked for evidence that college-wide assessment results were being considered in the academic planning process (CFRs 4.6, 4.7).

Given discussions with faculty in five varied departments and on several committees, it seems that faculty feel committed to outcomes assessment in the majors—an impressive accomplishment in itself—but are not so involved in general education assessment or in considering its connection with their programs. Apart from advice from

the Assessment Committee, further information or opportunities to learn about assessment and its use are not available to the faculty—for example, by sending key people to relevant workshops or by bringing experts from comparable colleges to campus. So far, at this point in implementing CMC’s assessment program for general education, it is too early for student outcomes assessment to have played a role in the academic planning process. (CFRs 3.4,4.4,4.7)

#### Assessment in the Major

CMC has made substantial progress in addressing issues concerning assessment of student learning that were described in the CPR team report and the Commission’s action letter. At the time of the CPR self study report (2009), not all of the 15 majors offered solely by CMC had established student learning outcomes. By June, 2010, program learning outcomes for the remaining CMC majors were adopted. (CFRs 1.2,2.3,2.4)

In addition, CMC took the lead among the Claremont colleges consortium to develop assessment and evaluation for majors that are available to CMC students but are offered by various cooperative groupings of the colleges including CMC, such as Classical Studies, Film Studies, majors in the W.M. Keck Science Department, etc. (CFRs 1.2,2.3,2.4)

The visiting team reviewed the assessment results presented for the EER self study and met with faculty of five departments (Economics, Government, Literature, Mathematics and Computer Science, and Psychology) and with faculty of the Keck Science Department.

The team observed a wide range of faculty expertise in, and understanding of,

assessment. For example, in one department, faculty were able to articulate that learning outcomes assessment results could lead to changes in teaching methods; in another department, faculty expressed confusion over the difference between learning goals and learning objectives. Despite this range, there appeared to be genuine goodwill among the faculty to do a good job and to learn from assessment. (CFR 2.4)

As mentioned in the EER self study report, most departments elected to use the senior thesis to evaluate students' attainment of learning objectives. The team read several of the senior theses and evaluation rubrics available in the team room. Our judgment is that while the senior thesis is a good overall assessment tool, for many departments it cannot be used to evaluate all program student learning objectives. This limitation is recognized in some departments who use a variety of other direct and indirect measures. In other cases, departments proceeded to use the senior thesis for SLOs that could be assessed, and deferred assessment of the other SLOs. The team observes that there has not been enough time since starting assessment activities to comprehend the limitations of the senior thesis. More time and education of faculty will allow better assessment planning in the major programs. (CFRs 3.4,4.6,4.7)

Assessment of senior theses is difficult in cases where there are a very small number of thesis students in the program. For example, the five graduating seniors last year in the Religious Studies Department were either dual or double majors. None chose to write a senior thesis in Religious Studies.

**B. Theme 2: Planning for Growth**

The Planning for Growth Theme, which appeared entirely reasonable when the Proposal was submitted in 2007, was derailed by the economic and financial meltdown beginning in 2008. CMC is operating at or near capacity in terms of student housing, faculty load, and faculty office space under its current operating procedures (e.g., all students live on or near campus, a low student-faculty ratio, a traditional academic calendar in which facilities are underutilized during the summer months). Growth was seriously contemplated in 2007, in part because CMC’s (large) endowment had been growing robustly (\$528 million in 07/08), and could help finance the necessary expansion of residential housing and office space. The financial collapse reduced CMC’s endowment by over \$100 million. Though the market value of CMC’s endowment has been on a path to return it to the level reached in 07/08 (\$466 million), prospects for the future are not the same as those in 2007. Facilities expansion and significant enrollment growth is not considered “financially feasible in a short to medium length time frame.” As a result, the EER visitation team did not pursue the theme of Planning for Growth.

At this time, there are no plans to return to enrollment growth as a means of strengthening the College. The College’s strategic plan is periodically “refreshed” by in-depth analyses of timely issues and led by college-wide Task Forces. This work typically includes a campus audit of how the issue under study impacts the College, identification of best practices and a report to the College president that includes recommendations for action, as appropriate. A recent initiative focused on global education and presently the focus is on campus climate. (CFRs 4.1,4.2)

### **C. Student Success**

Since the CPR, CMC has continued its highly successful retention and graduation strategies. The average retention rate of students from their freshmen to their sophomore year is over 93% in all disaggregated race/ethnicity categories from entering cohorts 2003/2009, with a few exceptions. For Hispanic or Latino students the retention rates were: 2003 (88.0%), 2004 (89.7%), and 2008 (89.7%) For Black, non-Hispanic the rate was 90.0% for the 2003 cohort. The small number of students in this category (n=6) distorts the meaning of this percentage which is caused by the loss of one student. Many years in the 2003/2009 sequence demonstrate a 100% retention for U.S. under-represented groups. Similarly, the aggregate six-year graduation rate for CMC students in 2010 is 93.2%. Viewing the pattern of six-year graduation rates for entering cohorts from 1998-2004 disaggregated by race also demonstrates a high level of success for all groups and an increasing level of graduation rates for U.S. under-represented groups across the more recent years. Six-year graduation rates for U.S. students grouped by race/ethnicity across entering cohorts from 2001-2004, ranged from a low of 84% for Hispanic to a high of 92.3% for Black non Hispanic, 97.4% for Asian or Pacific Islander and 100% for American Indian or Alaska Native. Six year graduation rates for nonresident alien students during this same time period range from 71.4% to 100%. Both retention and graduation rates are comparable to those of CMC's peer institutions.

Reasons given for CMC's highly successful retention and graduation rates include: (a) the need-blind no-loan financial aid policy; (b) ensuring a good fit by being highly selective (high GPA and SAT scores; a rich portfolio of leadership activities), and

seeking students who are ambitious, successful, risk-takers, and opportunity-seekers; (c) the excellence of the faculty. and (d) a strong alumni network. (CFRs 2.10,4.4)

#### **D. Effectiveness of Program Review**

CMC has conducted systematic academic program review for all departments during the past eight years (typically two departments each year). The current operating document “Guidelines for Academic Departments and Program Reviews” recommends the inclusion of assessment and evaluation of student learning outcomes in the department self study. In CMC terminology, “evaluation” is meant to include “analysis”, but this document does not explicitly call for analysis of student learning outcomes assessment and reflection on results. Inclusion of learning goals and student learning outcomes have been required beginning in 2010-2011. However, as mentioned in other parts of this report, assessment of student learning in the majors has only begun within the last year. Thus, it is too early for the academic program reviews to include results of assessment in the self study. (CFR 2.7)

(We note that the CMC campus refers to academic program review as “external review” while the term “program review” or “WASC review” in our meetings was interpreted as review of assessment of student learning. External reviews at CMC include a review of the academic program plus review of other aspects of the department including governance structures, hiring practices, use of space and facilities, etc.)

The visiting team reviewed program review documents, met with the Dean and associate deans of the faculty, and met with faculty in three departments that recently completed the program review process (Government, Mathematics and Computer

Science, and Psychology). In all meetings with the departments, faculty spoke favorably to the value of program review for program improvement, including receiving useful feedback from external reviewers. Examples of improvements include reorganization of curriculum, department chair succession planning, acquisition of more research space, and useful feedback on faculty hiring. One department stated that it appreciated having the opportunity through the program review process to present its strengths and needs to the College administration. Another department stated its appreciation to the external review team for validation of the department's academic quality.

Program reviews include the department self study process and report, a visit by an external review team and its report, and a written response by the department. The visiting team inquired about how resource allocation followed from these steps. In general, there is an agreement in principle by the Dean and then ongoing conversations to seek solution(s) in a collaborative manner. For example, a request for an additional faculty line would begin with a conversation between the department and the Dean, and proceed to the committee on Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure (APT). At a spring meeting of department chairs, resource needs including requests for new faculty positions are presented. Approved proposals would then go to a committee of the Board of Trustees for further vetting. While there is no formal process to align resources with needs or a connection of program review results to a formal budget process, CMC has an effective mechanism to address resource needs that is based on a collegial and collaborative approach involving discussions among the department, the APT committee, Dean and President, and to a lesser extent the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees. (CFRs 4.3,4.4)

The visiting team met with faculty and the dean of the W.M. Keck Science Department, the joint science program of CMC with Pitzer College and Scripps College, to inquire about academic program review in that unit. The W.M. Keck Science Department has three disciplinary areas but 12 separate curricular majors that are available to CMC students. A new governance structure has recently been implemented that includes an executive committee and an advisory board. The latter will work with department faculty to schedule disciplinary program reviews over the next three years. At this time the tentative schedule is: review of Biology curricular programs in 2012-2013; review of Physics in 2013-2014; review of Chemistry in 2014-2015.

Apart from the important area of student learning assessment, the team finds that the CMC academic program review process is working successfully toward program improvement in the departments. (CFR 4.4)

While CMC co-curricular programs are not on a systematic and periodic review cycle like academic programs, the institution has a culture of inquiry and has oversight practices in the area of student affairs. In reviewing the annual report for student affairs, the team was impressed with the data-based approach for shaping decisions. The team also examined the recent report on a study of student-athletes which compared their academic outcomes to those of the general student body, and the final report of the task force on the role of alcohol on campus. These studies demonstrate CMC's attention to the impact of co-curricular experiences on the student body. (CFRs 2.11, 4.4)

#### **E. Other Issues Arising from the Standards and CFRs**

There were no other significant issues arising from the standards and CFRs.

### **SECTION III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Claremont McKenna College has addressed each recommendation in the CPR report and the WASC commission action letter. In the process the institution has demonstrated its willingness to embrace the challenges of assessment, its capacity to move quickly, its success in articulating Student Learning Outcomes for courses, majors, departments and general education and its implementation of a first round of direct and indirect assessment measures. It has utilized several creative and direct measures to assess its goals, complementing these with many indirect measures. Having now completed a first round of assessment, it is poised to review and refine its process and results, to build on these so as to look at change over time, and to apply these results to relevant campus decisions. Much has been accomplished in the short time since the Capacity and Preparatory review and in the spirit of continuing to challenge this vibrant educational enterprise, the team recommends the following steps so that the College will more fully realize the potential and reap the benefits of what it has begun. We are confident that this institution has the capacity and will to do this and in so doing to be a national leader in this arena.

#### Commendations

Many significant and important steps have been taken to lay a strong foundation on which to build a reflective and systematic inquiry of student learning.

1. We commend CMC for being an outstanding academic institution with a distinctive mission and purpose, comprised of administrative leaders, faculty, staff

and students committed to its continued learning and improvement and having the capacity and will to sustain its success. (CFRs 1.1-1.3,2.6,3.1,3.2)

2. At the time of the CP review, it was noted that “some on-going tension exists at CMC between its fundamental purpose as an undergraduate liberal arts institution and its emphasis on preparing students for leadership in government and business.” We commend the College for addressing this matter in ways that have been constructive, collegial and beneficial. A shared sense of institutional mission and character is evident throughout campus. (CFRs 1.1-1.3)
3. We commend the College for its campus-wide (or institutional) response to creating a positive climate for diversity. Since the Capacity and Preparatory review, the College has implemented a student life survey, expanded programming and most recently formed a new Task Force to assess the campus climate and related diversity issues in a more comprehensive way. Much has been accomplished in the short time since our last visit, committees are in place, and plans are being developed to ensure continued attention and progress. (CFRs 1.5,2.2,3.1,3.2)
4. We commend CMC for its progress in undertaking a program of assessment to improve student learning. At the time of the CPR, the College was challenged to “design and implement a reasonable, phased and effective multi-year plan to systematically gather valid and reliable data with regard to the level of success achieved by students on the institutional student learning outcomes, the general education student learning outcomes, and the student learning outcomes of the graduate and major programs.” We recognize that meeting this challenge

required the College to marshal its considerable intellectual and fiscal resources with energy, imagination and scholarly rigor.

- a. The team is impressed that all departments have developed learning goals and objectives and have completed at least one cycle of assessment. This step creates the foundation on which quality assessment can be built. These learning goals and objectives are made public through their inclusion in the College catalog and elsewhere. (CFRs 1.2,2.3,2.4,2.6)
- b. The team is impressed with the good will we see among faculty to embrace the goals of assessment. (CFRs 2.4,4.6,4.7)
- c. In spite of it being an unanticipated expectation, CMC took on and accomplished the task of providing student learning goals and objectives for all Claremont programs in which CMC students participate. Through its leadership in working with sister Claremont schools, a common set of learning goals and objectives is now articulated for these consortia programs which are jointly operated and over which no single institution has complete control. (CFRs 1.3,2.2-2.4)
- d. These achievements are a testament not only to the abilities of the CMC leadership, faculty and staff but to the more elusive qualities of dedication and trust so essential to their excellence. The team observed a willingness among faculty and administration to explore and work together to find ever better ideas and models for student learning. (CFRs 2.4,3.11,4.4)

### Recommendations

If CMC is to capitalize on its considerable investment in assessment, it must be able to use the results not only to demonstrate its excellence to the outside world, but also to inform and advance its own work and educational mission. Building on the foundation laid in the past 18 months, CMC is poised to achieve and sustain a vibrant, valid and useful system for assessment of student learning. In the team’s estimation, success will require the College to further develop an organizational structure to lead and sustain these efforts and to provide the necessary quality control. A critical number of people across the campus community with the knowledge and skills to build and implement a comprehensive and meaningful system of inquiry and use are needed. (CFRs 4.7,4.8)

#### Organizational structure

The team recommends that the Assessment Committee be given a clear mandate to provide leadership and quality assurance for the College’s assessment program and have available the resources to develop the knowledge and skills needed to achieve the College’s assessment goals. In our view, the completion of this reaffirmation of accreditation process brings the WASC Steering Committee to the end of its charge, one that it has accomplished with grace and success. In our judgment, further involvement of the two committees will produce confusion, diffusion of responsibility and duplication of effort. (CFRs 3.8,3.11)

There are five steps we urge the College to consider in addressing this recommendation:

1. clarifying to whom the Assessment Committee reports. At this time, there appears to be confusion about whether it reports to the Curriculum Committee, the Dean of the

Faculty or to the WASC Steering Committee. We propose that it report to the Dean of the Faculty recognizing the need to keep all relevant parties informed and involved with their work consistent with the culture of the College.

2. establishing membership on the Assessment Committee that is consistent with the significance it is to play in the life and well being of the College and the scope of its work. Who is involved in this Committee is not only crucial to the scope and quality of its work but it is a visible sign to the college community of the importance and prestige the College attaches to this effort. Among its members of key faculty and staff, we urge the College to consider a representative from the Kravis Institute for Leadership, given the new Student Learning Outcome on leadership.
3. appointing a chair of the Committee who is a talented leader, experienced in assessment, viewed by the campus community as having the authority to carry forward the Committee's mandate and the credibility to succeed in the College's culture of faculty governance.
4. establishing terms of Committee membership that will ensure consistency and sustainability for their work and systematically expand involvement of newer faculty and more established faculty and staff in these efforts. We think that this effort will require mentoring of new leaders, learning by existing campus leaders, and College wide recognition of the importance of these tasks.
5. building the expertise, knowledge and skills of the members of the Assessment Committee so that they will be able to lead, inform and assist the campus community in their assessment work. The many ways to approach assessment provide opportunities to match interests, levels of competency, and the task at hand. For

example, it can be useful to bring to campus individuals from peer colleges to explain their models and approaches for particular kinds of questions, assessment methods, and use of results to close the loop. Although the College has not gone outside during the past 18 months in starting its assessment work, the team believes the College has moved significantly forward to a stage where outside peers can be an important and valuable resource for building expertise. Also, it can be very productive to send a team to one of the many national seminars, conferences or workshops where the team works together with a variety of consultants to develop a campus plan or program for assessment. We think that this step might be especially useful for members of the Assessment Committee as they set out on this next phase of their work. The reason for this recommendation is that we see faculty willing to participate in assessment of their majors and General Education, often realizing what it can provide but casting about for how to do it in a meaningful way.

#### Building a Meaningful Assessment Program

This approach requires being clear about the goals and priorities for student learning as CMC has been doing. At this time, it seems to the team that the CMC assessment efforts are aimed at accountability, at assuring an external constituent such as WASC of the College's success. While not unimportant, if the College's assessment efforts are built only for accountability, their usefulness and power are unnecessarily limited. The real value of assessment comes from its use in identifying how the curriculum and other learning programs are reaching their goals and pointing to ways to strengthen student learning and test the effectiveness of the program, major or General

Education curriculum in order to strengthen what works and change what does not. Ultimately a vibrant and meaningful assessment program is the basis for being able to incorporate best practices into the curriculum, pedagogy and other College services thereby ensuring excellence and timeliness of student learning and performance.

Now that goals for student learning have been articulated and a first cycle of assessment has been completed, valuable questions about student learning are being raised, new ideas posed, and new programs piloted. These steps demand a range of methodologies that can respond in valid and reliable ways to provide meaningful results on which to judge outcomes and make decisions. Moreover, the College community in general and the faculty in particular must develop their capacity and comfort with assessment becoming nimble, efficient and effective in matching their approach to fit their questions in a range of disciplines, interests, general education and other programs before them now and in the future. (CFRs 2.6,4.4,4.6,4.7)

We offer three suggestions for CMC's consideration:

1. holding campus-wide conversations to make assessment efforts more useful to all. These could be held in small, focused groups for majors and programs and in larger groups for General Education. The goal is to foster understanding and familiarity with the use and means of assessment. As the campus becomes more comfortable with this process, departments, programs and groups of faculty can engage in conversations about their findings, sharing strategies and methodologies that work, much as they already do with their scholarship.
2. providing faculty and staff development to build strategies and expertise at each step along the assessment continuum: incorporating hypotheses, choice of appropriate

methodology, data analysis, reflection, conclusions, alignment with financial and other resources, integration with program reviews and use of results. Each of these steps will take time to build and the landscape of understanding and use can be expected to be uneven as the campus develops its expertise and activities.

3. disseminating assessment findings, discussing results and making informed changes in the program and/or the methods for assessment. Extending the assessment work in this way brings together the many stakeholders in the curriculum in ways that build understanding and interest in participation in this part of student learning. To date this step has not been taken; without it little progress in the understanding and use of assessment will be achieved.

In closing, the visiting team observes that CMC accepted the challenge from the CPR visit to make progress on assessment of learning with stunning results. The team would like to offer a second challenge to CMC from the EER visit: that CMC meet its potential to be great in this area, and become a leader among the elite liberal arts colleges in this country, within the region here in the West, and among the Claremont Colleges.

**Team Report Appendix**  
**CREDIT HOUR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Institution: Claremont McKenna College  
 Kind of Visit: Educational Effectiveness Review  
 Date: November 8-11, 2011

A completed copy of this form should be appended to the team report for all CPR, EER and Initial Accreditation Visits. Teams are not required to include a narrative about this matter in the team report but may include recommendations, as appropriate, in the Findings and Recommendations section of the team report.

<b>Material Reviewed</b>	<b>Questions/Comments</b> (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)	<b>Verified Yes/No</b>
Policy on credit hour	Does this policy adhere to WASC policy and federal regulations?	<b>Yes</b>
	Comments:	
Process(es)/ periodic review	Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)?	<b>Yes</b>
	Does the institution adhere to this procedure?	<b>Yes</b>
	Comments:	
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours?	<b>Yes</b>
	Comments:	
Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? How many syllabi were reviewed? What degree level(s)? What discipline(s)?	<b>No online or hybrid courses offered</b>
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded?	
	Comments:	
Sample syllabi or equivalent for other kinds of courses that do not meet for the prescribed hours (e.g., internships, labs, clinical, independent study, accelerated)	What kinds of courses? <b>Internships, Independent Study, Senior Thesis</b> How many syllabi were reviewed? <b>at least 3 each</b> What degree level(s)? <b>Bachelor's</b> What discipline(s)? <b>All</b>	<b>Yes</b>
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded?	<b>Yes</b>
	Comments:	