



**WILLAMETTE
UNIVERSITY**

**Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report
for Willamette University**

**Prepared for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and
Universities**

August 2022

Table of Contents

Section I. Introduction and Institutional Overview	1
Accreditation Overview	
Revised University Mission Statement	
Section II. Mission Fulfillment	2
Merger with Pacific Northwest College of Art	
Fortified Enrollment and Finances	
New Academic Programs to Attract Students	
Resumed Strategic Planning	
Section III. Student Achievement	8
CAS Cohort Composition and Student Achievement Trends	
PNCA Cohort Composition and Student Achievement Trends	
Conclusions from Data	
Section IV. Program Assessment	17
Program Assessment 1: CAS's BS in Physics	
Program Assessment 2: PNCA's Intermedia BFA	
Section V. Addressing Recommendations	20
Fall 2019 Comprehensive Peer Review Recommendations	
• Recommendation 1: Continue to assess [Willamette's] strategic position and revise, as necessary, a comprehensive plan for fulfilling its mission.	
• Recommendation 2: Develop meaningful indicators of institutional effectiveness and/or mission fulfillment to support future decision-making.	
• Recommendation 3: Create a comprehensive system of assessment that builds upon existing program assessment efforts for the purpose of supporting future programmatic and institution-level planning.	
• Recommendation 4: Address budget shortfall due to lower enrollment and develop a responsible enrollment forecasting methodology that supports realistic enrollment budgeting.	
Fall 2021 Ad-Hoc Merger Visit Recommendations	
• Recommendation 1: Consider the meaningfulness of current data being collected to evaluate student achievement, and ultimately, the degree of mission fulfillment.	
Section VI. Moving Forward	31
Continued Refinement of Programmatic Assessment	
New Cross-University Program Development	
Greater Integration Across the University's Administrative Units	
Continued Structure in Support of the University's Strategic Plan	
Appendices	35

I. Introduction and Institutional Overview

Founded in 1842, [Willamette University](#) was the first university established in the western United States. Today, Willamette has four schools and two campuses. The Salem campus is situated in the capital city of Oregon on a beautiful, historic campus and augmented by a 305-acre forest in the heart of the Willamette Valley. Willamette's Portland campus in downtown Portland includes the [Pacific Northwest College of Art](#) as well as branch locations for its MBA for Professionals program and Master of Science in Data Science program. PNCA was founded in 1909 and merged with Willamette in June 2021.

Taken together, the University comprises five degree-offering units: an undergraduate [College of Arts and Sciences](#) (CAS), [the Pacific Northwest College of Art](#) (PNCA), a [Committee of Studies in Computation and Data Science](#) (Committee of Studies), a [College of Law](#) (WUCL), and the [Atkinson Graduate School of Management](#) (AGSM). Through these five units, Willamette grants BA, BS, BFA, MFA, MA, MBA, JD, MLS, and LL.M degrees, and a certificate in Data Science. The University also offers joint degrees in Data Science, Law, Management, and the Arts (MA/MFA degrees). The total Fall 2022 enrollment for these five schools is projected to be 2,402 students (estimated as of August 8, 2022).

Willamette's College of Law is accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA). The Atkinson Graduate School of Management is accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA). Earlier this year, the College of Law filed a comprehensive accreditation report with the ABA and is awaiting final determination. Atkinson submitted its comprehensive application for re-accreditation to NASPAA in August 2022.

In the pages that follow, we will provide a brief overview of the most significant accreditation events over the past three years since our 2019-20 Self-Study Evaluation and affirmation of accreditation. We will also thoroughly address the recommendations offered as part of our 2019 Peer Evaluation Report, as well as during our 2021 *Ad Hoc* Merger Report and Site Visit following our merger with the Pacific Northwest College of Art.

Accreditation Overview

In February 2020, after reviewing [Willamette University's 2019 Comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report](#) and the corresponding Peer Evaluation Report, NWCCU reaffirmed Willamette's Accreditation. Peer evaluators issued four commendations and four recommendations where Willamette was "Substantially in Compliance but in Need of Improvement."

On June 30, 2021, Willamette officially merged with the Pacific Northwest College of Art. Prior to its integration with Willamette, PNCA was also accredited by NWCCU, which reaffirmed PNCA's accreditation in January 2019 based on their Fall 2018 Comprehensive Self-Evaluation. At that time, the Commission issued three commendations and three recommendations where PNCA was "Substantially in Compliance but in Need of Improvement." The Commission also scheduled a follow-up *ad hoc* evaluation in Spring 2020, in which PNCA addressed recommendations related to fiscal stability and the efficacy of data used to evaluate its core themes (based on the pre-2020 NWCCU standards). A third recommendation related to program

assessment¹ was scheduled to be addressed in PNCA’s Mid-Cycle review, then rescheduled for Fall 2021, and then ultimately canceled after PNCA merged with Willamette.

Prior to approving a merger between our two institutions, the NWCCU Executive Committee engaged a panel of evaluators to review PNCA’s substantive change merger proposal. In October 2020, the NWCCU Executive Committee approved the merger contingent upon the approval by the United States Department of Education. Within six months of the official integration, the Commission also required an *Ad Hoc* Merger Report assessing the merits and progress of the merger, followed by an October 2021 evaluation team visit to Willamette’s Salem campus to review the merger progress. Since this *Ad Hoc* Merger Report and visit coincided with what would have been PNCA’s Mid-Cycle Report, Willamette took the opportunity to report on the progress of PNCA and Willamette’s peer review recommendations. The *Ad Hoc* Merger Site Visit team issued a Peer Merger Evaluation Report that found the essential elements of the merger to be completed; this report further commended the University for the impressive contributions of various college and university staff in undertaking merger activities, as well as the significant efforts made to assure a “congenial merger that respected the cultures of both institutions.” The team also recognized that Willamette and PNCA had parallel outstanding recommendations with respect to learning assessment.

Finally, the *Ad Hoc* Merger review team requested that all outstanding recommendations be addressed in Willamette’s Mid-Cycle Review. We address these recommendations in Section V.

Willamette University Mission Revised in 2021

After the merger with PNCA in 2021 and in response to a larger and more diverse university, the Willamette Board of Trustees revised the University’s Mission Statement:

Through nationally distinctive programs connecting liberal education to professional practice, Willamette University prepares graduates to turn knowledge into action and lead lives of achievement, contribution, and meaning.

Willamette's new Mission Statement underscores the University as a selective degree-granting university with programs consistent with its mission in the liberal arts, law, art and design, data and computation, and management. The phrase “transform knowledge into action” derives from the University’s motto, *Non nobis solum nati sumus* (“Not unto ourselves alone are we born”), which serves to focus our educational purpose and guide planning. Evidence of our mission fulfillment is corroborated in our student achievement, institutional effectiveness, and strategic initiatives.

II. Mission Fulfillment

It has been three extraordinary years since Willamette’s comprehensive peer evaluation in November 2019. Since that time, we have weathered considerable challenges associated with a global pandemic and declining undergraduate enrollment. We have also steadfastly remained

¹ PNCA recommendation, “While there is evidence that program learning outcomes have been developed, they are not widely available, nor do they seem to be operationalized as part of assessment processes; also, the institution is encouraged to consider the meaningfulness of current data being collected to evaluate achievement of core theme objectives, and ultimately, the degree of mission fulfillment.”

mission-driven and made significant progress achieving institutional sustainability and advancing our strategic objectives.

Our strategy for ensuring that Willamette will continue to grow and thrive as our region’s leading liberal arts-focused university is to develop distinctive, cross-institutional degree programs that merge our core strengths in the liberal arts and sciences with our professional course offerings. In the three years since our seven-year peer evaluation, we can demonstrate four major achievements: a merger with PNCA, the Northwest’s independent flagship art and design college; fortified enrollment and finances to secure Willamette’s future and to facilitate new strategic investments; the development of innovative academic programs to attract new students; and resumed strategic planning activities that were postponed by the pandemic and the acquisition of PNCA. Each of these achievements is discussed in greater detail below.

Merger with Pacific Northwest College of Art

In accord with the University’s strategic vision of developing distinctive, cross-institutional degree programs, growing overall enrollment, and strengthening University organizational structures, the University merged with the [Pacific Northwest College of Art](#) on June 30, 2021.² The acquisition of PNCA is our most transformative accomplishment and constitutes significant progress toward our strategic objectives and a sustainable future. This union created an innovative institution that will define quality in arts and design, liberal arts, and selected professional education in the Northwest. Adding PNCA as Willamette’s fourth college also enables the University to exploit economies of scale and scope in university administration; offers students a more vibrant and attractive educational environment; provides opportunities to grow into emerging art and design fields (e.g., arts management, experience design, creative computing); and creates the academic and financial capacity essential for investment in new and cross-college programs. In addition, PNCA’s Portland campus gives Willamette a significant physical presence and visibility in one of the Northwest’s largest cities.

Much has been accomplished to advance PNCA’s integration. Three members of the PNCA Board of Directors have joined the Willamette University Board of Trustees. In March 2022, Jennifer Cole was hired as the inaugural Jordan Schnitzer Dean of the Pacific Northwest College of Art with a significant gift to endow her deanship. Various offices and units across campus have merged staff and begun integrating their operations—including Advancement, Student Affairs, Student Success, Admissions, Career Development, Financial Operations, the libraries, the Registrar’s Office, Willamette Integrated Technology Services, Communications, and Marketing. University partners have also begun to explore how to coordinate and improve academic advising, maximize and organize campus space, promote curricular collaboration and cross-teaching, and integrate academic and administrative technology systems. (A full report on

² NWCCU representatives may recall that Willamette also undertook a due diligence process to consider a similar merger with the Claremont School of Theology (CST), which began in 2017. CST has been engaged in a multi-year legal dispute with The Claremont Colleges regarding the sale of its Claremont property—the successful resolution of which was a prerequisite for CST’s move to Willamette. Decisions by the California Court of Appeals in 2021 meant that CST was not able to successfully advance its case, making a transaction with Willamette untenable. Willamette is in the process of disaffiliation with CST, with the formal disaffiliation documentation to be signed this fall. We are disappointed by this outcome, as our affiliation with CST has been academically productive. Members of the University’s leadership team remain in contact with CST colleagues as they determine next steps for their institution.

merger activities and outcomes for FY 2022 was shared with the Board of Trustees in May 2022.)

The merger of PNCA into Willamette University has resulted in many mutually beneficial operational and financial changes. One of the first financial impacts of the merger was the successful refinancing of existing Willamette debt and \$7 million of PNCA's debt. This refinance at rates much lower than PNCA could have achieved independently resulted in a significant decrease in the combined debt service for both institutions from over \$4 million to just under \$2.8 million for Fiscal Year 2022 and \$3.1 million for Fiscal Year 2023. Immediately following the close of the merger, PNCA's assets were incorporated into Willamette University; this can be seen in the [Consolidated Statement of Activities for FY21](#) as the inherent contribution of \$41 million. This incorporation was a significant driver of the overall increase in the University's net assets by \$117 million, resulting in a combined University that is in a strong financial position to weather the near-term effects of the pandemic.

Throughout Fiscal Year 2022, PNCA's non-academic operations were organized into the broader university operations; this allowed unit heads to utilize excess capacity and to build additional capacity more efficiently (due to the size of the now-combined institution). These efforts have also transformed PNCA from an organization that was losing over \$4 million in 2018 and in 2019 to a school that, for Fiscal Year 2023, will cover its direct expenses and contribute \$4.9 million to the central University costs—supporting both the College's non-academic functions and Willamette University students, more broadly. In addition to financial efficiencies, the combined organization has experienced numerous process improvements. Results of the increased financial strength and improved operations are evident by the expected 1.75x increase in undergraduate enrollments between Fall 2022 and Fall 2023.

Fortified Enrollment and Finances

Declining enrollment (especially at the undergraduate level) and its financial repercussions have been a painful ordeal at Willamette over the last three years. Budgetary shortfalls necessitated staffing, service, salary, and supply reductions; the deferral of capital renewal and repair; and a temporary reduction in retirement contributions. To address this challenge, Willamette aggressively moved to stabilize and safeguard our financial future by (a) restructuring Willamette's Board of Trustees to better reflect and promote University integration; (b) hiring a new [Vice President of Enrollment Management](#) to manage enrollment efforts across the University; (c) investing in [admissions counselors](#), [career development](#) support, and [marketing and communications](#); (d) completing a [tuition reset](#) in 2020 to reflect the true cost of an undergraduate education—which reduced undergraduate tuition in CAS by 20 percent and aligned undergraduate tuition across CAS and PNCA; and (e) seeking grants and a special draw on the endowment to cover short-term strategic investments.

In addition to the many mutually beneficial operational and financial changes described above, these strategies have already paid significant dividends. The admissions cycle for Academic Year 2022-23 has seen a surge in undergraduate student interest in Willamette. The University has also met or surpassed budget and enrollment targets in all programs—and most spectacularly in CAS. Between the four colleges, approximately 950 new students are expected to enroll in Fall

2022—including the largest undergraduate class at CAS since Fall 2015. The ballooning enrollment validates the fundamental strength of Willamette’s programs and reputation.

Even with strong undergraduate enrollments this year, however, the University’s fiscal position will remain challenging. Financial aid budgets at PNCA and CAS were substantially increased to secure the Class of 2026, and the University’s enrollment will reflect its two small COVID-era classes for at least two more years. Nonetheless, prudent financial management necessitates continued investment in the University’s staff and overall strategic growth.³ As such, in Fiscal Year 2023, the Willamette Board has approved salary increases for faculty and staff, as well as several strategic investments in eleven new full-time faculty hires to support our program goals.

Finally, as part of the implementation of the University’s 2022 Strategic Plan, the President’s Office—together with the Chief Operating Officer, the Provost, and the Office of Institutional Research—have collaborated to create a series of institutional indicators and benchmarks to measure mission fulfillment, fiscal sustainability, and progress on implementing the Strategic Plan. These measures are detailed in Section V (in response to Recommendation 2), and will also help to ensure the ongoing assessment and review of the University’s mission fulfillment.

New Academic Programs to Attract Students

Even during the recent period of fiscal austerity, the University has continued to make strategic investments in new academic program offerings. In fact, the President and the Board of Trustees have named new program development—particularly programs that respond to the evolving interests of college students, prepare graduates to address some of the world’s most pressing challenges, and speak directly to regional needs of the Pacific Northwest—among their top priorities in ensuring Willamette’s distinction amongst its regional and national peers. In response to this call, the University has developed new undergraduate majors in [Business](#), [Data Science](#), [Public Health](#), and [Politics, Policy, Law, and Ethics](#), as well as minor programs in [Sustainability](#) and in Business. At the graduate level, the University has developed a [Masters of Science in Data Science](#) and a [Data Science certificate](#). While it is too early to analyze growth trends in these programs, inquiries and initial enrollment in these programs signal significant student interest.

Most of these new programs draw from curricula that are already offered at various colleges in the University or that can be modified and taught within our existing colleges and programs. For example, the BSBA and Business Minor are taught by AGSM faculty (with new undergraduate coursework developed for this program), and students complete their general education and any other major/minor coursework in CAS. Similarly, CAS students majoring in Politics, Policy, Law, and Ethics can fulfill degree requirements through existing graduate course offerings in the College of Law. Finally, the Committee of Studies⁴ serves both undergraduate and graduate students through its BS degrees in Computer Science and Data Science, an MS in Data Science, and a graduate Data Science Certificate. Selected courses in AGSM and PNCA are also

³ More detailed data on finance and forecasting methodology that supports enrollment budgeting is included in the response to recommendation 4 in Section V.

⁴ The Committee of Studies in Computation and Data Science was established by Willamette’s Board of Trustees in May 2021 to create a new and more flexible administrative structure for developing truly integrated, cross-disciplinary programs.

approved electives in the MSDS degree program, and a number of MBA students have pursued a combined MBA/MSDS degree.

The development and approval of these new programs is facilitated by the [Provost's Academic Council \(PAC\)](#), which was formed by Provost Long in Academic Year 2020-21 to serve as a consultative and governing body related to University-level academic affairs and curriculum. PAC has overseen and approved the development of the BSBA program and has approved new integrated University-wide academic policies and structures such as a common bell schedule (to be implemented in Academic Year 2023-24) and a University Academic Integrity Policy (implemented in Academic Year 2022-23).

In the years ahead, Willamette will continue to build and demonstrate its capacity to function as an integrated University. Provost Long has encouraged the various college deans to actively seek opportunities to expand program offerings through collaboration between schools and through outreach to community partners, and President Thorsett has identified three additional areas of program development for the near future: Democratic Institutions, Big Data and Human-centered Computing, and Climate Change. While Willamette's transformation from a siloed structure of independent schools to an integrated, cross-discipline, and efficient University will require ongoing cultural adjustment, Willamette's leadership will continue to encourage collaboration and innovation as a mechanism to engage and enroll more students.

Resumed Strategic Planning

Many of the initiatives outlined above have been central in Willamette's recent strategic planning discussions. These conversations began in earnest in Fall 2019, when President Thorsett and the University's Trustees began to articulate the strategic position of making Willamette the region's leading private liberal arts university. In fact, this vision had begun to permeate conversations during the University's 2019 NWCCU Comprehensive Evaluation and site visit, and builds upon the "Big W" strategic objectives laid out in the University's [2013 Strategic Plan](#).

Although the University was preparing to formally embark upon its next strategic planning process after the 2019 site visit, the next two years brought significant challenges, transitions, and financial uncertainties. Like most other institutions, Willamette had to quickly pivot to new pedagogical models, campus safety protocols, and fiscal austerities as part of the COVID-19 pandemic—including full and partial shifts to remote learning over the 2020 Calendar Year. Also during 2020, the University's Trustees were approached by the Pacific Northwest College Art about a potential merger, which required a rapid, rigorous, and largely confidential due diligence process between Fall 2020 and Spring 2021.

With greater stability in Academic Year 2021-2022, however, the University was finally able to undertake its strategic planning process in earnest. As a first step in this effort, Willamette's Board of Trustees affirmed the University's new [Mission Statement](#) in October 2021.

Also during this time, President Thorsett and Provost Long launched an eight-month strategic planning process that engaged members from across the campus community in discussions about the current state of higher education (including how broader sector changes are reflected at Willamette) and how the University might leverage its colleges, programs, geographic location,

and other institutional strengths to create a sustainable organization moving forward. This three-phased process included a series of [roundtable conversations](#) that explored Willamette’s changing student body, regional needs, and core qualities of a 21st Century university; nine “[WU Cafe](#)” sessions that gathered campus community members in person and via Zoom to build community and discuss how Willamette might uniquely address the themes raised during the prior phase’s roundtable conversations; and a cross-university working group that reviewed notes from these discussions to distill a core set of themes that might shape the strategic plan. The WU Cafe sessions featured a PNCA faculty member who served as a “graphic recorder” for the conversations. Their presence helped to connect faculty from PNCA and the University’s Salem campus, and their graphic recordings provided a visual depiction of the conversations' main themes. The graphic recording from the January 25, 2022, session is provided as an example (Figure 1).

Figure 1: January 25, 2022 WU Cafe Graphic Recording



During Spring 2022, President Thorsett (in conjunction with University academic and operational leadership) used these materials to draft [Willamette’s 2022 Strategic Plan](#). Drafts of the plan were reviewed and revised by members of the University’s senior leadership team, the Dean’s Council, and the [Provost’s Academic Council](#), and the plan was approved by Willamette’s Board of Trustees in May 2022. The new strategic plan positions Willamette as an “integrated university responsive to the needs of the 21st Century,” and asks the University community to imagine a more integrated Willamette—one with a community of faculty and students engaged in programs and curricula that intersect with greater coordination and intention. It highlights Willamette’s areas of distinction, recommits to developing a deep engagement with the region, and outlines a vision to leverage Willamette’s broad institutional resources to create programs that prepare students to “turn knowledge into action” and address 21st Century

challenges—with targeted themes related to democratic institutions, big data and human-centered computing, and climate change.

The plan also identifies both short- and long-term objectives. In the short-term, the plan lays out a strategic imperative to align revenues and expenditures to ensure Willamette’s intergenerational equity through strategies such as increasing enrollment, strengthening academic and co-curricular programs, and designing and implementing more integrated institutional structures and practices. The plan’s longer-term vision builds upon anticipated short-term financial growth and sustainability, and imagines a robust Portland campus, improved campus infrastructure, investments in new academic programs and student support mechanisms, and academic and co-curricular programs that better reflect the needs of the region.

With this Strategic Plan document as a guide, Provost Carol Long and COO Dan Valles will lead the University’s academic and administrative units in developing a Strategic Operations Plan in Fall 2022. This plan will operationalize the Strategic Plan at both the University and unit level through one-, three-, and five-year goals, and will be tracked annually among the University community and as part of the Board of Trustees’ ongoing evaluation of institutional operations and mission.

With an iterative, flexible, and data-informed planning process, and with a vision focused on a thriving Willamette University in 2042 (Willamette’s 200th Anniversary), our Strategic Plan aims to build a University designed to address 21st Century needs. More agile, financially sound, and centered on teaching and learning, Willamette will continue to prepare students for lives of achievement, contribution, and meaning as they turn knowledge into action by addressing the world’s most pressing challenges.

III. Student Achievement

Each year, Willamette University publishes indicators of student achievement via our [Factbook](#) and the widely-used [Common Data Set](#). These are publicly available on the [Institutional Research homepage](#), where the University maintains at least 20 years of statistics covering a range of characteristics and outcomes regarding the institution and its educational mission.⁵

Additional metrics of student achievement are gathered regularly for presentation to the University’s Board of Trustees, and *ad hoc* data reports are often requested by campus working groups and committees or for specific projects or initiatives. One such set of metrics that has been gathered on an ongoing basis since 2015 (at least in the College of Arts and Sciences) is a set of metrics related to overall student achievement. Established by the Board’s now-dissolved Subcommittee on Access and Affordability,⁶ these metrics examined undergraduate debt,

⁵ Since the merger with PNCA, the Institutional Research team has been able to adapt virtually all of Willamette’s Factbook reporting to include the new school, and has begun compiling necessary data for a regular PNCA Common Data Set. Eventually, the team anticipates being able to incorporate prior years’ PNCA data into the Factbook and Common Data Set, but this effort probably will not be completed for a year or two.

⁶ This Subcommittee was dissolved as part of the broader restructuring of the University’s Board of Trustees in 2020 to better reflect the increased integration of the University and its colleges. The Access & Affordability subcommittee reflects a period when most trustee committees were largely structured around the undergraduate College of Arts and Sciences; the responsibilities of this committee are now subsumed within the Board’s Academic Affairs and Enrollment and University Life Committees.

enrollment, and graduation rates broken down by demographics of students historically underrepresented in higher education (e.g., first-generation, Pell-eligible, and students of color). These data were benchmarked with colleges in the Northwest Five Consortium (Whitman College, Lewis & Clark College, University of Puget Sound, and Reed College), as well as with some California state institutions (as CAS had enrolled a large number of California students following 2008 recession-era higher education funding cuts in the state).

While the University continues to track these data for CAS, the list of comparison institutions has been revised to reflect a broader array of regional and national peer and aspirant institutions. Additionally, this comparison activity has expanded to include undergraduate students enrolled in PNCA, as well as graduate students enrolled in the Atkinson Graduate School of Management and College of Law (each of which has its own set of peer institutions). Finally, in an effort to better understand some of the qualitative measures of student achievement, the Office of Institutional Research has plans to expand upon these prior metrics into two additional categories to measure students' campus experience and post-graduate pursuits. As such, Willamette's revised (and in development) indicators of Student Achievement include the following:

- a. Equitable access, admission into, and successful matriculation through a degree program
 - Indicators: Enrollment by biological sex, race/ethnicity, Pell-eligibility (undergraduates), and first-in-family college degree-seeking (undergraduates)
- b. On-time graduation
 - Indicators: Retention, graduation rate (6-year for undergraduates), and graduation-rate gaps by biological sex, race/ethnicity, Pell-eligibility (undergraduates), and first-in-family college degree-seeking (undergraduates)
- c. Positive campus experience (new)
 - Indicators: NSSE survey data, co-curricular engagement, internal qualitative survey (in development)
- d. Successful post-graduate pursuits (new)
 - Indicators: post-baccalaureate/graduate educational outcomes (all students), employment outcomes, average debt upon graduation (undergraduates), Strategic National Arts Alumni Project data (PNCA students)

While the University has gathered data related to the first two metrics for nearly ten years, our capacity to report on the latter two (newer) metrics is in progress, as these will engage more qualitative data; we expect to have this fully developed by the completion of our Comprehensive 7-year Self-Study in 2026. We have, however, continued to gather data related to equitable access and on-time graduation, and have expanded this to include PNCA. Comparison metrics for the University's graduate programs have largely been gathered by these respective colleges for professional accreditation purposes, although the Institutional Research office is working to integrate these data into ongoing institutional reports, as well.

In the remainder of this section, we demonstrate how these data are being used to assess student achievement in our undergraduate programs. As CAS and PNCA have distinct student populations and peer groups, our continued tracking, assessment, and continuous improvement efforts related to these metrics will largely take place at the college level, and we will discuss the two colleges separately.

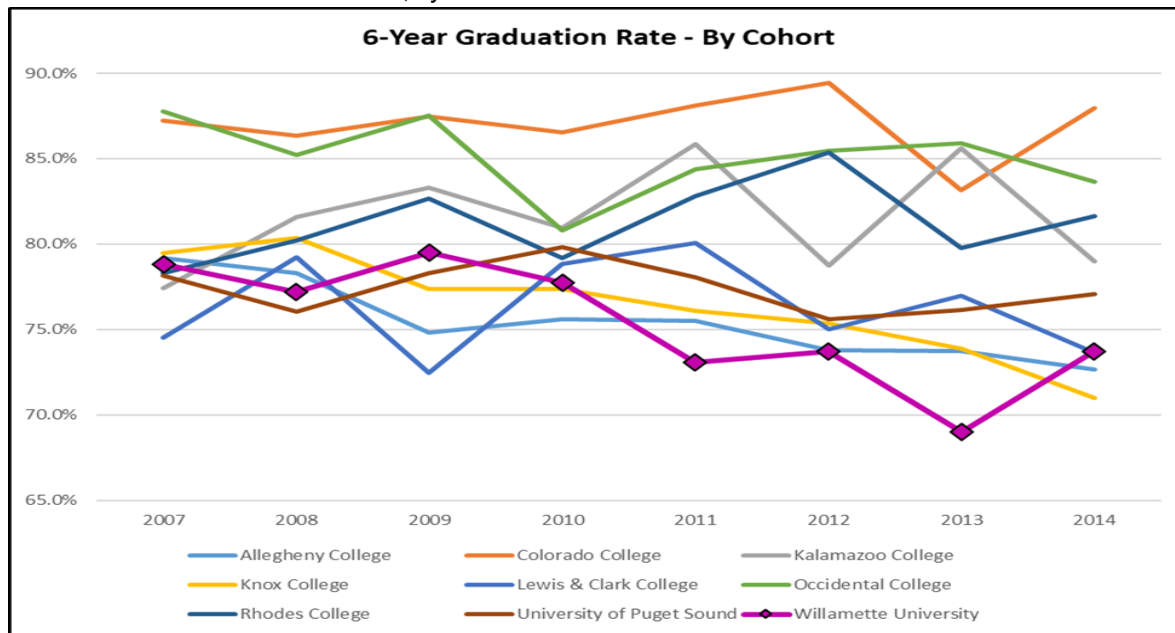
CAS Cohort Composition and Student Achievement Trends

For benchmarking and comparison purposes, Willamette’s [College of Arts and Sciences \(CAS\)](#) compares itself to three regional peers (Lewis & Clark College, the University of Puget Sound, and Occidental College) as well as five national peers (Allegheny College, Colorado College, Kalamazoo College, Knox College, Knox College, and Rhodes College). These peers have been chosen based upon their similarity to CAS as a private, undergraduate, liberal arts college, as well as upon their relative proximity to CAS on the *US News* rankings of private colleges.⁷

Over the last ten years, CAS has largely met its goals of being among the more diverse and representative schools of our kind. At the same time, our trends over time—and benchmarking ourselves against our comparison group of eight other peers—suggests specific areas for improvement.

Our core indicator of student achievement is graduation—specifically, 6-year graduation rates as reported annually to IPEDS. Focusing on this statistic is both logical and makes for the most consistent comparison with other schools. Historically, CAS’s 6-year graduation rate has been between 70 and 80 percent. However, as evident in Table 1, the trend between the 2007 and 2014 cohorts (the latest year for which 6-year data are available) is one of slow decline. Despite this decline, CAS remains aligned with a subset of its peer schools for which this has been the case (Allegheny, Knox, and Lewis & Clark).

Table 1: CAS 6-Year Graduation Rate, by Cohort



As we begin to compare student enrollment data by demographic characteristic, CAS’s student gender parity is somewhat out of balance; over the past decade, female-identifying students have comprised between 55 to 59 percent of the undergraduate student population (see Table 2). This puts CAS in the middle of its national peer group, and in better balance (by a few percentage points in any given year) when compared to its regional peers. Unfortunately, as seen in Table 3,

⁷ Each college is within about 30 positions above and below CAS in these rankings.

the 6-year graduation gap between CAS’s female- and male-identifying students is consistently one of the largest in its comparison group.⁸ (Note that the 6-year graduation rate counts only those cohorts who could have graduated within the past 6 years, to date, and thus lags the College’s current enrollments.)

Table 2: Percent CAS Female Enrollment, Peer Comparison

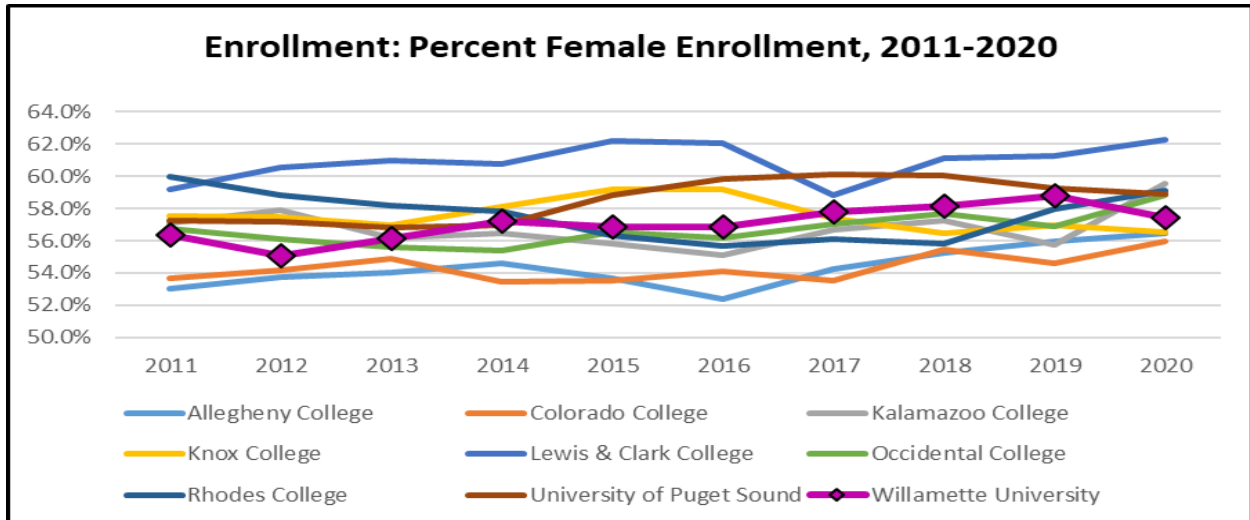
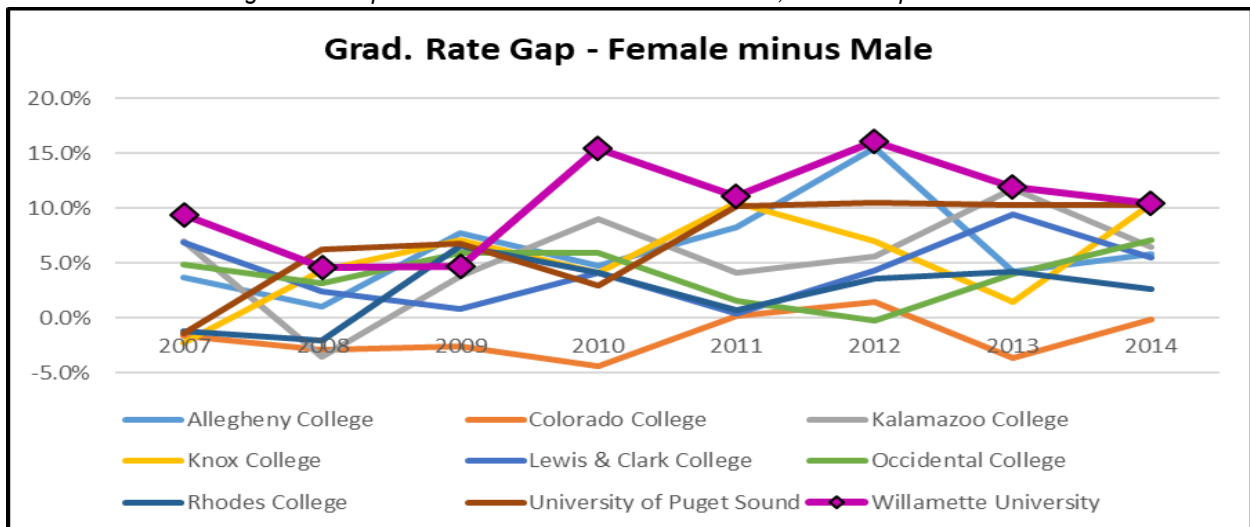


Table 3: CAS Percentage Point Gap Between Female and Male Students, Peer Comparison



Regarding demographics around race and ethnicity, CAS has a strong history of attracting and enrolling one of the most diverse undergraduate student bodies—both in the region and among institutions in its comparison group. As seen in Table 4, the proportion of CAS students who

⁸ This “gap” is a calculation we will discuss for all of our outcome categories here. It represents the difference in percentage points between the focus group percentage (female-identifying students, in this instance) and a given comparison group percentage (male-identifying students.) The ideal would be 0 percentage points difference in the 6-year graduation rates. Higher numbers, whether positive or negative, indicate greater disparities in graduation rate between the identified groups.

identify their race or ethnicity as “other than White”⁹ has grown from an already-robust 22 percent of the population to between 32 and 36 percent. Moreover, for the period examined here (2007-2014), the gap in the 6-year graduation rate between CAS’s “White-identifying students” and “Other than White-identifying students” is low: between 0 and 5 percentage points (see Table 5). Together with Occidental College, CAS has arguably been the most consistent school in its comparison group in keeping this gap near zero.

Table 4: CAS Enrollment of Non-White Students, Peer Comparison

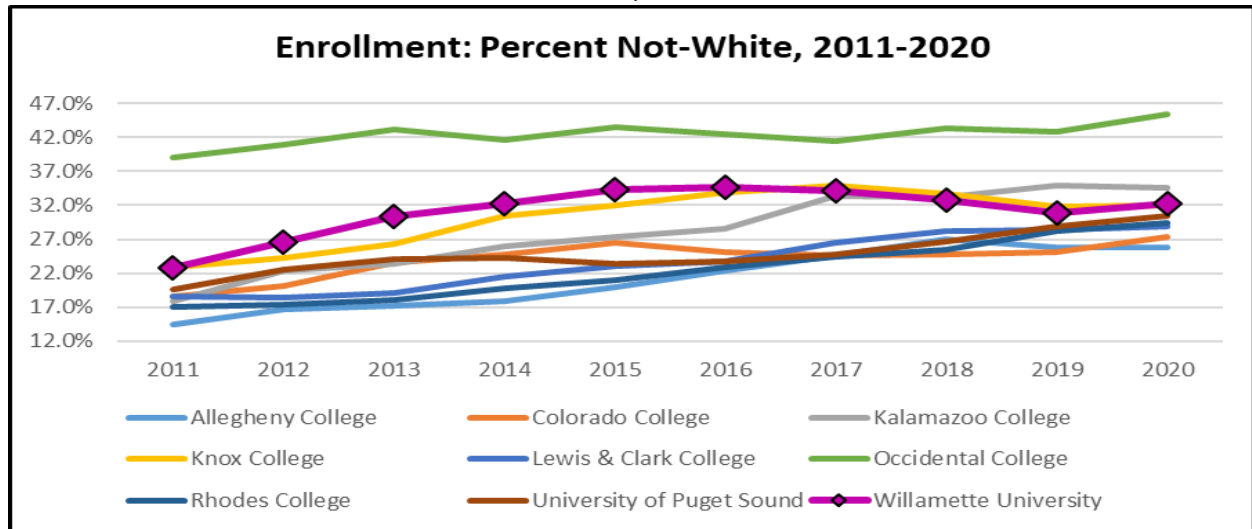
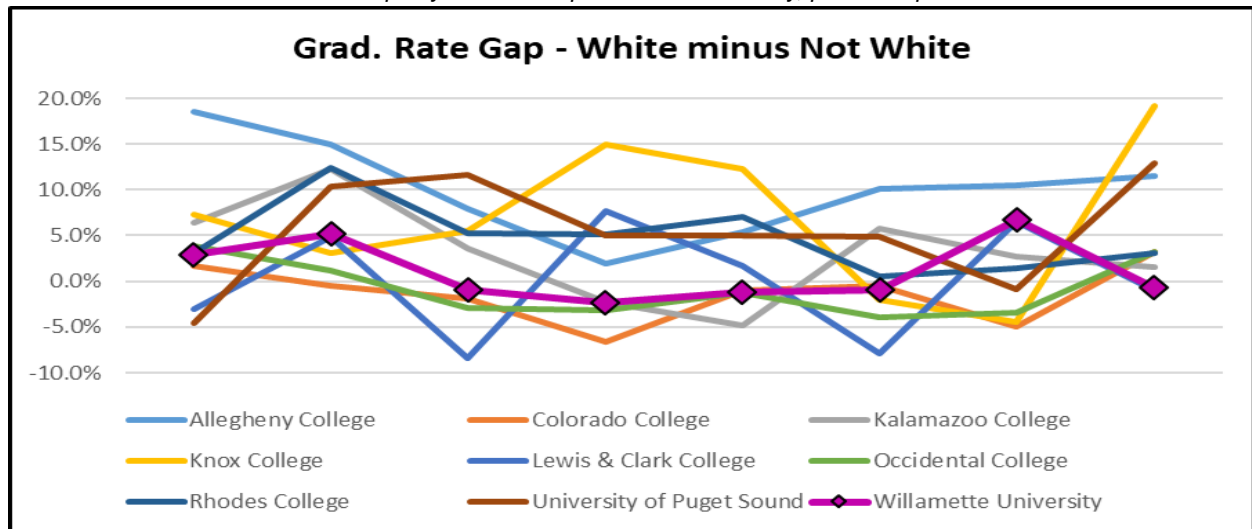


Table 5: CAS 6-Year Graduation Gaps by Student-Reported Race/Ethnicity, peer Comparison



Lastly, with regard to socio-economic diversity (as indicated by Pell-supported students in the population), CAS has consistently enrolled 20 to 23 percent Pell-eligible students in its annual cohorts (see Table 6); this positions it above half or more of the schools in its comparison group. Furthermore, we are pleased that the graduation gap between Pell-eligible students and their

⁹ Our categorization of “other than White” excludes all Nonresidents, all “race-unknown” responses, and all White-identifying students.

non-Pell peers has been essentially 0 percentage points (see Table 7)—with the exception of 2010, when Pell students graduated at a rate 5 percentage points higher than non-Pell students.

Table 6: CAS Student Enrollment by Percentage Pell, Peer Comparison

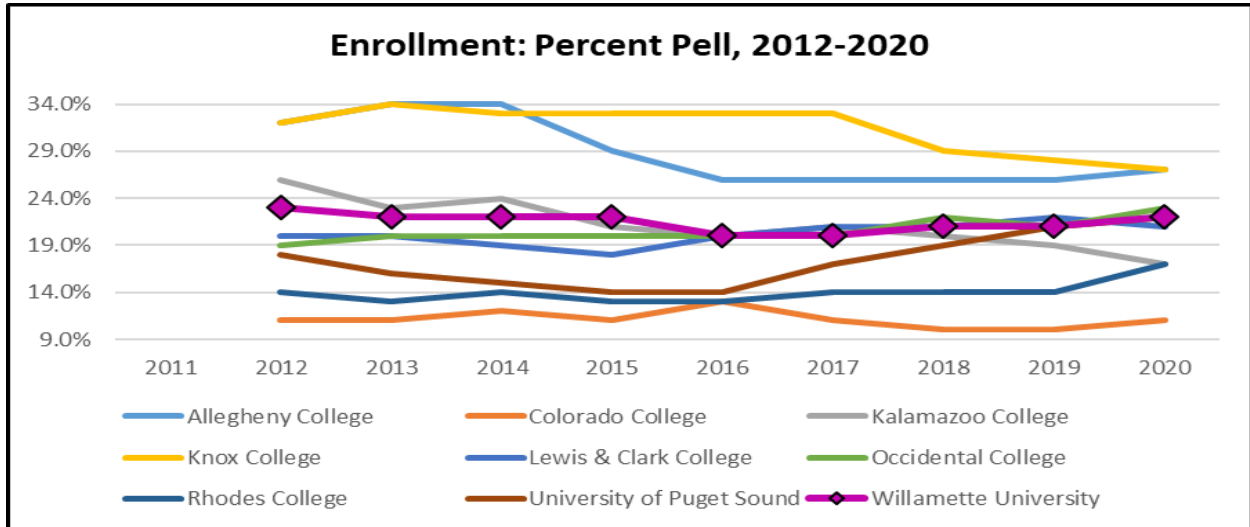
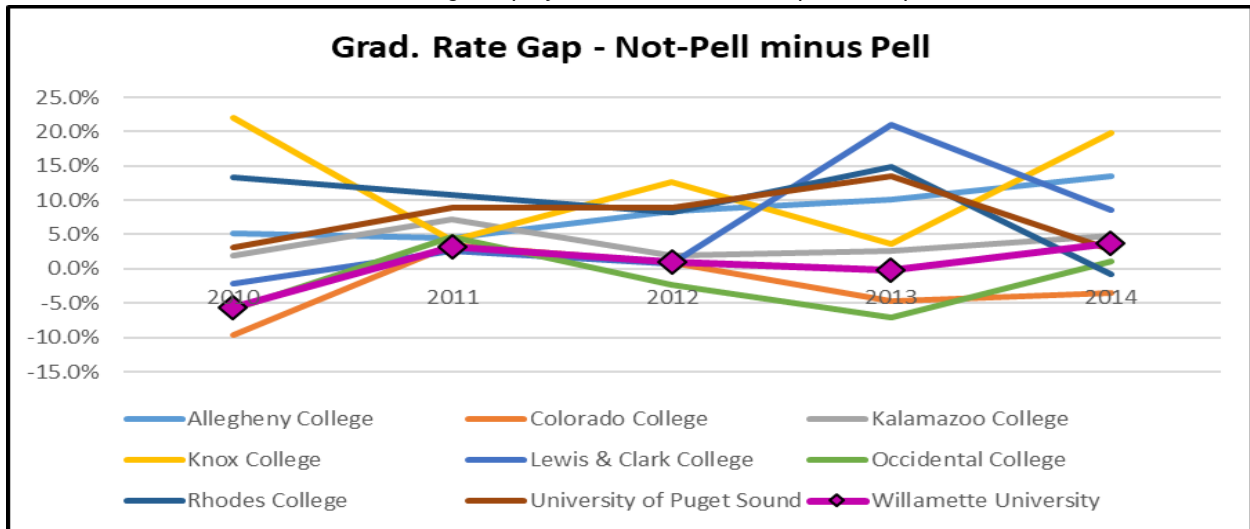


Table 7: CAS 6-Year Graduation Percentage Gap by Student's Pell Status, peer Comparison



These data demonstrate that CAS has performed strongly with respect to equity in access, admission, and matriculation of students across identity categories—and that it has done so in degrees that match or exceed those of its peer institutions. With respect to the six-year graduation rate by race/ethnicity and Pell-status, the data suggest that CAS is achieving the Board’s equity objectives (as well as matching or exceeding those of our peers).

Two areas, however, demand attention. First is the gap between the graduation rates of CAS’s female- and male-identifying students, and second is CAS’s performance among its peer group with respect to overall six-year graduation rate (which is among the lowest of its peers). Recent efforts, including investments in Academic Advising through CAS’s [Student Success Hub](#) and the creation of early-career interventions such as Willamette’s First Year Experience (and its

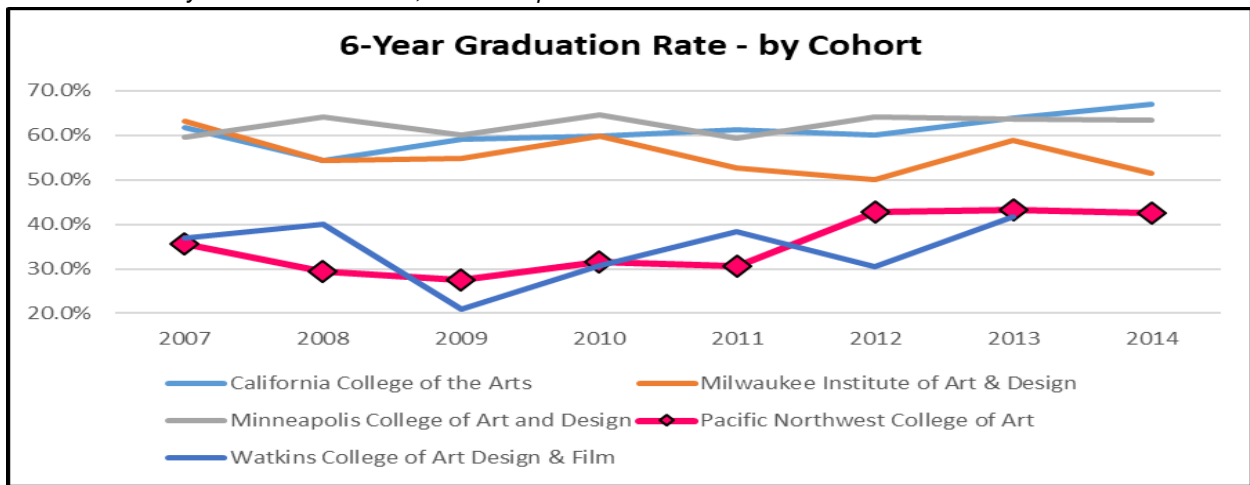
accompanying, co-curricular Community-building, Health, Academic Success Experience program, or CHASE) aim to provide early and ongoing resources to support student retention, success, and graduation, but work remains to achieve greater parity in access and success among the College’s various student populations. The College aims to address these gaps as part of University-wide efforts to improve student retention and on-time graduation (for more information, see Section III).

PNCA Cohort Composition and Student Achievement Trends

Given the specialized nature of its curriculum, PNCA’s peer group is largely national, and includes the following arts institutions: Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design, California College of the Arts, Minneapolis College of Art & Design, and Watkins College of Art at Belmont.

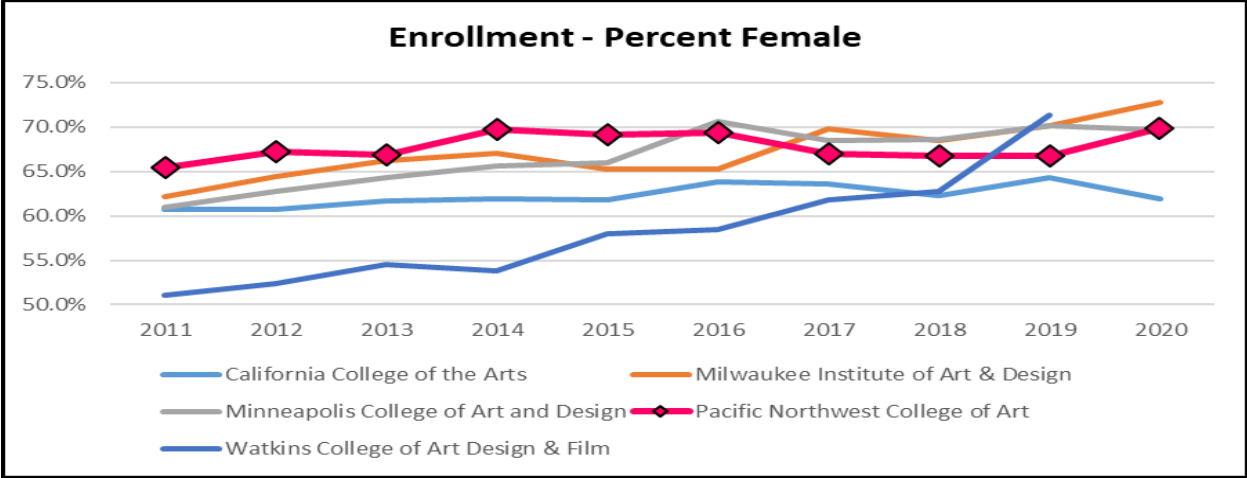
While graduation and retention rates generally tend to be lower at art institutions, PNCA’s 6-year graduation rate has remained at the bottom end of its peers. While the College has made progress in its 6-year graduation rates in recent years (see Table), a substantial gap exists between PNCA and three of its four peer institutions. Improving on this graduation rate will, first and foremost, rely upon improving PNCA’s overall first-year retention rate.

Table 8: PNCA 6-year Graduation Rate, Peer Comparison



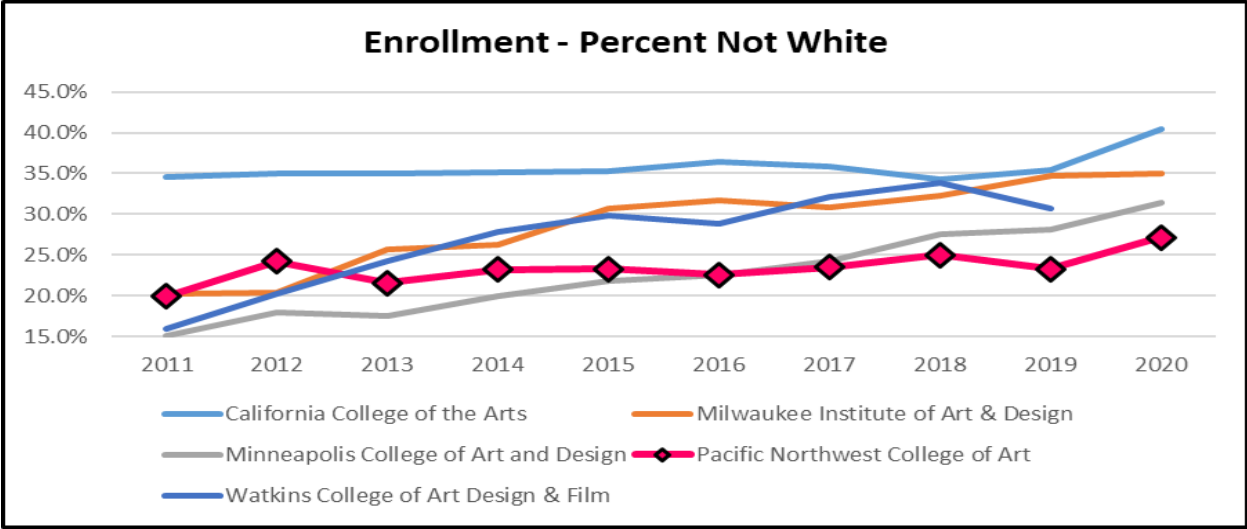
All of the schools in PNCA’s comparison group have struggled to achieve gender parity in enrollment (see Table 9), and this has been a strong trend over time. For the last 10 years, the proportion of the student population identifying as female has fluctuated steadily between 65 and 70 percent, and it returned to its previous high of about 70 percent in 2020.

Table 9: Percent PNCA Female Enrollment, Peer Comparison



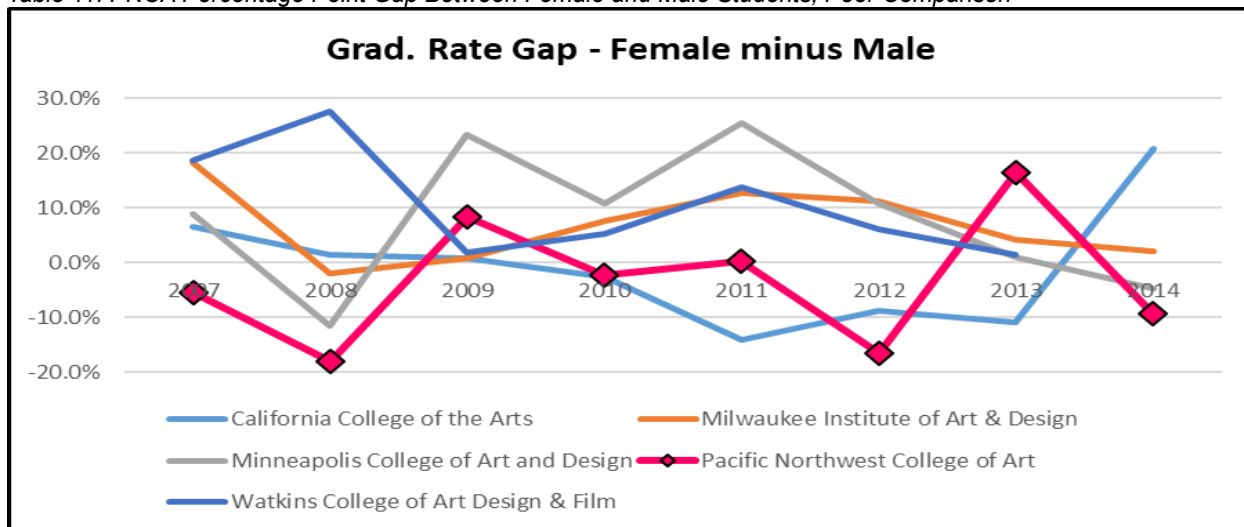
Student enrollment with regard to racial and ethnic diversity has been more positive. While PNCA lags its peers, the College’s enrollment of non-White students over the past 10 years has been one of steadily increasing diversity—with the proportion of non-White identifying students rising from 20 percent in 2011 to approximately 27 percent in 2020 (see Table 10).

Table 10: PNCA Enrollment of Non-White Students, Peer Comparison



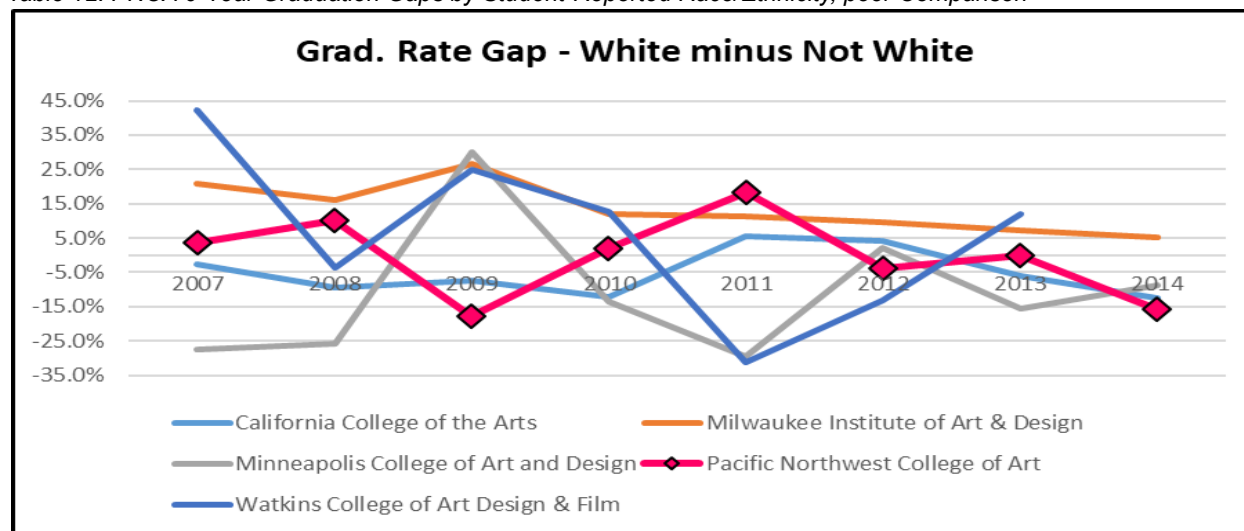
With respect to equitable outcomes for these two groups, trends over time for PNCA and its peers show a high degree of variability. For Watkins, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis, the gap between male and female graduation rates consistently tips toward positive differences (see Table 11). California shows a steady trend away toward higher male achievement, until a sudden shift in 2014 back toward Female outcomes. PNCA, on the other hand, zig-zags between female and male outcomes gaps (that are at times close to 0 percentage points and at others close to +/- 19 percentage points.)

Table 11: PNCA Percentage Point Gap Between Female and Male Students, Peer Comparison



Similarly, all schools except Milwaukee demonstrate a similarly oscillating graduation gap between White and Non-White students (see Table 12).

Table 12: PNCA 6-Year Graduation Gaps by Student-Reported Race/Ethnicity, peer Comparison



These data underscore a set of challenges and goals that were well-known to Willamette University at the time of the merger: First, PNCA wants to retain and graduate its enrolled students at a rate much more consistent with its peer schools, and second, with higher retention and graduation rates, the College will seek to reduce and stabilize outcome gaps across demographic groups in the student population.¹⁰

Conclusions from Data

Willamette's College of Arts and Sciences has a strong history of attracting, enrolling, and supporting through to graduation a diverse and representative student body. At the same time, the

¹⁰ Note that first-generation and Pell-eligibility data is not consistently available for PNCA and its peers at this time. Future self-study reports will incorporate trend data on these metrics.

preceding discussion points to areas where monitoring and improvement are needed. These include advancing the college's overall 6-year graduation rate back toward 80 percent (where it stood roughly 10 years ago); diagnosing the cause of the gap between female and male graduation rates (and bringing CAS's male-identifying students up to the same rate as their female-identifying peers); and working to close graduation-rate gaps between sub-population groups (particularly between historically underrepresented students and the overall student population) as close to zero as possible.

Exactly how to respond to the PNCA evidence remains a work in progress—both due to greater variability in the statistics and to the need to continue studying and learning about the undercurrents of retention and graduation at PNCA in the years to come. One clear objective, and one known to both schools since prior to the merger, is to improve first-year retention and 6-year completion rates. From there, additional strategies can be developed to improve upon the population disparities related to graduation and retention, to continue increasing diversity in the overall student population, and—as it is for CAS—to bring the completion gaps between sub-population groups (particularly between historically underrepresented students and the overall student population) as close to zero as possible. As one step toward addressing these disparities at the college level, Dean Cole has named professor Sally Schoolmaster as the College's inaugural Assistant Dean of Student Success and has hired a Retention Specialist—both of which will be new positions for Academic Year 2022-23.

Considering these shared challenges among Willamette's undergraduate student populations, student retention and graduation (as well as equity gaps in student retention and graduation) have been named among the University's top priorities in the 2022 Strategic Plan. In response to this goal, one of the Year 1 activities outlined in the Strategic Operations Plan is to create a University-wide working group to explore equity gaps, existing areas of support, as well as opportunities for greater collaboration and enhanced programming to support improvements to student retention, outcomes, and support. This group will comprise faculty and staff from each college, as well as staff from central University units such as Admissions, Athletics, the Bishop Wellness Center, and the Provost's Office.

The University has also made longer term investments toward the advancement of these efforts by adding capacity in its offices of Career Development (at all colleges), Academic Support (at both CAS and PNCA), and Student Affairs. The Vice President for Student Affairs (hired in 2020) created a new Dean of Students for Community Inclusion and Care position as well as an Assistant Dean for Community Care and Inclusion, and the Provost has hired an Assistant Provost for Institutional Equity and Community Engagement. Along with working to better understand student retention and support, staff in these various programs will also explore mechanisms to gather and evaluate qualitative data around student satisfaction and post-graduate outcomes. Taken together, these individuals and units will help Willamette track student achievement, compare with our regional and national peers, and develop programs and resources aimed at advancing student success across all student populations.

IV. Program Assessment

As part of their ongoing student learning assessment—and in response to recent NWCCU peer evaluations and recommendations—both CAS and PNCA faculty have been working to improve

their undergraduate student learning assessment efforts. Since NWCCU peer reviews identified shortcomings in program assessment at PNCA and CAS, this section provides an overview of two program learning outcome assessments (one from each college) that are illustrative of the goals, thinking, iterative feedback, and continuous improvement around learning assessment at the two colleges. The two programs—[CAS’s Physics department](#) and [PNCA’s Intermedia BFA program](#)—have completed a full round of program assessment and are representative of the procedures developed to make learning outcomes assessment more consistent within each college, as well as the types of efforts underway to help faculty at each college share best practices among their cross-university peers.¹¹

Program Assessment 1: CAS’s BS in Physics

Since the University’s 2019 Self-Study, CAS has enhanced its efforts to standardize learning outcomes assessment practices and support at the college level. The College’s faculty-led Learning Assessment Committee (LAC) has developed materials to establish a consistent and meaningful culture of program assessment. In 2020, LAC sent these materials—including an Assessment Survey with Accompanying Instructions, as well as discipline-specific assessment resources—to all of CAS’s programs and departments to establish a baseline for ongoing, annual assessment. (For more information about these resources, see the University’s response to Recommendation 3 in Section V.)

Using the materials provided by the LAC, the CAS Physics department completed their annual Assessment Survey in November 2020, which revealed the following:

- a. *Assessment History.* The department assesses their introductory courses at the beginning and end of each semester. The initial assessment measures students’ initial comfort with physics to help cultivate majors and improve retention, especially by historically underrepresented students. The exit assessment is content-related using a test from materials available from the American Physical Society. The department’s assessment history also indicates that Physics submitted assessment reports in Academic Years 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 (note that—as is the case for many CAS departments—the pandemic disrupted assessment progress).
- b. *Student Learning Outcomes.* The Physics program has four SLOs related to content knowledge, research, and communication skills.
- c. *Assessment Plan Status.* Using the NWCCU [Rubric for Evaluating Outcomes Assessment Plan and Progress](#), the department indicated that their assessment procedures are “emerging” in assessment planning and implementation, use of results, and assessable

¹¹ For the sake of this report (and, in particular, in responding to the 2019 Peer Evaluation Team’s recommendations around learning outcomes assessment at CAS and PNCA), this section focuses upon undergraduate program assessment at these two colleges. Concurrent with the submission of this report, however, Willamette’s Atkinson Graduate School of Management submitted a self-study to NASPAA—which includes (in response to NASPAA Standard 5: Student Learning) an extensive description of how AGSM has updated its Integrated Knowledge Exercise Week, or IKEW, based upon a multi-year assessment. Additionally, the College of Law is awaiting final feedback on its March 2022 ABA Site Visit Report, during which evaluators raised questions regarding the specificity and ongoing evaluation of its assessment plans as outlined in their 2022 Self-Assessment. In July 2022, the College responded to the Site Visit Team’s June 2022 report, in which they addressed many of these concerns with additional context. The University’s newly-formed Committee of Studies in Computation and Data Science is also in the early stages of developing learning outcomes and assessment protocols for its Computer Science and Data Science programs.

outcomes. They indicated that they were “developed” with respect to their assessment planning and implementation in introductory courses, as well as their alignment of courses with SLOs and reliability of results.

- d. *Curricular Map*. The department’s curricular map identifies where the SLOs are addressed in their curriculum.
- e. *Mapping Activities to SLOs*. For each course in the curriculum, the department identified its various assigned activities and evaluated work, as well as how each of these activities and assignments are intended to introduce, develop, or complete students’ understanding or mastery of each SLO.

Building upon its Assessment Survey, the Physics department submitted their assessment report to the LAC in Fall 2021. The report included an assessment plan and rubrics (see Sections B and C) where the department plans to assess all four SLOs jointly at various curricular stages over the course of four years. The plan also incorporates process enhancements that the department learned from past assessments (such as initial assessment results for the Introductory Physics courses), as well as reflections upon these prior and current findings and proposed changes moving forward. For example, after noting a lack of student engagement in the Introductory Physics’ final assessment, they indicated future changes to how these assessments are administered and how students might receive credit for their earnest participation and improvement over time.

The LAC’s response to the Physics report is indicative of the type of feedback offered to these departments. After commending the department for its revised SLOs, it provides guidance on how particular SLOs might be further refined, tracked more consistently over time, and used to generate curricular improvements. The LAC will continue to work with this and other CAS departments as part of its annual Assessment Survey collection and review process.

Program Assessment 2: PNCA’s Intermedia BFA

Like the Physics assessment report in CAS, PNCA’s Intermedia report (prepared by Chair Emily Ginsburg) demonstrates the planning, implementation, reflection, and proposed revision encouraged among program assessment at PNCA.

To prepare for this assessment pilot, Ginsburg identified an array of student assignments and materials (including their thesis project, thesis formal thesis papers, oral presentations/defense, thesis proposals and bibliographies, visual work documentation, student CVs, and students’ statements of post-graduate plans) that could be used to observe students’ arc of development regarding the program’s student learning outcomes. She and her colleagues then developed an assessment rubric with a clear, defined set of learning outcomes around four key themes—Creative Practice, Critical Inquiry, World View, and Professional Practice—that program faculty could use to assess these various assignments.

As part of her Spring 2022 assessment, Ginsberg selected a sample of seven students from the Spring 2021 and 2022 graduating cohorts, and reviewed their materials alongside the program's learning outcomes rubric. Through this exercise, she found that student outcomes around Creative Practice and Critical Inquiry were "mostly excellent," and that outcomes around World View and Professional Practice were "between good/excellent." While these final assessments of work were helpful, she realized that the department needs "more up-to-date baseline information" to make a more informed assessment—particularly when it came to tying students' more experiential-based learning (including networks, outward-facing portfolios, and activities such as internships, residencies, part-time work, and post-graduate mentorships) to the program's Professional Practice learning outcomes.

Following this assessment, Ginsburg developed a plan for Academic Year 2022-23 to address these concerns and explore additional assessment mechanisms. Her identified assessment strategies include the following: building formal studio visits during students' third and fourth years into the assessment process; creating a new 400-level, self-directed Intermedia Studio course that would give students more agency in selecting projects through which to apply the program's learning outcomes in their work; adding updated CVs and outward-facing portfolios as a requirement for the program's 300-level Professional Practice course; and asking students to update their statements of post-graduate plans (which are currently only required in the 300-level Professional Practice course). She also expressed a desire to incorporate more meaningful conversations about assessment into the Intermedia faculty discussions (although she noted the difficulty in doing so given the faculty's many competing responsibilities—particularly since many are adjuncts).

The Intermedia report also highlights one of the considerable challenges faced by PNCA faculty in conducting learning outcomes assessment: the College's significant composition of adjunct faculty—many of whom have shorter, more teaching-focused responsibilities and contract periods. Even as PNCA's departments and programs develop more robust assessment plans, they will need to ensure that these are achievable with their limited full-time faculty, and that any improvements to curriculum in light of these assessments are conveyed to these instructors. Still, the Intermedia assessment provides excellent guidance on how to review student work in light of a variety of indicators and characteristics, as well as a clear rubric to present these outcomes for future analysis.

In addition to improving learning assessment practices at the College level, faculty at CAS and PNCA have had preliminary discussions about how the two colleges might collaborate around learning assessment training and best practices. PNCA's recently appointed Accreditation Coordinator, Jay Ponteri, has begun to meet with representatives from the LAC to share the College's Assessment Survey and other materials, and the colleges are exploring opportunities to host joint faculty workshops or trainings on this theme. With more collaboration between these two colleges—and perhaps across the University more broadly—there are opportunities to generate additional resources, support, and excitement around meaningful learning outcomes assessment to the benefit of our students.

V. Addressing Recommendations

As noted in Section I, both Willamette and PNCA received recommendations as part of their 2019 Site Visits and Peer Reviews. The following pages provide updates on progress related to recommendations from both Willamette's Fall 2019 Comprehensive Peer Review and the Fall 2021 *Ad Hoc* Merger Peer Review (which now includes recommendations made to PNCA as part of its 2019 Self-Study and Peer Review).

Fall 2019 Comprehensive Peer Review Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Continue to assess [Willamette's] strategic position and revise, as necessary, a comprehensive plan for fulfilling its mission.

As noted in Section II (Mission Fulfillment), the University has recently undergone a year-long strategic planning process. This year-long process drew upon existing institutional enrollment and fiscal realities, examined the professional and civic needs of today's graduates, and drew upon the perspectives of institutional experts and campus community members from both the Salem and Portland campuses. These efforts resulted in a plan that aims to solidify Willamette's place as the region's leading private liberal arts University through its offering of intentionally integrated programs and curricula respond to 21st Century societal, technological, and environmental challenges, and will be accompanied by a Strategic Operations Plan (a draft of which was submitted to the Board of Trustees' Executive Committee in Fall 2022) that will outline tangible, measurable actions toward achieving the plan's vision.¹²

Slightly preceding (and continuing alongside) these strategic planning efforts, there have also been a series of initiatives aimed at advancing President Thorsett's continuing vision for greater cross-university integration and the University's revised mission to deliver "nationally distinctive programs connecting liberal education and professional practice." These initiatives include the following:

1. Willamette has deployed the use of its contract with Hanover Research to conduct feasibility studies around the development of new academic programs that will both attract students and align with the University's mission and strengths. Through these efforts, several program development conversations are underway in areas such as arts management (with coursework at CAS and AGSM), UX design (with coursework at PNCA and in the Committee of Studies in Computation and Data Science), and joint degrees such as an MBA/MFA—all of which aim to advance the University's mission and solidify its strategic position among higher education institutions in the region.
2. In Fall 2020, Provost Long called together a series of cross-university working groups that have developed and proposed common degree mapping templates, a unified University bell schedule and academic calendar, and University-level academic policies. The collaborative solutions proposed by these groups aim to provide consistency and clarity in the student experience as students increasingly enroll in courses and programs that span Willamette's colleges, and the policy group will continue its work in Academic Year 2022-23.
3. Also in Fall 2020, Provost Long created and launched the [Provost's Academic Council](#). This Council serves as the University's primary body for reviewing and approving University-level academic policies and programs, and has already reviewed and voted

¹² See Section V, Feedback to Recommendation 2 for more information on Willamette's Strategic Operations Plan.

upon academic programs such as the BSBA major and coordinated policy and structural changes such as the University Academic Integrity policy and the University's first-ever coordinated bell schedule (which will go into effect in Academic Year 2023-24).

4. There have also been efforts to promote administrative efficiencies—including the hiring of a VP for Enrollment Management to oversee University-wide enrollment activities, the integration of all four colleges' course registration into a common platform, and the expansion of units such as Student Affairs, Career Development, and Accessible Education Services to allow them to serve the entire University.

Taken together, these various initiatives reflect the University leadership's assessment and implementation of mechanisms needed to help realize Willamette's immediate fiscal and structural goals, to advance the University's mission, and to advance the Strategic Plan's vision to make Willamette an integrative University responsive to the needs of the 21st Century.

Already, some of these efforts have begun to bear fruit. In Fall 2022, the College of Arts and Sciences will enroll its largest class since Fall 2015, with an anticipated 525 incoming first-year students. Many of these incoming students have expressed an interest in Willamette's cross-university programs—including the opportunity to earn an undergraduate business degree in a liberal arts context through the BSBA program; to learn core coding skills while also examining the ethics of data management and application through the BS and MS in Data Science programs; to earn an undergraduate degree in CAS's Politics, Policy, Law and Ethics program that includes courses in Willamette's College of Law; or to obtain a joint degree in management, data science, or law (each of which are now available through 3+2, 3+1, and 3+3 programs, respectively). This strong enrollment cycle has reaffirmed that Willamette is moving in the right direction with regard to greater integration and programmatic development, and University leadership will continue to guide conversations, collaboration, and planning that advances this strategic position.

Recommendation 2: Develop meaningful indicators of institutional effectiveness and/or mission fulfillment to support future decision-making.

As part of the University's Strategic Planning process, multiple stakeholders have engaged in the development of both annual and ongoing indicators of Willamette's achievement of its mission, Strategic Vision, and operational goals. Three of the primary tools being developed include a set of financial and enrollment performance indicators, a series of annual mission fulfillment and student achievement benchmarking tools, and a Strategic Operations plan aimed at measuring the one-, three-, and five-year implementation of the 2022 Strategic Plan. A summary of each is provided below.

With leadership from the Senior VP and Chief Operations Officer—and with support and input from the Provost's Office—the University has developed a comprehensive list of Financial and Enrollment Performance Indicators related to the University's fiscal and enrollment health. These indicators reflect the University leadership's most commonly requested information used for decision-making, planning, and monitoring. Out of this list, a subset of "key indicators" are being identified for integration of a communication dashboard (or dashboards) that can be regularly presented to University leadership. In developing these new performance indicators, the Associate Provost for Institutional Research and Senior VP and COO have been mindful to

select indicators that could be reported upon regularly, promptly, and with minimal effort. Building the "machinery" to support indicator reporting has been underway for some time, and the pair hopes to produce an early prototype for this reporting tool in Fall 2022.

In addition to the financial and enrollment indicators, the Associate Provost has begun to draft a set of benchmarks that will help the University to track and assess its progress related to Mission Fulfillment and Student Achievement. Drawing upon existing, in-process, or planned data sources (including those gathered as part of the University's ongoing Student Achievement measures as discussed in Section III), these benchmarks map to ongoing institutional values and strategic goals around access, retention, graduation, and outcomes; the University's mission to prepare graduates to "lead lives of achievement, contribution, and meaning"; and 2022 Strategic Plan priorities around attaining fiscal stability and becoming the region's leading liberal arts university. These metrics will also likely be more relevant to the broader campus community (beyond institutional leadership) and will be gathered and shared regularly as part of ongoing institutional assessment.

Finally, as part of the implementation of Willamette's 2022 Strategic Plan, Provost Long and COO Valles have begun to develop an Operations Plan that outlines a series of short-, mid-, and longer-term goals and objectives in support of the Strategic Plan's broader vision. A high-level draft of this Strategic Operations Plan was reviewed by the University Trustees' Executive Committee in August 2022, and deans and unit heads will work with Provost Long and COO Valles to map college- and unit-level goals and objectives to this Operations Plan and the larger Strategic Plan in Fall 2022. These operational plans will be tracked regularly at both the University and unit level, and progress updates on the higher-level University Operations plan will be presented regularly to the Board.

As part of the University's Academic Year 2022-23 efforts around Strategic Plan implementation, each of these assessment tools (the Financial and Enrollment Performance Indicators, the Mission Fulfillment and Student Achievement Benchmarks, and the University and unit-level Strategic Operations Plan) will be coordinated into a series of reports that can be prepared, shared, and analyzed on a regular basis by various segments of the University community. It is our goal to create a series of qualitative and quantitative assessments that can be consulted both as part of annual planning activities in the University's colleges and units, as well as for larger strategic decision-making by University leadership.

Recommendation 3: Create a comprehensive system of assessment that builds upon existing program assessment efforts for the purpose of supporting future programmatic and institution-level planning.

In response to this recommendation, Willamette has carried out two primary sets of activities aimed at improving programmatic and institution-level planning. First, the College of Arts and Sciences has conducted a review of its programs and curricula to respond to a changing undergraduate enrollment, which resulted in more structural changes to the College's curricular offerings and staffing. Second, both CAS and PCNA have responded to a series of Peer Review recommendations around learning outcomes assessment aimed at improving curriculum and learning outcomes at the department and/or program level. Updates on both activities are discussed below.

CAS Comprehensive Program and Curricular Assessment in Response to Enrollment Between FY16 and FY20, the College of Arts and Sciences saw a significant decline in undergraduate enrollment—with an overall decline of 29 percent during this five-year period. This decrease in enrollment coincided with a period of natural attrition among the College’s faculty (e.g., through retirements and departures) at approximately the same rate. While these faculty departures helped to alleviate financial constraints during this time, the unplanned and unmanaged nature of this attrition—coupled with hiring freezes in both tenure-track hiring and non-tenure-track appointments—led to misaligned faculty resources across the curriculum and limited ability to invest in strategic growth areas. This misalignment presented an opportunity—if not an imperative—to systematically evaluate CAS programs and align faculty resources more effectively in service of the College’s curricular and strategic objectives.

In Fall 2020, University leadership requested a comprehensive review of the CAS curriculum and programs to help inform the Board’s budget and strategic prioritization in the months ahead. Between November 2020 and January 2021, CAS Dean Ruth Feingold led a faculty task force charged with developing a curricular plan (with affiliated staffing plans) that would respond to the College’s changing enrollment—including changes in terms of student body size, composition, and academic interest—while remaining nimble and resilient in light of ongoing and shifting fiscal realities. The group produced a Report and Recommendations that explored topics related to (a) curriculum and staffing, (b) program prioritization, consolidation, and elimination, and (c) areas of investment and “programs of distinction.” Dean Feingold presented these recommendations to Willamette’s Board of Trustees in February 2021.

Since the time of that report, progress has been made in the following areas:

1. Recommendation: Simplify curriculum and administrative structures through departmental mergers and program elimination
 - a. Update: The College has merged its Anthropology, Chinese, French & Francophone Studies, German, Russian, Asian Studies, and Latin American Studies to create a new major in [Global Cultural Studies](#)
 - b. Update: CAS has eliminated its Humanities, Rhetoric, and Comparative Literature and the History of Ideas majors, incorporating relevant coursework into other majors and programs
2. Recommendation: Redesign majors to incorporate generous cross-listing of electives from other programs
 - a. Update: The College’s [English](#), [Sociology](#), [Biology](#), and [Religious Studies](#) majors have adopted generous cross-listing practices, which have allowed for greater cross-disciplinary studies among their students and reduced teaching burden on these programs’ faculty
 - b. Update: Newer major programs in the College—including [Public Health](#), [Global Cultural Studies](#), and [Politics, Policy, Law, and Ethics](#)—are built upon a base of extensive cross-listing
3. Recommendation: Redeploy CAS faculty to teach selected classes at PNCA as part of its Liberal Arts core required for BFA students
 - a. Update: In Academic Year 2021-22, nine such courses were taught at PNCA

CAS will continue to advance the recommendations that emerged from this report. It is likely that some of the strategic investments in programs will be a longer-term endeavor—both due to current fiscal constraints and the immediate need to staff courses for the larger-than-expected incoming first-year class in Fall 2022.

Update on CAS Learning Outcomes Assessment

Since the completion of Willamette's seven-year comprehensive evaluation in 2019, our institutional efforts on assessment have been guided by three objectives: (1) to address the NWCCU recommendation to develop more sustained, purposeful, and on-going assessment of CAS's programs, (2) to design and implement an assessment program for the College's redesigned General Education program (implemented Fall 2019), and (3) to support new colleagues at Pacific Northwest College of Art in developing a comprehensive system of assessment and addressing their most recent recommendations (many of which mirror those noted for CAS). A summary of our progress in advancing these objectives is outlined below.

It should be noted that the emergence of COVID less than a year after our 2019 Self-Study has undeniably hindered our progress, both on re-establishing robust program assessment and on putting a sustainable general education assessment structure in place. Nevertheless, the College has made some notable progress, and has outlined plans for CAS's faculty-led Learning Assessment Committee (CAS) to complete both program assessment and general education assessment goals by August 2023.

Objective 1: Develop More Sustained, Purposeful, and Ongoing Undergraduate Assessment

During the 2020-21 academic year, the LAC worked with departments to establish a common set of objectives and expectations for the assessment of major programs (while leaving the method and substance of assessment to individual departments and programs). LAC adapted the NWCCU "[Rubric for Evaluating Outcomes Assessment Plan and Progress](#)" to serve as its roadmap to guide departments and programs in these efforts.

To provide all departments with discipline specific assessment resources and a common starting point, the LAC has also developed materials to support the establishment of a consistent and meaningful culture of program assessment. In 2020, the Committee requested that all programs and departments fill out an Assessment Survey that asks departments and programs to describe their assessment history, list their current published student learning outcomes, provide an update on their assessment plan status, produce a curricular map that identifies SLOs addressed in their curriculum, and outline course activities that address specific SLOs. Together with this baseline information, the LAC provided departments with a Department and Program Assessment Guidebook that provides information and resources related to program assessment.

Over the course of Academic Year 2020-21, departments were asked to complete a series of preparation and planning activities, with the goal of completing one new assessment cycle and report by the end of Calendar Year 2021; this date was extended to August 2022, given response rates. Using the rubric, the Committee identified starting points for every major-delivering department, which allows them to annually examine where progress has been made toward the overall goal. On a rolling basis, the LAC will review reports and provide feedback on the effectiveness of specific assessment procedures.

With these assessment procedures, the LAC now has a mechanism to systematically show where each major program began, as well as the progress each has made toward development of a sustainable assessment program.¹³ A summary of these efforts is provided in Table 13.

Table 13: CAS Department and Program-Level Learning Assessment Progress (August 2022)

Departments	SLOs	Currcilum Map	4-Year Assessment Plan	Recent Report Submitted	Notes
Art-Hist	Complete	Complete	Initiated		
Art-Stud	Complete		Initiated		
Biol	Complete	Complete	Initiated		
CCM	Complete				
Chem	Complete	Complete	Initiated		
Econ	Complete	Complete	Complete	Fall 2021	
Engl	Complete	Complete	Complete	Spr 2022	
EES	Complete	Complete			
EXHS	Complete	Complete	Complete	Spr 2022	
Hist	Complete	Complete	Initiated		
Glob Cult Stds	Complete	Complete	Initiated	*	GCS is a new program. First report: 2023
Japnse	Complete	Complete	Complete	Spr 2022	
Music	Complete	Complete			
Philo	Complete	Complete	Complete		
Physics	Complete	Complete	Complete	Fall 2021	
PPLE	Complete	Complete	Complete	Spr 2022	
Psych	Complete	Complete	Complete	Spr 2022	
Relig Stds	Complete	*	*	*	Unclear if CAS will continue Relig Studies major
Soc	Complete	Complete	Complete	*	Soc has been heavily redesigned. First report: 2023
Span	Complete	Complete	Initiated	Spr 2022	
Thtre	Complete	Complete	Initiated		
Interdisc Progs					
Arch	Complete				The CAS has prioritized getting department majors re-engaged with assessment in 2020/21 and 2021/2022. Interdisciplinary programs will be re-engaged in 2022/23.
Cinema	Complete	Complete			
CLSCs	Complete				
Hum	Complete				
Intl Stds	Complete	Complete			
PHEAL	Complete	Complete			
WGS	Complete				

Overall, progress has been slow. While almost every department has re-engaged, not all departments have produced an annual report:

Total Departments	21
Depts submitting a curriculum map	18
Depts submitting a 4-year plan draft	17
Depts with a complete 4-year plan	9
Depts having submitted a 2021-22 report	8

In the coming year, the LAC expects to establish an annual reporting date for assessment.

Objective 2: Develop and implement assessment of the new CAS general education program

¹³ Note: The Committee has concentrated its efforts on major-delivering departments for the last two years; CAS also has interdisciplinary majors (or “programs”) that will be assessed using the same set of procedures. The Committee postponed initiating renewed assessment of interdepartmental programs until AY 2022-23.

In Fall 2018, the CAS faculty approved a significantly redesigned [General Education Program](#). The general education program was designed over an 18-month period between January 2018 and May 2019, and was formally implemented in August 2019 for Academic Year 2019-20. Given the significant challenges in planning and deploying a comprehensive General Education assessment program, the College has taken an incremental approach to assessment: the LAC first reviewed the college-wide First-Year Seminar, and during Academic Year 2021-22 engaged Kathy Wise and Charlie Blaich from the Wabash University Center for Inquiry to help faculty think through how to assess the broader components of CAS's General Education program.

There has been some progress in these efforts, but work remains. Beyond the broader environmental challenges to accomplishing a College-wide assessment project (fiscal austerity, declining enrollments, and the COVID pandemic—all of which have led to an exhausted faculty), there have been two primary obstacles in developing and implementing a comprehensive General Education assessment. First, despite the LAC's efforts to outline, vet, and approve an assessment plan, CAS faculty have struggled to develop a consensus on how to assess some of the curriculum's learning outcomes. As a result, the Committee and overall CAS faculty have spent considerable time proposing, debating, and determining an assessment procedure. Second, sharp enrollment declines in 2019 and 2020 led to fewer students, urgent program reevaluation, and shrinking faculty size; in response, CAS's Academic Council made significant revisions to two of the five components of the General Education program. This process played out over 18 months, which contributed to the delay in developing a full assessment plan for this curriculum.

In light of these obstacles, the LAC has prioritized the development of a comprehensive General Education assessment program for Academic Year 2022-23. The following outline briefly identifies each component of the new General Education program and summarizes the status of assessment planning and deployment.

- *College Colloquium and the First-Year Experience.* The CAS equivalent of a first-year seminar, College Colloquium, carried over from the previous General Education program. A second component, the First-Year Experience,¹⁴ is a weekly, hour-long course aimed at improving student retention and success by equipping all first-year and transfer students with the knowledge, understanding, resources, and awareness to succeed at Willamette. The program has [well-defined SLOs](#), and has been exhaustively assessed using a pre- and post- survey of participants as well as qualitative feedback from student "Colloquium Assistants," faculty, and staff. Data have been collected and used to improve subsequent iterations of the program in 2019, 2020, and 2021.
- *Distribution Requirement.* As part of its General Education curricular revisions, the CAS faculty sought to reduce the scope of its distribution requirement while simultaneously preserving the breadth of coursework fundamental to a liberal arts education. After developing this requirement, it became clear that the Distribution requirement did not adequately identify assessable SLOs, and there have been robust, ongoing debates over how to resolve this challenge. In April 2021, CAS Dean Ruth Feingold organized a seminar with the Wabash University's Center of Inquiry aimed at defining a coherent understanding of desired General Education learning outcomes; approximately 40 CAS

¹⁴ The First-Year Experience has since been renamed Community-Building, Health, Academic Success Experience, or "CHASE," but we have retained its former name to encourage alignment with the attached program assessments.

faculty participated. Despite the progress made during these discussions, the LAC has faced challenges in developing a consensus strategy for assessment, which has been further confounded by ongoing faculty debate and resulting changes to this requirement. During Fall 2021, the LAC finally arrived at a preliminary plan for assessing the Distribution requirement, and will be deploying this plan in Academic Year 2022-23.

- [*Writing Program*](#). This General Education component is, for the most part, a smaller version of the College's previous General Education curriculum. Given the degree to which this has been assessed previously, it has been given a lower priority for immediate assessment attention. Nonetheless, the LAC will be planning for on-going assessment of this component in the near future.
- [*World Engagement \(WE\) and Power, Diversity, and Equity \(PDE\)*](#). These fourth and fifth components of the new General Education program do not yet have assessment procedures designed, but this is an urgent agenda item for the LAC in Academic Year 2022-23. Both components have clearly defined SLOs, as well as clear slates of courses that fulfill these requirements. However, both have slipped behind schedule, owing to the focus on other parts of the General Education assessment previously discussed. Furthermore, in the case of PDE, the actual requirement and its SLOs have undergone continued debate and revision since 2019, leading the LAC to wait until the final form is approved before determining how best to develop an assessment plan.

Objective 3: Integrate PNCA assessment into overall institutional assessment, and support the College in developing, implementing, and sustaining a program of assessment for its major programs

Prior to the merger with Willamette University, PNCA's institutional mission statement was to "prepare students for a life of creative practice." During Academic Year 2010-11, and in accordance with the NWCCU standards at the time, PNCA faculty articulated four core themes in support of its mission: Studio Practice, Critical Inquiry, World View, Professional Practice. Over the subsequent years, these themes were widely integrated into PNCA's overall strategic vision, curriculum development, and program learning outcomes. After its merger with Willamette, PNCA's accreditation cycle was reset to match Willamette University's existing cycle, and PNCA faculty reconsidered their core themes and affirmed their alignment with the University's broader Mission. This alignment allows PNCA to contribute to University-level planning and assessment through its particular brand of art and design education.

PNCA Academic Year 2021-22 Learning Outcomes Assessment and Findings

In the months following PNCA's June 2021 merger with Willamette, former ALO Don Negri and Associate Provost of Institutional Research Kelley Strawn worked with PNCA colleagues to assist with their process of renovating and reinvigorating their program assessment procedures. At PNCA, these efforts were coordinated by PNCA faculty Jay Ponteri and Kristin Bradshaw, who deployed the same [NWCCU assessment rubric](#) used by CAS's LAC to develop a more robust, comprehensive, and sustained assessment program for PNCA. Over Fall 2021, department and program faculty reviewed and revised program-level SLOs to align with the four core themes supporting the mission (these learning outcomes have since been posted to PNCA's departmental webpages' "Curriculum" sections). This process provided PNCA faculty with a foundation to assess these programs in the short-term, while also developing an annual process

for aligning and assessing program learning outcomes with the overall institutional vision and program-specific objectives.

During this foundation-building assessment process in Spring 2022, many undergraduate programs evaluated all program outcomes, while others shaped an assessment process around specific student struggles identified by faculty reviewing students’ thesis projects. Still other programs used this assessment cycle to document and assess recent programmatic efforts—including revisions around degree requirements, pedagogies, and curriculum within and across required courses. Most departments and programs assessed student work samples taken from 400- or 600-level work, as assignments from these more advanced course levels offered faculty the most expansive means through which to evaluate the program outcomes. A summary of PNCA’s departmental and programmatic assessment efforts, to date, is provided in Table 14.

Table 14: PNCA Department and Program-Level Learning Assessment Progress (August 2022)

PNCA Departments’ Assessment Progress (August 2022)			
Program	Have SLOs	Assessment Plan	Assessment Piloted
Animated Arts	X	X	X
Creative Writing (BFA)	X	X	X
General Fine Arts	X	X	X
Graphic Design	X	X	
Illustration	X	X	X
Intermedia	X	X	X
Painting			
Photography	X	X	X
Printmaking	X	X	X
Sculpture	X	X	X
Video+Sound	X	X	X
Applied Craft & Design	X	X	X
Collaborative Design & Design Systems	X		
Critical Studies	X	X	X
Print Media	X	X	X
Visual Studies			
Low-Residency Creative Writing	X	X	X
Low-Res. Visual Studies			
Post BAC			
BFA Foundation		X	

In conducting these assessments, faculty found that many undergraduate-level thesis projects offer an inadequate breadth of work to fully assess program outcomes. This was the case for BFA Creative Writing, Intermedia, Photography, and Printmaking. PNCA’s faculty Assessment Coordinators will use these findings to help faculty design a more expansive work sample that speaks to all the program outcomes in Academic Year 2022-23.

Conversely, PNCA’s graduate thesis projects—which often include a paper and an exhibition—do offer snapshots to assess all of the program outcomes, although many of the graduate school faculty need help creating assessment rubrics. The College’s Low-Residency Creative Writing program’s assessment efforts provide a model for implementing and sharing

assessment processes, and PNCA Assessment Coordinator Jay Ponteri (who also chairs the Low-Residency Creative Writing program) has been charged with helping the graduate department chairs create such rubrics in Academic Year 2022-23. In support of these efforts, PNCA Dean Jennifer Cole has earmarked funds to pay the College's part-time faculty to help review portfolio samples as part of this process.

In addition to support from PNCA's Dean's Office in supporting learning assessment, Ponteri also hopes to collaborate with CAS faculty and the Provost's Office to hold a series of mini-workshops to help faculty gain greater familiarity and comfort in developing and implementing programmatic assessment. Identified themes for these workshops include collecting work samples to measure identified program outcomes, creating functional rubrics, formulating a sustainable assessment process, and developing SLOs and assessment plans for the BFA's required Liberal Arts courses. Ponteri has set a larger goal of helping faculty to develop a college-wide, digital student portfolio process that allows students to gather and manage samples of their work and for faculty to readily collect samples that speak to specific SLOs.

In addition to these program-level efforts, PNCA will also be working to adopt College-level learning outcomes that map to the University's 2022 Strategic Plan. In Fall 2022, PNCA faculty and staff will begin this process by mapping PNCA's core themes to College-wide learning outcomes.¹⁵ Particular areas of interest identified by Dean Cole for this effort include studio/creative practice, critical worldview, ethical leadership, creative interdisciplinarity, and career complexity. This work will be led by a work group comprising faculty, students, and administrative leadership, and will be completed by December 2022.

Programmatic Assessment through Newly-Centralized Support

In Summer 2022, Provost Long began to finalize the structure of her Provost's Office to include centralized resources and support for University- and college-level accreditation and assessment. The newly established Associate Provost of Institutional Research and Assistant Provost for Academic Planning and Accreditation (and ALO) now monitor, review, and archive all school and university accreditation materials, and offer support related to data collection and analysis, academic planning, and accreditation. This central coordination enables schools to learn from each other's practices, facilitates better cross-institutional data collection and analysis, and provides methods for assessing cross-institutional programming as it evolves. In addition, the ALO and Associate Provost of Institutional Research will monitor how intra-institutional programs (most immediately, the University's new programs in Data Science, Public Health, and Business Administration) are evolving to ensure that their SLOs are mission-focused and that program faculty are undertaking meaningful assessment of them.

Recommendation 4: Address budget shortfall due to lower enrollment and develop a responsible enrollment forecasting methodology that supports realistic enrollment budgeting.

The University expects (and is planning for) deficits for the next three years, with positive operating results returning in FY26 as the small COVID-era classes progress through their programs. Fortunately, due to many years of prudent budgeting, Willamette approached these problems with a strong cash position and strong long-term reserves invested in the

¹⁵ A set of Draft Institutional Learning Outcomes for PNCA has been developed and will be refined as part of these conversations.

Board-designated endowment (also known as the quasi-endowment). Though some expense reductions and deferrals were implemented, the Board also recognized that the use of “rainy-day” reserves was an appropriate alternative to drastic cuts and was essential to avoid losing momentum on strategic initiatives and investments needed to protect the University’s long-term market position, revenues, and financial strength. Thus, in its efforts to manage this multi-year challenge, the Board established a framework of financial guardrails to constrain financial and operational planning through 2026—allowing some deficit spending but also ensuring the maintenance of sufficient reserves to address other unexpected challenges should they arise.

The University has also redesigned its Five Year Forecast to incorporate enrollment assumptions, growth efforts described in the Strategic Plan, as well as cost assumptions to support the plan and efficiency expectations achieved through continuous integration. While Willamette’s near-term growth is dominated by the graduation of smaller Salem undergraduate classes and the replacement with these classes with ones similar in size to our Fall 2022 enrollment, assumptions around increased transfer student recruitment and graduate enrollment also contribute to the predicted overall enrollment trajectory. Additionally, the finance team has accounted for efforts to reshape our applicant pools and adjust tuition levels—all with an eye toward decreasing the undergraduate discount rate. Their assumptions were tested with our Vice President for Enrollment Management and each College's Deans for realism and achievability.

These revised financial models reflect both the University’s efforts to increase enrollment and the demographic and fiscal headwinds facing all universities, resulting in what we believe to be a realistic enrollment assumption. Even still, this forecast represents one scenario of numerous possible outcomes, and is highly unlikely to be the exact scenario that results. As such, University leadership, in consultation with the Board, will identify contingency plans should there be an unexpected shortfall—the extent of which will vary depending upon size of a shortfall and progresses through cuts in variable costs (e.g., food, housing, etc.). Tools to be considered range from reducing operating budgets, to pausing compensation increases, to implementing a hiatus in retirement benefits (the latter two options could be implemented in a large shortfall situation, but would cause the University to lose ground on maintaining competitive compensation packages).

Fall 2021 Ad-Hoc Merger Visit Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Consider the meaningfulness of current data being collected to evaluate student achievement, and ultimately, the degree of mission fulfillment.

Please see the University’s responses to recommendations 1 and 2 above.

VI. Moving Forward

In preparation for the University’s Year Seven Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Report—and as part of our ongoing efforts to integrate PNCA and advance the strategic vision of President Thorsett and the Board of Trustees—Willamette will prioritize the following initiatives in the years ahead.

Continued Refinement of Programmatic Assessment

As outlined in Section IV, both PNCA and CAS have made substantial progress in addressing peer evaluators' recommendations following their Year Seven evaluations. Both colleges have built and piloted internal structures for devising, sharing, and receiving peer feedback on their evaluation of student learning outcomes, which they will continue to refine and grow.

Additionally, as the University works toward greater integration (and, hopefully, fewer in-person restrictions posed by the pandemic), faculty leaders are exploring opportunities to expand professional development and networking across the colleges' faculties around program and learning outcomes assessment. Revised structures in the PNCA Dean's Office (including a recently appointed Accreditation Coordinator, a Senior Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, and Assistant Dean of Student Success) and in CAS's faculty committees will help to facilitate these ongoing efforts.

The University's colleges of Management and Law have or will also see opportunities to advance their assessment of student learning outcomes as they continue to meet discipline-specific accreditation requirements. AGSM completed their Continuous Improvement Review Report for the AACSB in 2019, during which they received commendations for student learning outcomes demonstrated as part of their Integrated Knowledge Exercise Week (IKEW); as part of their 2022 NASPAA Self-Study, Atkinson faculty reflected on the continuous improvement related to the development and ongoing assessment of the IKEW. Similarly, the College of Law also recently completed their ABA Self-Study and site visit (March 2022), during which—and in response to evaluator comments—they have outlined and reflected upon learning assessment activities. WUCL will receive final feedback from the ABA in August 2022, which will inform ongoing learning assessment activities in compliance with ABA standards.

Finally, the University's newly-formed Committee of Studies in Computation and Data Science is also in the early stages of developing learning outcomes and assessment for its Computer Science and Data Science programs. Undergraduate Computer Science and Data Science programs recently submitted their learning assessment plans to the CAS Learning Assessment Committee for consultation and alignment with other undergraduate program assessments, and Masters degree and certificate programs (currently only in Data Science, although a graduate Computer Science curriculum will likely be developed within the next 2-3 years) will be managed solely by the Committee of Studies.

It should also be noted that in addition to college-level program assessment efforts, the University ALO monitors, reviews, and archives all accreditations. This central coordination allows schools to learn from each other's practices, facilitates better cross-institutional data collection and analysis, and provides methods for assessing cross-institutional programming as it evolves.

Growing the Committee of Studies in Computation and Data Science into a Fifth College

In their 2021 Resolution to form the Committee of Studies in Computation and Data Science, the Board of Trustees stated their intention to establish a School of Computation and Data at the University. This resolution outlined a series of conditions to be met in advancing this goal in areas such as fundraising, faculty appointments, enrollment growth, identification of facilities, and integration into the University's financial model.

Significant progress has been made toward meeting these conditions. The Committee of Studies has seen growth in its initial years, with robust undergraduate enrollment in its various course offerings and considerable interest in its joint degree programs; Academic Year 2022-23 promises additional growth. Similarly, enrollment in the stand-alone MS/DS program has grown since its Fall 2020 launch, with enrollment in the Fall 2022 cohort currently expected to be between 25 and 28 students. To accommodate this growth, the Committee of Studies has hired four new tenure-track faculty members over the past two years (two in Academic Year 2021-22 and two beginning in Academic Year 2022-23)—two of which have received seed funding through a [\\$1.9 million Strengthening Institutions Grant](#) from the Department of Education to grow Willamette’s computation and data science programs.

Now in its third year, the Committee of Studies currently offers BS degrees in Computer Science and Data Science, a MS degree in Data Science, a graduate Certificate in Data Science, and a 3+1 BS to MS degree in Data Science. Within the next two years, the Committee will continue adding breadth to its programs, and plans to add a Master of Science in Computer Science. It is also worth noting that the Committee of Studies curriculum has been designed to complement the University’s existing colleges and schools—a design philosophy that is evident in its close integration with Willamette’s MBA curriculum, its curricular tie-ins with programs in CAS, and conversations between Committee of Studies and PNCA faculty to build programs that integrate computation, coding, and design. As such, it serves as a model for future program development that reflects Willamette’s integrated university vision.

New Cross-University Program Development

As noted above, Willamette’s 2022 Strategic Plan has prioritized the development of cross-university academic and co-curricular program development as a mechanism for both providing sustainable enrollment as well as for preparing the University’s graduates for successful professional and civic lives. In the immediate term, University leadership has identified the following areas of exploration and/or program development:

- MS in Computer Science, which will engage design coursework at PNCA
- Health Leadership/Management, which would expand the College of Law’s [Health Law Certificate](#) to include electives in the Atkinson Graduate School of Management
- Revamping CAS’s [Arts, Technology, and Multimedia](#) minor, with potential for collaborative coursework with the Committee of Studies and PNCA
- An array of Arts Management and/or joint MBA/MFA program opportunities that combine coursework at PNCA, AGSM, and CAS’s Theatre department
- Review of PNCA’s MFA Collaborative Design/MA Design systems degrees to include concentrations aimed at engaging Committee of Studies and CAS—including exploring the feasibility of a 4+1 BFA pathway with graphic design and information design
- Expanded, “client-based” professional Writing programs that would serve students from all colleges

In the longer term, President Thorsett has highlighted three priority topic areas for cross-university program development: climate change, human-centered computing, and democratic societies. These three themes address “wicked problems” that graduates will face as

they leave Willamette and enter workforces and communities around the world, and all will require the sort of cross-disciplinary thinking and skills that the University seeks to advance.

Greater Integration Across the University's Administrative Units

In addition to academic integration, the University will continue to prioritize cross-university integration in its administrative units. A few areas of immediate focus include enrollment and marketing, course registration and scheduling, and academic administration.

In addition to hires in Enrollment and Marketing (see discussion of Willamette's new VP of Enrollment Management in Section II), the University is also making efforts to provide clearer and more comprehensive messaging around its expanded cross-university academic offerings. Beginning in Spring 2022, the University underwent an audit of its website (including PNCA's linked website) to explore issues of analytics, usability, technology, design, and content. This audit provided a series of short- and long-term recommendations to improve navigation, accessibility, search engine optimization, information architecture, and consistency in messaging. The University's marketing team is in the process of developing a plan to address these recommendations, and Willamette has sought funding from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust to support these efforts (funding decision pending).

The University also seeks to better integrate course registration, scheduling, and academic catalog publishing to ensure consistency in the student experience. In Academic Year 2021-22, a cross-university committee led by Willamette's Vice President and Chief Information Officer discussed needs around academic operations, outlined a list of technical requirements for a University-wide academic operations system, and participated in a series of vendor demonstrations. In Spring 2022, the group recommended a preferred system that could be adopted at the University level. Seed funding for this software purchase has been requested as part of the Murdock Trust proposal, with a target implementation date of Academic Year 2023-24.

Finally, Provost Long has led a series of initiatives to promote greater cross-university integration around academic administration. These efforts include the centralization of academic finance (led by the Associate Provost for Academic Finance), greater coordination of institutional research activities (led by the Associate Provost for Institutional Research), efforts to promote greater equity across the University's academic units (led by a newly-appointed Assistant Provost for Institutional Equity and Community Engagement), structures to develop University-level academic policy and planning (led by a newly-formed Assistant Provost for Academic Planning and Accreditation), and centralized University accreditation oversight (also led by the Assistant Provost for Academic Planning and Accreditation). Taken together, the [Provost's Office](#) now serves as a central resource for academic integration, university-wide, with a goal to provide the support necessary to help minimize college-level "silos" that previously defined the University's academic structure.

Continued Structure in Support of the University's Strategic Plan

Finally, the coming years will see the operationalization of Willamette's recently-approved [2022 Strategic Plan](#). Beginning in Summer 2022 and working into Academic Year 2022-23, Willamette's Chief Operating Officer (who oversees Enrollment, Marketing & Communications,

Financial Operations, and Facilities and Operations) and the Provost (who oversees Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Information Technology) will lead efforts to develop a Strategic Operations Plan that will provide one-, three-, and five-year activities and benchmarks for advancing the Strategic Plan's vision and goals. As part of this process, senior leadership will gather feedback from unit-level leads and Deans to map college- and unit-level activities to the University's strategic priorities.¹⁶ Updates on this Strategic Operations Plan will be provided to the Board of Trustees' Executive Committee.

To provide additional support around these and other cross-university integration efforts, the University has hired a Project Manager who reports directly to Willamette's Chief Operating Officer. This individual is helping to develop project management practices at the University, and will help to provide structure in maintaining momentum, ensuring communications, assessing resourcing, and promoting the evaluation of the Strategic Operations Plan and other cross-university projects.

While the past three years since Willamette University's 2019 Comprehensive Self-Study and Peer Review have presented a host of unpredictable (and unprecedented) challenges, the University has continued to define and advance its strategic vision. Indeed, the shifts in enrollment, fiscal, and pedagogical strategies brought by the COVID-19 pandemic—coupled with the University's merger with PNCA and creation of a new Committee of Studies—have necessitated the restructuring and integration of various institutional functions, as well as the refinement and communication of vision by University leadership. With a new Strategic Plan that clearly articulates the University's strategic direction as well as an Operations Plan designed to help implement this vision at various levels, the University enters the second half of its accreditation cycle with a shared understanding and clear structures to fulfill its mission, assess its progress, and make informed decisions about how to prioritize improvement and growth in the years to come.

¹⁶ Some of this work has already begun. In Summer 2022, the Student Affairs division developed a list of strategic educational priorities with affiliated learning outcomes that reflect the University's priorities, and the College of Law defined an array of "[Signature Strengths](#)" that will drive their work in the years ahead. AGSM will also be undertaking a college-level planning process in compliance with AACSB/NASPAA requirements during Academic Year 2022-23, and the Assistant Provost of Academic Planning and Accreditation will serve as the Provost's Office liaison on this team.

Reference Documents

Section I. Introduction and Institutional Overview

1. Willamette University 2019 NWCCU Comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report
2. NWCCU Peer Evaluation Report of Willamette University (12/18/2019)
3. NWCCU Recommendations for Willamette University following 2019 Site Visit
4. PNCA NWCCU Accreditation Letter (1/17/2019)
5. Willamette University/PNCA 2021 NWCCU *Ad Hoc* Merger Report
6. NWCCU Willamette University Peer Merger Evaluation Report (October 2021)

Section II. Mission Fulfillment

1. Willamette University / PNCA Merger Summary Report, May 2022
2. Willamette University FY 2021 Audited Financial Statements
3. Willamette Board of Trustees, Committee Restructuring White Paper (v. May 2020)
4. Willamette Board of Trustees, Executive Committee Minutes on Approved Faculty Positions (May 2022)
5. College of Arts and Sciences, Student Academic Interest (Fall 2022)
6. Willamette Board of Trustees, Resolution for School of Computation and Data Science (May 2021)
7. Willamette University 2022 Strategic Plan

Section III. Student Achievement

All referenced data tables are embedded within section

Section IV. Program Assessment

1. CAS Department and Program Assessment Survey Template (November 2020)
2. CAS Department and Program Assessment Survey Instructions (November 2020)
3. CAS Department and Program Assessment Guidebook (May 2021)
4. Willamette University Atkinson Graduate School of Management NASPAA Self-Study Report (August 2022)
5. Willamette University College of Law 2022 ABA Self-Assessment Report
6. Willamette University College of Law 2022 ABA Site Team Report
7. Willamette University College of Law Response to ABA Site Visit (July 2022)
8. Computing and Data Science Programs Learning Outcomes and Assessment Plan
9. CAS Physics Department Assessment Survey (November 2020)
10. CAS Physics Department Assessment Report (AY 2020-21)
11. CAS Learning Assessment Committee Assessment Feedback, Physics
12. PNCA BFA Intermedia Learning Assessment Pilot (AY 2021-22)

Section V. Addressing Recommendations

1. Willamette University Draft Financial and Enrollment Indicators (August 2022)
2. Willamette University Draft Mission Fulfillment Benchmarks (August 2022)
3. Willamette University Draft Strategic Operations Plan (August 2022)
4. CAS Program Prioritization Task Force Charge (November 2020)
5. CAS Program Prioritization Task Force Report (January 2021)
6. CAS Program Prioritization Task Force Summary PowerPoint (January 2021)

7. CAS 2020 Department and Program Assessment Survey Template (November 2020)
8. CAS Department and Program Assessment Guidebook (May 2021)
9. CAS First-Year Experience Assessment Report (2019)
10. CAS First-Year Experience Assessment Report (2020)
11. PNCA Draft Institutional Learning Outcomes (August 2022)
12. Willamette University Board of Trustees, Financial Guardrails (2022)
13. Willamette University FY 2023 Budget and Five-Year Forecast (2022)

Section VI. Moving Forward

1. Computing and Data Science Programs Learning Outcomes and Assessment Plan
2. Willamette Board of Trustees, Resolution for School of Computation and Data Science (May 2021)
3. Willamette University 2022 Strategic Plan
4. Willamette University Draft Strategic Operations Plan (August 2022)
5. Student Affairs Learning Goals and Outcomes (Summer 2022)