

Interim Report Form

SECTION I: Cover Sheet

Name of Institution:	Mills College 5000 MacArthur Boulevard Oakland, California 94613
Person Submitting the Report:	Marianne Sheldon Accreditation Liaison Officer
Report Submission Date:	October 31, 2014

SECTION II: Statement on Report Preparation

Briefly describe in narrative form the process of report preparation, providing the names and titles of those involved. Because of the focused nature of an Interim Report, the widespread and comprehensive involvement of all institutional constituencies is not normally required. Faculty, administrative staff, and others should be involved as appropriate to the topics being addressed in the preparation of the report. Campus constituencies, such as faculty leadership and, where appropriate, the governing board, should review the report before it is submitted to WSCUC, and such reviews should be indicated in this statement.

Following the College's Educational Effectiveness Review in 2010, the WSCUC action letter of February 28, 2011 was posted online for the campus community to review and to use in planning for this interim report. In the past three and a half years, faculty, program, and department heads as well as the Assessment and General Education Committee, the Office of the Provost, and the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Academic Assessment (OIRPAA) have been hard at work discussing and implementing assessment processes, assembling data, and reviewing program reports.

The Interim Report narrative was drafted by Alice Knudsen, director of OIRPAA; David Donahue, professor of education and acting provost; and Marianne Sheldon, professor of history and accreditation liaison officer.

Once the initial draft of the report was completed, it was shared with President Alecia A. DeCoudreaux and members of the President's Cabinet as well as with the Assessment and General Education Committee, the Faculty Executive Committee, and the Curriculum Transformation Task Force. The draft was revised as appropriate. The final report was posted on the College's website. Although the Board of Trustees did not review this report, the board has received regular reports on the College's assessment work in the Educational Policies Committee and in meetings of the full Board of Trustees.

SECTION III: List of Topics Addressed in this Report

Please list the topics identified in the action letter(s) and that are addressed in this report.

Full Implementation of Assessment and Program Review Processes

In order to address this issue fully, the report has been divided into four sections:

1. Assessment and Program Review Processes
2. Comprehensive Review of General Education
3. Support for Faculty to Improve Their Teaching Practices
4. Technology, Equipment Infrastructure, and Integrated Systems

SECTION IV: Institutional Context

Very briefly describe the institution's background; mission; history, including the founding date and year first accredited; geographic locations; and other pertinent information so that the Interim Report Committee panel has the context to understand the issues discussed in the report.

Mills College is an independent liberal arts college for women with graduate programs for women and men. Mills was founded in Benicia, California in 1852 as the Young Ladies Seminary. In 1856 Susan and Cyrus Mills purchased the seminary and moved it from Benicia to its current location in Oakland—then Brooklyn Township—in 1871. In 1885 Mills was chartered as a non-sectarian college for women by the state of California. Its first bachelor's degree candidates graduated in 1889. In 1920 a School of Education and a School of Graduate Studies were established. The master of arts degree was first awarded by Mills in 1921 and the master of education degree first awarded in 1929. The College has been accredited by WSCUC since 1949. In 1990 a decision made by the Board of Trustees to admit men to the undergraduate program was reversed and the College affirmed its commitment to remain an undergraduate college for women. Mills currently offers 37 undergraduate majors, 21 master's degree programs, and a research doctorate in educational leadership.

In fall 2014 there are a total of 922 undergraduate and 626 graduate students enrolled at Mills, for a total student enrollment of 1,548. Included in that total are 297 undergraduate and 299 graduate entering students. Students of color currently make up 48% of the Mills student body (54% of undergraduates and 41% of graduates). Of the fall 2013 cohort, 72% of first-time first-year students and 82% of transfer students returned for their second year of study.

SECTION V: Response to Issues Identified by the Commission

This main section of the report should address the issues identified by the Commission in its action letter(s) as topics for the Interim Report. Each topic identified in the Commission's action letter should be addressed. The team report (on which the action letter is based) may provide additional context and background for the institution's understanding of issues.

Provide a full description of each issue, the actions taken by the institution that address this issue, and an analysis of the effectiveness of these actions to date. Have the actions taken been successful in resolving the problem? What is the evidence supporting progress? What further problems or issues remain? How will these concerns be addressed, by whom, and under what timetable? How will the institution know when the issue has been fully addressed? Please include a timeline that outlines planned additional steps with milestones and expected outcomes. Responses should be no longer than five pages per issue.

1. Assessment and Program Review Processes

Assessment at Mills is a multi-layered comprehensive process. The first layer is the assessment of the learning goals related to the College's mission. The second layer is the assessment of the learning outcomes that were specified at the time the current General Education Program was launched in fall 2003. The third layer is the assessment of the learning goals specific to the academic programs, or majors. And, finally, the fourth layer is the assessment of the guiding principles articulated by the Division of Student Life (DSL). At any given time, assessment is taking place within all of these layers in some form.

When the WSCUC Visiting Team came to Mills in October 2010, the College had already built the framework and infrastructure for assessment. Assessment of student learning was embedded into the program reviews, conducted every five years, and annual reports, both required by all academic (major) programs. Program reviews require that departments provide a summative assessment of all their goals. Annual reports require that departments assess at least one of their goals. Templates had been developed for the academic programs providing prompts to aid faculty in constructing their assessment plans and writing their assessment reports. Templates for DSL were also devised. The Mills Academic Assessment Program (MAAP) website had been created providing an Assessment Guide, a rubric library, and other resources for faculty and staff involved in assessment. All programs had constructed learning goals, curricular maps, and assessment plans. A redesigned Course Approval and Revision Process (CARP) made explicit the alignment of each course with its academic program and institutional goals. Finally, a schedule of assessments for goals related to the mission of the College, General Education Program, and DSL had been developed with the intent to assess all institution-wide academic program goals, and guiding principles within five years of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) visit.

Assessment at Mills had also become a living framework. Many of the academic programs had gone through at least one cycle of assessment. Assessment of institution-wide learning goals—mission and general education—as well as the DSL guiding principles was under way. All faculty members had interacted, through CARP, with the academic program, general education, and mission goals supported by their course(s), seeing the connections and clarifying, both for themselves and students, the expectations underlying those goals. Assessment was leading to improvements in courses and programs. However, the framework was still relatively new, the work done within the framework was not uniform in quality, and the level of engagement on the part of the faculty was inconsistent.

The quantity of assessment work continued on schedule since the time of the EER visit. The College has completed five more assessment cycles of its institution-wide learning goals (including goals for the General Education Program): clear and effective communication, historical perspectives, multicultural perspectives, women and gender, and creation and criticism in the arts. In all, twelve out of sixteen of the College's institution-wide learning goals have gone through at least one cycle of assessment to date. All of the academic programs with the exception of three have been through a formal program review, including the assessment of capstone projects covering all program learning goals. Two of the three remaining programs (Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and Mathematics) are scheduled for their reviews this year. French is scheduled for review next year when both members of the department will be on campus. All programs have completed annual reports which include the assessment of at least one program learning goal. DSL is also well into assessing its five guiding principles. The student administrative units, under new leadership since the time of the EER visit, are establishing comprehensive plans for assessing their operations.

While there was an initial expectation that all mission goals and general education goals would have gone through one cycle of assessment by now, three events altered this expectation, two internal and one external. The first was the assessment of our General Education Program itself, which is described in detail in the next section. The second was the new direction of the College forged by the 2013-18 Strategic Plan (See Appendix 1-1: Mills College Strategic Plan 2013-18), which called for a review and revision of the curriculum, informed in part by the results of the assessments of our General Education Program. The strategic planning process also inspired a broad discussion of a renewed Mills mission, grounded by the concepts and themes born in the general education revision. The timing of this could not have been more prescient given the third event that changed our assessment priorities, the revision of the WSCUC standards for accreditation.

WSCUC's 2013 Handbook of Accreditation requires colleges to speak to the "Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of the Degree." In addition, the handbook now explicitly names five core competencies that are expected to be a part of the degree. In sum, although the existing schedule of the assessment of the mission and general education learning goals was not yet completed, attention needed to be paid to what was new. Thus, we returned to the core competencies of critical thinking, information literacy, quantitative and computational reasoning, written communication, and oral communication, all competencies that had already been central to Mills' mission.

Even with the quantity and pace of the assessments taking place at Mills, the quality of the assessments is the most encouraging and exciting aspect of our progress. As would be expected, practice has improved the processes of assessments—the artifacts, evaluation tools, evaluators, etc. We have learned as an institution, and discuss in the next section, what the issues are that need to be addressed to produce quality assessment work that leads to valid and reliable information on which to base improvements.

As an institution, we are moving toward the "learning paradigm" and away from the "instruction paradigm." That is to say, our focus is first on student learning and our institutional priorities are built around the evidence we collect about that learning. We have expanded the makeup of our assessment committee to include the leaders of our faculty development and student administrative services areas, and have established a working group to look at how we can build explicit connections between our academic programs and our co-curricular programs.

The most encouraging change in assessment is in the tenor and depth of the conversations and the earnest, honest engagement around assessment and continuous improvement practices that have moved the College to a new level. For example, a group of faculty invited to be a part of a written communication assessment project reacted enthusiastically with comments such as, “This is important work! Count me in!” When the meeting of this group was held, the members were deeply engaged in constructing an assessment that would be meaningful in understanding the level of our students’ writing skills, and committed to making the improvements necessary to ensure students’ competence in this area.

2. Comprehensive Review of General Education

The current General Education Program, which was launched in fall 2003 and consists of ten areas of study, has been reviewed on three levels thus far. The first level is a purely quantitative review of the courses that meet general education requirements. This review looked at the outcomes that were documented as delivered through the courses to consider whether or not the level of exposure to these outcomes was adequate for students to become proficient. This assessment revealed that the students were not being adequately exposed to the general education outcomes. For example, in some cases, courses only supported one or two of several outcomes for a particular area.

The General Education Committee then revised its policy to require that courses meeting general education requirements support at least 50% of the outcomes for that requirement. Faculty teaching courses that were below the mandatory level, who were still interested in having their course meet the requirement, reapplied to the committee through CARP. They were asked to document meeting more than 50% of the outcomes and to define the measures they would use to ensure the outcomes were met. If approved by the General Education Committee, the course returned to the list of those satisfying a general education requirement. This process was very constructive and informative because many of the faculty going through the process had never seen the outcomes, most likely because the course was approved several years before and in some cases taught by a different faculty member.

The second level of assessment of the General Education Program is the direct assessment of student learning using student artifacts generated in the general education courses to determine the level of learning that has taken place. These formal assessments were begun in 2008 and have been taking place annually since then, with two general education areas assessed in each cycle. Of the ten outcome categories, eight have gone through at least one cycle of assessment: Written Communication I, Written Communication II, Information Literacy, Quantitative and Computational Reasoning, Historical Perspectives, Women and Gender, Multicultural Perspectives, and Creating and Critiquing in the Arts.

Information Literacy has gone through two cycles of assessment, and Quantitative and Computational Reasoning was assessed a second time because there were difficulties with the pre-/post-test design of the first assessment (i.e., not enough of the pre-test participants returned for the post-test). Written Communication I and II are going through their second cycle of assessment this year.

In addition, student learning in competencies not explicitly part of Mills’ General Education Program has been assessed. These are competencies that we expect all students to achieve, are implicit in our mission, and were announced as required in the WSCUC’s 2013 Handbook of Accreditation. First and foremost among these competencies was critical thinking, a core competency at the heart of our research-based liberal arts curriculum, and oral communication. Critical thinking has gone through two assessment cycles. Oral Communication is also being assessed this year, our second attempt. The first

one had too small a sample and was fraught with technical difficulties, but was useful in teaching us how to avoid the same issues going forward.

The third level of assessment of the General Education Program is triangulating the data on student learning with student responses on surveys such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Higher Education Research Institute College Senior Survey (CSS). Both of these instruments have measures related either to students' perceptions of their abilities in the core areas (critical thinking, information literacy, quantitative reasoning, oral communication, written communication, and others) or to the level they have engaged in activities related to these knowledge and skill areas. This is considered indirect evidence of student learning, which is not as powerful as reviewing student artifacts, but certainly meaningful when interpreted in the context of the direct assessments. For examples of survey measures used, see Appendix 2-1: Quantitative and Computational Reasoning Assessment Report.

The direct assessment of student learning through student artifacts is the most meaningful assessment and the most challenging. The framework for this direct assessment is very similar for most of the ten areas in general education, but, of course, the participants differ depending on the area being assessed. The first step in this process is to determine which courses supporting the area being assessed are offered that particular year (either fall or spring or both depending on the timing of the preparation for the assessment). The courses are labeled in the database with general education attribute codes, making this a very straightforward step.

Once the courses are identified, the instructors for each course are invited by the Director of OIRPAA to participate in the assessment. The invitation includes a description of the project (purpose, overview of the process, schedule of meetings, etc.), what they are expected to do, and an estimate of their time commitment. Because many of the general education areas are supported by courses from multiple disciplines, the Director of OIRPAA works to ensure that there is a balance of disciplines in the assessment. If the balance is skewed, faculty teaching courses in the disciplines that are needed for a representative sample are contacted and encouraged to consider participating. In most cases, the balance is achieved at least minimally. Some areas of general education are very homogenous, such as historical perspectives, and so maintaining such a balance is not an issue. The total number of courses in the sample varies depending on the area being assessed as there is a great deal of difference in the number of courses supporting each area. In general, twelve courses is considered optimal. In some cases, few courses are eligible as is the case for quantitative reasoning, and therefore, the course sample size is much smaller (five courses in this case).

All faculty members participating in the project attend a series of meetings. The meetings are facilitated by the Director of OIRPAA, who poses questions to the group around the outcomes defined for the area and how they might best be measured. During these meetings, faculty engage in rich conversations about the outcomes themselves. For example, the Creating and Critiquing in the Arts faculty discussed how to interpret outcomes such as, "Engage with the creative process, either actively or critically," and asked themselves whether the evaluation is simply either a "yes" or a "no" or whether the quality of the work is also an issue, in which case scores would be needed.

After this initial step of working with the outcomes and gaining consensus on their interpretation, participating faculty construct the tool to evaluate the artifacts. This phase stimulates rich conversation as the faculty grapple with what standards to use and how to articulate the quality of the work they would expect to see for each. Finally, once the evaluation tool is constructed, the next conversation

turns to the assignments that faculty will give their students to elicit work that aligns with the learning outcomes being measured. Interestingly, while this is probably one of the most crucial steps, it is also the one about which faculty members are more or less sanguine, that is, they are confident that the work they are assigning will be well-aligned with the outcomes.

At this point, the decisions for which consensus of the participating faculty members is needed have been made. They teach their courses and identify the assignment being used for the assessment on their syllabi. They inform students that their work will be collected and graded for the course, but will also be reviewed confidentially as part of the general education assessment project.

The final step is for the Director of OIRPAA to hire the evaluators. The evaluators are in most cases Mills faculty members; however, for two of the assessment projects, two Mills faculty were hired along with a PhD candidate at UC Berkeley to get some outside perspective. In general, faculty members do not evaluate student work from their own courses to mitigate against bias.

The results of these assessment projects have been mixed:

- On six of the eight outcomes for the area of Historical Perspectives, over 50% of the students scored in the range of 1 (poor) and 2 (fair), where 3 (good) was the benchmark.
- In Quantitative Reasoning, students' overall performance on average was above the midpoint, and closest to "good" on a scale of "poor," "fair," "good," or "excellent," but still not reaching the benchmark of "good."
- Of the three goals that were measured in the area of multicultural perspectives, all scored slightly above 2 on a scale of 4.
- In the assessment of the two goals for women and gender, students did not consistently achieve the benchmark.
- In the assessment of the general education second writing requirement, all of the mean scores for the skills assessed were below the "competent" level, with an overall mean score of 2.77 on a scale of 4.
- One bright spot was that the assessment of student artifacts indicates that our students' overall performance on assignments demonstrating their ability to create and critique in the arts was between "good" and "excellent" on all measures.

Two examples of assessment reports are provided as Appendix 2-1: Quantitative and Computational Reasoning Assessment Report and Appendix 2-2: Historical Perspectives Assessment Report.

One reason identified to account for the mixed results is that the work the students were doing in the courses supporting these requirements was not completely in alignment with the outcomes defined for those areas, a fact that only came to light as the evaluators were doing their work. Therefore, the student artifacts that were evaluated did not demonstrate consistently the learning defined. This meant that before recommendations could be made to bolster the learning, the process needed to be improved to ensure that the assessment was valid. Two improvements are planned for future assessments: one is to have the participating faculty review the actual assignments to confirm the alignment; and the second is to have the evaluators score the alignment as they evaluate the work and only use the learning scores from the assignments that earned a high alignment score. These scores could also be used to provide feedback to the faculty designing the assignments.

Two assessment projects were done with a different approach from the one described above. They were the assessments for critical thinking and information literacy. A second administration of the Collegiate

Learning Assessment (CLA) in 2012 provided supplemental data on critical thinking, including true longitudinal data of the first-year students who took the CLA in 2008 and then again as seniors in 2012. Coupled with the CLA were course-embedded assessments, which were structured in a similar way as the general education assessment processes described previously. The result of this assessment was that the College is within an “acceptable” range of competency when compared to other institutions of similar selectivity. Another second cycle of data gathering, this one for information literacy, was achieved through the repeat administration of the Research Practices Survey, which provided both indirect and direct evidence of students’ abilities in choosing, evaluating, and using resource information. The main conclusion was that the online information literacy module required of all entering students, College 005, was having virtually no impact on the students’ skills in this area.

These results were reported back to the faculty, initiating a process to “close the loop” by using the data to improve learning in these areas. For an example of this process, see Appendix 2-3: Information Literacy Assessment Report.

The first step in “closing the loop” on assessment of information literacy was for the College’s assessment committee to review the Information Literacy Assessment Report and, after discussion, draft a memo to the faculty. The memo included a summary of data about information literacy, questions about assessment processes and outcomes raised by the data, and suggestions for curricular change. The memo served as a prompt for discussion of information literacy at an all-faculty retreat. Based on feedback from faculty at the retreat, the assessment committee revised its memo to include a final set of recommendations for curricular change to the Provost and the College’s Curriculum Transformation Task Force (CTTF). The Task Force is charged with revising the College’s program of general education and can benefit most greatly from “closing the loop” on assessment.

One of the results of this process is that the College 005 course is being revised with an improved information literacy module. Another improvement includes a commitment by faculty to embed information literacy in the requirements for majors, something that will ensure information literacy is developed beyond the introductory level.

The overall conclusion of the comprehensive review of general education, however, was that the structure of the General Education Program itself was a major issue. First, students were required to take only one course to satisfy each general education area requirement. It was apparent that one course did not sufficiently prepare the students for all of the outcomes designated for a given area. Second, the vetting process in place for approving courses to meet general education requirements, prior to its introduction in 2003, was not sufficiently rigorous. Third, over time, course content “drifted,” and was not reevaluated periodically.

Partly as a result of these structural issues, and partly because of a Strategic Plan which called for a review and revision of the curriculum, in particular general education, the College began a comprehensive revision of its general education in spring 2014. At that time, the President appointed the CTTF which has been working for the last year not only on a new vision for general education, but also on a vision of developing a more creative and cohesive curriculum focused on new technologies and active pedagogies to improve student engagement and learning. Committee members include: Maia Averett, associate professor of mathematics (Co-chair); David Bernstein, professor of music; Audrey Calefas-Strebelle, assistant professor of French; Nalini Ghuman, associate professor of music; Maggie Hunter, associate professor of sociology; Ajuan Mance, professor of English (Co-chair); Patricia Powell,

professor of English; Paul Schulman, professor of government; Priya Shimpi, associate professor of education; and Jenn Smith, assistant professor of biology.

The task force was charged with developing a framework of skills and competencies for a revised undergraduate core curriculum that would be in keeping with the College's strategic plan of providing students with flexible ways to attain a Mills degree and preparing them for the dynamic landscape of further study, work, and community life in the twenty-first century. As the committee drafts its framework, it is exploring competencies in multimodal communication (oral and written, including English and languages other than English); quantitative and scientific reasoning; experimentation, creativity, and innovation; race, gender, and power analysis; community engagement; and critical analysis. Embedded in the framework are the five core competencies required for accreditation by the WSCUC: critical thinking, information literacy, quantitative reasoning, written communication, and oral communication.

Given the weaknesses in the infrastructure of the existing General Education Program, the committee was tasked with assuring that not only would the competencies be defined, but the program would be explicit about where and how the competencies would be delivered in the curriculum, and how the learning of those competencies would be assessed. This is to be accomplished through a process whereby courses apply and are approved to be a part of the general education curriculum. This process will be a rigorous one in which instructors will be required to be explicit about course content and alignment with the outcomes and the pedagogical means by which the learning will be accomplished. Assessment of the learning outcomes showing evidence that students are reaching the desired proficiency will also be a prerequisite to continued participation in the program.

Because the competencies defined by the new program are meant to renew and redefine the meaning of a Mills degree, the committee will also be responsible for working with academic programs to move the competencies introduced by the General Education Program up through the curriculum into courses students would be taking in their junior and senior years. The competencies would be accomplished through students' majors so that they would have the knowledge, skills, and abilities well in hand when they graduate. This will prepare the College to articulate the "meaning, quality, and integrity" of the Mills degree.

The task force will present a plan for implementation in fall 2016 which will draw on currently offered courses in existing and reconfigured ways and new first-year seminars and courses based on high impact learning experiences.

3. Support for Faculty to Improve Their Teaching Practices

Under the leadership of Donald Crampton, director of the Center for Academic Excellence, and with the collaboration of Cynthia Scheinberg, professor of English, Mills has a robust teaching and learning group of over 25 faculty members that meets regularly and shares resources through the College's Blackboard site. Discussions in 2013-14 ranged from looking at senior theses across a variety of disciplines to understanding "trigger warnings" in classrooms.

The College has committed to building a center to support innovation in pedagogy and professional development for faculty by expanding on its existing Center for Academic Excellence (CAE). The first step in this evolution was the appointment of Dr. Donald Crampton as the new CAE director. Crampton has been teaching at Mills and leading the program in nursing since 2011. He brings prior experience from the Colleges of Worcester (MA) Consortium, leading their Certificate in College Teaching, Teaching in the

Sciences, and Seminar in College Teaching. The second step was appointing Dr. Crampton to the assessment committee. As a participant in discussions about assessment processes and results, he facilitates connection between learning and faculty development around improved pedagogies. He has been at the forefront of the discussion and the process of “closing the loop” and has worked closely with the Director of OIRPAA to gather data and resources for this work.

As part of its plan to implement a new general education curriculum and encourage curricular change, Mills has established two funds that will support innovation: The Mary Ann Childers Kincaid (MACK) Fund and the Sandra Greer Fund. Both are endowed funds that will support teams of faculty within and across departments to re-vision the structure and requirements of academic experiences for first-year students and for majors at the College. The Sandra Greer Fund (~ \$40k) has been used to support the work of the CTF and the MACK Fund (~ \$500k) will see its first payout in the 2014-15 academic year.

4. Technology, Equipment Infrastructure, and Integrated Systems

One of the recommendations of the WSCUC EER Team stemming from their visit to Mills in October 2010 was that the College “pay attention to technology and equipment infrastructures and integrated systems. For example, technologies that would allow faculty to capture the artifacts of a student’s work would benefit the assessment process.” As a result, in 2010-11, the assessment committee, after determining that the Information Technology department at Mills did not have the capacity to provide this infrastructure, reviewed several assessment-focused software products. This review included onsite demonstrations and follow up. At the end of the process, it was determined that TaskStream would best meet the needs of the College. TaskStream is an online performance assessment and management system and one of the more established companies providing this type of software. The Director of OIRPAA contacted several references who were all very pleased with TaskStream. The Mills School of Education (SOE) had also made the decision to use one of the modules of TaskStream, quite independently from the College’s larger assessment process, for its credential preparation students. Positive feedback from SOE since their implementation strengthened our resolve and also gave us a very practical reason for choosing TaskStream.

TaskStream consists of two modules, both in use at Mills: the Accountability Management System (AMS) and the Learning Achievement Tools (LAT). The AMS module helps to facilitate and manage planning, assessment, and accountability initiatives across the College. Each academic program has a workspace in AMS. The LAT workspaces provide a template for the project, a place to upload the student artifacts, and means to create evaluation tools and to score the artifacts. The system also generates standard and customized reports of the progress of submissions and evaluations, and of the assessment results. The LAT is the more “in the trenches” part of the TaskStream system, providing a powerful and flexible workspace for collecting and assessing student work. Because learning goals, competencies, and standards are built into the LAT, and artifacts are scored and reports generated within the LAT, assessment has become much more manageable for all concerned.

Mills began using the system in the spring of 2012, and then in earnest in the 2012-13 academic year, first employing the Learning Achievement Tools (LAT) module. Faculty have been involved with LAT either as evaluators or by facilitating the uploading of artifacts into the system. Feedback from evaluators has been very positive, all reporting convenience and ease of use. While there have been no issues with the uploading of artifacts, one faculty member felt that it was an imposition to have students upload their own work. This is an area we will need to work on.

Mills began preparing the AMS module for use in the spring of 2013. Templates were developed for all phases of program assessments: mission statements, learning goals and outcomes, curriculum maps, assessment plans, assessment reports, and action plans and reports. A document of instructions was written and posted on the Mills Academic Assessment Plan (MAAP) website. (See Appendix 4-1: TaskStream Instructions for Program Assessment Workspaces.)

In the summer of 2013, OIRPAA built assessment workspaces for each academic program on the graduate and undergraduate levels and moved the existing mission statements, learning goals, and curriculum maps for each program into Taskstream. A TaskStream “rollout” timeline was established, with the first phase beginning in October 2013, which asked faculty to review their mission statements and learning goals and to provide measurable criteria (outcomes) for each of their goals. This meant consolidating the measurable criteria that faculty had developed for each individual course into a set for use program-wide.

During the next phase in December 2013, the program faculty reviewed the curricular map for their programs. Where the old curricular maps had aligned each course with a broad goal, the new maps aligned the courses instead with each measurable criterion (i.e., outcome) for the goals. In other words, it was not necessarily expected that a given course would support all of the outcomes for a particular goal, as was the case in the old curricular maps. This provided greater specificity as well as flexibility in terms of where the content would be delivered in the curriculum. To ensure that the alignment between each course and the learning outcomes on the map were realistic, the program chair instructed their faculty to review the map and indicate the measurable criteria that they felt were delivered in their course and at what level of proficiency. Once all of the faculty for a particular program completed this process, the department Chair or Dean, along with a few faculty members in the program, reviewed the map to assure themselves that it was cohesive, that is, that every outcome was introduced at some point in the curriculum, given ample opportunity for practice throughout the curriculum, and fully developed somewhere in the curriculum. They also reviewed the map to ensure that it was coherent, that is, that the sequence of courses allowed for the learning to be delivered in a logical and appropriate order. While the basic process was similar to the construction of the original curricular maps, this second iteration increased faculty participation and, as a result, produced much more useful maps of each program’s curriculum.

The next phase, in the spring of 2014, was the transfer of each program’s 2013-14 assessment cycle into TaskStream. This entailed faculty moving the content of the original assessment plan to the new template within TaskStream. At the end of the spring, during the final phase of the AMS rollout, faculty reported their assessment findings for the year in TaskStream, rather than in the Assessment Report Templates. They were also asked to upload their data into their reports, and, finally, to upload the Provost’s Annual Report into the workspace for that cycle.

Using TaskStream has already confirmed its utility. Those responsible for overseeing Mills assessment program have access to reports showing the progress of each program in terms of its assessment activities—those not begun, those in progress, as well as those completed. Faculty has ease of access to their own workspace and ownership of it and their processes. And finally, all assessment activities are documented within TaskStream, including the artifacts used for assessment and all data regarding findings.

In terms of the progress of migrating the assessment information into TaskStream, to date, 98% of the mission statements and 82% of the learning goals and outcomes are in TaskStream, 70% of the

curriculum maps have either been or are in the process of being reviewed and updated by the programs in TaskStream, 68% of the assessment plans are in progress or completed in TaskStream, and 40% of the assessment findings are in TaskStream. (See Appendix 4-2: TaskStream Inventory.) The remainder will be migrated into TaskStream before the end of the 2014-15 academic year. The response of faculty has been mixed regarding this migration, but most of the negativity appears to originate from those that have not yet interacted with it. However, those that have migrated their work are enjoying the accessibility to their workspace and the freedom to make changes as they grow in their assessment practices. (See Appendix 4-3: TaskStream Workspace Examples.)

TaskStream use has extended to housing the Faculty Development Grant application process. In addition, it is currently being configured for a fall 2015 launch to provide the template for the complete Program Review Process so that all information and documents regarding program review, from the self-study through the exit interview, are within TaskStream and easily located and accessed by faculty and administration. Having a central system for documenting and reporting activities reduces the structural burden (e.g., aggregating data, keeping track of separate documents, etc.) allowing all concerned to concentrate more on what is important—considering the quality of their assessments, reflecting on the findings of their assessments, and planning and implementing actions that lead to continuous improvement.

Using a centralized system such as TaskStream also gives the College the opportunity to showcase its programs and document its learning outcomes. As a small step in this direction, Mills is planning to provide students access to each academic program curricular map so that they can see what role each course plays in the whole of their major curriculum and make the connections between the courses that they are taking for a deeper understanding of what they are intended to learn and how that learning will progress. These maps are set up to include course descriptions and links to further course information so that the students can begin with the map and navigate easily to the other information they need.

SECTION VI: Identification of Other Changes and Issues Currently Facing the Institution

Instructions: This brief section should identify any other significant changes that have occurred or issues that have arisen at the institution (e.g., changes in key personnel, addition of major new programs, modifications in the governance structure, unanticipated challenges, or significant financial results) that are not otherwise described in the preceding section. This information will help the Interim Report Committee panel gain a clearer sense of the current status of the institution and understand the context in which the actions of the institution discussed in the previous section have taken place.

- Following the retirement of Janet L. Holmgren, Alecia A. DeCoudreaux became the 13th president of Mills College on July 1, 2011. Ms. DeCoudreaux previously served as vice president and deputy general counsel at Eli Lilly and Company and as chair of the Wellesley College Board of Trustees.
- A new leadership position was added to the President's Cabinet as a result of a recommendation of the Mills Enrollment Management Task Force. Brian O'Rourke was appointed Vice President for Enrollment Management beginning August 13, 2012 and is responsible for overseeing undergraduate and graduate admission, financial aid, and student accounts. Subsequently, the positions of Dean of Undergraduate Admissions and Director of Graduate Studies were eliminated and replaced with the Director of Undergraduate Admissions and Director of Graduate Admissions respectively. In addition, the position of Associate Vice President for Student Financial Services was replaced with the Assistant Vice President for Student Financial Services.
- Two leadership positions have been eliminated: Executive Vice President (June 30, 2011) and Vice President and General Counsel (August 3, 2012).
- The Vice President for Operations' title and responsibilities have changed significantly since the last WSCUC visit. The title was first changed to Chief of Staff and Vice President for Operations, and is now Chief of Staff and Vice President for Communications and External Relations.
- There have also been changes in personnel in other leadership positions:
 - Kimberley L. Phillips was appointed as Provost and Dean of the Faculty (July 1, 2013). Dr. Phillips is currently on medical leave; Associate Provost David Donahue was appointed Acting Provost on September 29, 2014.
 - Eloise Stiglitz was appointed as Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students (February 1, 2013). The title for this position has also been redefined from Dean of Students to Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students. Ms. Stiglitz will retire effective October 31, 2014. A search for a replacement has begun.
 - Tanya Hauck was appointed as Vice President for Institutional Advancement (April 1, 2014).
 - Tammi D. Jackson was appointed as Vice President for Finance and Administration and Treasurer (October 1, 2012).
- President DeCoudreaux initiated a new strategic planning process in fall 2012. Following extensive community engagement, six strategic imperatives were identified and approved by the Board of Trustees in May 2013:
 - Developing curriculum with a purpose in a changing world: creating new educational programs that prepare students for success as scholars, in the workplace, and as citizens;
 - Creating more flexible ways to obtain a Mills education with the goal of attracting new populations of students and improving retention;

- Strengthening the College's commitment to an inclusive campus environment and to social justice, particularly the preservation and sustainability of global resources;
 - Internationalizing Mills through globalization of the curriculum, attracting more international students, and enabling greater numbers of Mills students to study abroad;
 - Providing the programming, environment, and infrastructure for a vibrant campus life;
 - Developing and sustaining strategic community partnerships.
- In 2012-13 a Faculty Governance Task Force was created to work on the development of a more equitable and informed governance structure. In addition to evaluating the current committee structure, the task force is focused on promoting greater interaction between faculty and the Board of Trustees and between faculty and the President's Cabinet. In April 2014 the task force presented to the President a *Report on Shared Governance at Mills College: Assessment of the Current Context and Recommendations for Achieving a New Vision*. The task force has now been disbanded. The President and the Acting Provost have discussed the report's recommendations with the Faculty Executive Committee that will assume leadership of the discussion of faculty governance and of the task force recommendations.
- Following a faculty retreat in January 2014, the Curriculum Transformation Task Force (CTTF), an interdisciplinary faculty task force, was charged with revising the College's general education curriculum. The CTTF has developed a basic framework of skills and competencies for a revised undergraduate core curriculum that will be examined and vetted by the faculty during the 2014-15 academic year and into the following year with the goal of having it in place by fall 2016.
- In order to invest in the core functions and services that would enable the implementation of the six imperatives in the new five-year strategic plan and to achieve a balanced FY15 budget, a restructuring of College operations was begun in 2013-14 under the leadership of the President and the Cabinet. A hiring freeze was implemented in April 2014. Nine staff positions were eliminated, resulting in the layoff of employees in June and July 2014, and an additional thirteen vacant positions are to remain unfilled. While staff members will have a salary reduction in FY15, staff members are given the opportunity to take three regularly paid "non-work" days. These "non-work days" are paid days off. In addition, an early retirement incentive plan was announced in May 2014, resulting in the retirement of nine staff members.
- On May 14, 2014, Mills adjunct faculty voted to be represented by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). College representatives are engaged in collective bargaining negotiations with SEIU.

SECTION VII: Concluding Statement

Instructions: Reflect on how the institutional responses to the issues raised by the Commission have had an impact upon the institution, including future steps to be taken.

Reflecting on the issues raised by the Commission has contributed to a gradual and steady improvement in the College's assessment processes and the general atmosphere and attitude around assessment. As a result of the time and commitment put into the assessment of all Mills' programs we have learned much about strengthening the processes of assessment and where to focus attention and resources. Another positive development resulting from reflection on the Commission's feedback is a new sustainable strategy for engaging with faculty to "close the loop" on assessment. We have also reconfigured the College's assessment committee to make important cross-campus connections. A system is now in place to manage our assessment program, and to give greater autonomy to the programs to manage their assessment processes, to have better documentation of what they are doing and their findings, to store student artifacts, and, in the future, to showcase what we are doing and learning.

The evolution of our assessment process has inspired an approach that cuts across the curriculum, seeing assessment in a more holistic light, rather than as the sum of discrete activities. The approach to institution-wide assessments has improved, as has the faculty's assessment practices. In short, assessment is no longer alien but is more accepted as a way of knowing what we need to know to improve as an institution. In addition, faculty are more willing to participate in institution-wide assessment projects, and do so with increased confidence as a result of our ongoing practice and reflection. Conversations on assessment have evolved from surface knowledge to a much deeper understanding. For example, even two years ago, it would not have been possible to run into a faculty member on campus and have an impromptu conversation about assessment that was meaningful and engaged; now it can and does happen.

As we move forward, we have strengths from which to build in order to achieve our next steps. We want to work on defining our meaning as an institution. To do so, we can draw on much work, all of which has been based on data collection and analysis, including the College's strategic plan completed in 2013, the branding and marketing research conducted over the past year, and the CTF work in examining the habits of mind and ways of knowing, that will distinguish a Mills graduate.

We plan to establish a comprehensive assessment plan for student services. We have already brought key student services staff on board to the College's assessment committee. Drawing on what we know about assessing academic and student life programs and including student services, we can then build a culture of assessment that encompasses the entire College.

We want to refine our assessment practices to establish evidence of quality and continue to engage faculty in "closing the loop" (i.e., using data and analysis to make necessary changes to curriculum and pedagogy to improve learning). We will continue with our annual retreats where the faculty considers collegial recommendations from the assessment committee on "closing the loop" on key learning outcomes. This coming year we are examining the assessment results of two of the core learning competencies: quantitative and computational reasoning and creating and critiquing in the arts.

Finally, we want to continue nurturing the evolution of a culture of assessment at Mills, where stakeholders such as faculty and staff see assessment not as something extra they have to do but as

something that is embedded and integral to their work of providing the best instruction and services possible to students. We believe we have made encouraging progress in this direction. Our vision of this culture is a place where we are committed to measuring and understanding all our valued outcomes to see whether we are effective. In this vision, we create what one member of our assessment committee calls “a more engaged and self-regulated system of scrutiny based on teachers’ own sense of what’s important to measure and what data to collate.”

In this world, designation of a course as meeting a valued outcome would be contingent on a rigorous initial application process followed by faculty conducting a course assessment recurring on a three-year basis. Faculty will have complete discretion over how this is done provided they can produce a document at the end of the period which shows what has been measured, how it has been measured, what they think is indicated by the results, and what could be tweaked going forward for improvement. At the end of the three-year period, the assessment data will be submitted for review to establish whether or not the course is meeting the appropriate goals, and whether the designation would be allowed to continue. Such a system would indicate true ownership and understanding of assessment among faculty while ensuring the effective delivery of our valued outcomes to our students.

SECTION VIII: List of Appendices

- Appendix 1-1: Mills College Strategic Plan 2013-18
- Appendix 2-1: Quantitative and Computational Reasoning Assessment Report
- Appendix 2-2: Historical Perspectives Assessment Report
- Appendix 2-3: Information Literacy Assessment Report
- Appendix 4-1: TaskStream Instructions for Program Assessment Workspaces
- Appendix 4-2: TaskStream Inventory
- Appendix 4-3: TaskStream Workplace Examples

SECTION IX: List of Additional Required Data

- Program Review Guidelines
- Program Review Schedule
- Sample Program Review Reminder and Timelines
- Recent Program Review – Biology Department 2012
- Recent Program Review – Music Department 2012