EXTERNAL DEPARTMENT REVIEW PROCESS and GUIDELINES
Revised November 14, 2017

W&J has begun to initiate an external review process for its academic departments and programs. Our expectation is that every department and program will undergo external review in the next few years, at the rate of approximately four departments/programs per academic year. The self-study and campus visit of the external committee will be designed to give each department/program the opportunity to review objectively its educational mission and effectiveness. "Mission," in this context, signifies both the general education of W&J students and their more specialized training in the academic major. The department or program should discuss in detail the means used to assess whether students are realizing its academic objectives. This also should be a topic discussed with the visiting reviewers.

Departments and programs are strongly encouraged to use this review as a means to plan for the future. Although budgetary realities cannot be ignored, you are urged to see the review as an opportunity to engage in serious long-term planning, including the possibility of new academic initiatives.

We would like each department and program to use these guidelines to shape its review, as far as is practicable. Each department or program should prepare the self-study through discussions involving members at all ranks, and work to have the report to the visiting reviewers reflect as broad a consensus as possible.

Visiting Reviewers

The visiting committee will be composed of two members of the teaching faculty from institutions comparable to W&J. Departments and programs will be asked to identify potential reviewers. As far as possible, departments and programs should select experienced senior members of the profession to serve as visitors. The DAIR will invite the members of the visiting committee to serve. Visiting reviewers will be compensated $150 plus expenses for a one and a half day on-campus visit and a joint evaluation report submitted to the department/ program chair, and copied to the DAIR and VPAA.

Timeline

October 15   Short list of potential external reviewers due to the DAIR

February 1   Department self-study due to the DAIR (and electronically to reviewers)

March-April   Campus visits

May 1 (approx.)   Final reports due from reviewers

Issues and Questions to Consider

As your department or program goes through the review process, and particularly as you prepare your self-study, you are encouraged to consider the following issues and questions. You should not feel limited to these, but should use them to initiate your discussions and work.

I. **Mission:** What is the mission of your department or program? Is this mission clear from your curricular offerings? What means are used to assess the effectiveness of your mission? What are the major challenges to carrying out your mission? How does your mission relate to the Strategic Plan and other college priorities?

II. **Critical issues for the Visiting Committee:** What areas would you find it useful for the visiting committee to address in their review? What are the significant elements in your department or program that this review process should take into account?

III. **Curriculum:** How does your curriculum demonstrate the variety of topics, methods and approaches important in your discipline today?

   A. Where is your discipline heading over the next five to ten years?
   B. How has your curriculum changed in the last five to ten years?
   C. What constraints do you face in curriculum development?
   D. What are the strengths of your current course offerings?
   E. What are the institutional student learning outcome?
      ✓ What kind of assessment are you doing of these outcomes and what evidence do you have that they are being realized? How are you closing the loop?
   F. What are the student learning outcomes for your department?
      ✓ What are the student learning outcomes for your majors and/or minors?
      ✓ What are the student learning outcomes for your non-majors?
      ✓ What kind of assessment are you doing of these outcomes and what evidence do you have that they are being realized? How are you closing the loop?
   G. How effectively are you pursuing improvement for your majors in the designated skills areas (as applicable to your department or program): writing, oral communication and technology?
   H. What means do you use to improve and assess the skills listed above?
   I. What do your majors do after graduation? How does the major prepare them for their choices? How do you serve non-majors?
   J. How does the department or program interact with other departments and programs? Would you want to have more interaction?

IV. **Enrollment:** What changes have you observed in enrollment patterns and student interest in the last five to ten years? What projections can you make about future enrollment trends? How do you plan to connect these projections to curricular and staffing issues?

V. **Individual Work with Students:** What level of involvement does the department or program have in independent studies and honors projects? In what other ways does the department or program foster one-on-one work with students?

VI. **Staffing:** What significant staffing changes has your department or program experienced in the past five to ten years? What staffing needs do you anticipate in the future? How are teaching responsibilities determined? How is advising and other department service distributed? What is the mix between tenured and tenure-track staffing?

VII. **Faculty Development:** How are junior members of your department or program mentored with respect to their teaching, scholarship and departmental contributions? How is leadership in the department encouraged and developed? How are connections between disciplines encouraged?

VIII. **Resources:** What would you like to do more of (for majors and non-majors)? How adequate are facilities and support for your academic program (support staff, space, equipment, operating and library budgets)?

IX. **Appendix**
- Current CV's for all Teaching Faculty
- Sample Course Syllabi from all levels
- Year of Course Offerings printed from WebAdvisor

The attached sample schedule for the on-campus visit is a template; it can and should be modified depending on the department or program's needs. You should feel free to ask the reviewers to visit selected classes, for instance, as time permits. Please note that students should be included in the schedule. You may wish to utilize majors, minors or any other appropriate students in this process and to consider student input by email as well.

Sample Schedule for Visiting Reviewers
(Schedule may vary according to department request and reviewers' obligations)

First evening

5:30-6:30   Reception with members of the department (and possibly the VPAA and DAIR).

6:30-8:00   Dinner with selected department members.

8:00   Free time at the hotel to review supporting documentation supplied by the department.

Day 1

7:45-8:45   Breakfast meeting of reviewers

8:45-9:30	Meeting with the VPAA and DAIR
9:30-9:45	Meeting with department chair to review department facilities
9:50-12:00	Meetings with department members (tenured, non-tenured, and adjuncts)
12:00-1:00	Working lunch for reviewers
1:00-1:45	Meetings with majors, minors, other relevant students (no faculty should be present)
1:45-2:30	Meeting with full department
2:30-3:00	Final meeting with department chair
3:00-3:30	Exit interview with VPAA and DAIR

After the Visit:

The external reviewers will produce a report, which will be sent to the department/program chair, with a copy to the DAIR and VPAA. The department/program should meet to discuss the evaluation, and to decide which areas they would like to work on and which do not seem immediately relevant. Based on that discussion, the chair (or designated department members) will then write a response to the review over the summer, which will go to theVPAA and DAIR. The VPAA and DAIR will in turn respond to the department's priorities (both in writing and in a meeting with the department sometime in the fall) by indicating which initiatives he supports and specifying what the College will be able to fund.

Departments/ programs under review may choose to have the reviewers' reports posted to a password-protected area of the Academic Affairs website, so that other faculty may read them.

These guidelines were based on Smith College's "Guidelines for Decentennial Reviews"
http://www.smith.edu/deanoffaculty/decentennial guidelines.html