

Religious Studies Department

Program Review

Six-Year Report

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This report contains three key sections of program review:

- 1) Introductory Summary
- 2) Key Findings
- 3) Looking Forward with Key Questions

I. INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY

Westmont College's Religious Studies major offers the curriculum and the experiences that students need to gain competence in the study, understanding, and articulation of the Christian tradition in lively conversation with other religious traditions.

The Religious Studies Department offers a major and minor that combine courses in biblical interpretation, theology, history, world religions, and Christian mission. Additionally, the department offers a minor in Biblical Languages that allows students to concentrate on the biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek. Currently our department consists of two Old Testament professors (Tremper Longman, William Nelson), three in New Testament (Bruce Fisk, Caryn Reeder, Holly Beers), two in theology (Telford Work, Sameer Yadav), one in church history (Helen Rhee), and one professor who teaches courses in world religions and Christian mission (Charles Farhadian).

Many students in the Religious Studies Department are active in local churches, para-church organizations, and NGOs in the Santa Barbara region. Our graduates enter a variety of occupations, such as Christian ministry, social work, writing, law, counseling, and Christian missions. Many continue their studies in graduate schools across the world, being among the strongest students in those programs.

Program review of the Religious Studies Department over the past six years has provided opportunities to assess student learning, program strengths, and program gaps, as well as to consider future goals. Westmont's Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO) permeate all courses in the program of study. Please also refer to syllabi for related coursework and requirements (See Appendix). All outcomes are assessed with the capstone course, RS-180 (Senior Seminar), which is taught annually in the spring semester. Examples of the titles for past Senior Seminar courses include "Ecumenical Theology & Global Mission," "Eschatology," "Violence," "Missional Theology," "Birth & Death." Although the topic of the Senior Seminar changes annually, RS-180 is designed to facilitate cross-disciplinary learning that encompasses the breadth of the Religious Studies Department through co-teaching by faculty members from the Religious Studies Department.

The chart below lists some religious studies courses that contribute to the Institutional Learning Outcomes. It is important to note that these courses have ILOs

as aspirational goals rather than as outcomes, since, in terms of courses, the Religious Studies Department assesses outcomes only in RS-180 (Senior Seminar).

Religious Studies Courses that Contribute to Institutional Learning Outcomes

ILO	Christian Understanding & Practices	Global Awareness & Diversity	Critical Thinking	Competence in Written Communication	Competence in Oral Communication	Information Literacy
Courses	All courses Examples: RS-100: Foundations of Spiritual Formation RS-111: Paul & His Legacy RS-159: Missiology RS-010: New Testament	All courses Examples: RS-136: Hinduism RS-139: Islam RS-142: World Religions RS-159: Missiology RS-151: History of World Christianity RS-160: Mission & Globalization RS-107: Luke-Acts	All courses	All courses Examples: RS-139: Islam RS-142: World Religions RS-159: Missiology RS-160: Mission & Globalization RS-107: Luke-Acts	All courses Examples: RS-113: Church in the New Testament RS-159: Missiology	All courses Examples: RS-110: Jesus in the Gospels RS-114: The World of the New Testament

Since our 2010 Six-Year Report did not start with Key Questions, this report begins with a summary of what our department has found in the course of the program review cycle that we are just now completing.

The Religious Studies Department's last Six-Year Program Review Report was submitted in 2010. Annual Program Review Reports were submitted each year between 2004 and 2015. Since 2009, the Program Review Committee (PRC) template has changed for the Six-Year Report. The PRC's response to the 2010 Six-Year Report was positive, noting commendable strides in program review over the past years in the following three areas:

- a) developing and adopting a new, more concrete set of Program Goals and Program Learning Outcomes
- b) developing a Curriculum Map
- c) using both direct and indirect methods of assessing student learning

In response to the PRC's suggestion, a pragmatic and robust plan with **three Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)** was identified and the goals listed as statements not as key questions. Our three PLOs reflect the Religious Studies Department's commitment to excellence in educating our students' minds and hearts so that they will be equipped with confidence, knowledge, and wisdom, in order to be faithful to the gospel in many circumstances and callings throughout life. Over the past five years, we have assessed these outcomes, identifying where students excel and where the program could be strengthened to further develop student learning.

1. Hermeneutical Competence: Our graduates will be able to apply a range of skills in the interpretation of biblical and other religious literature.

a. They will employ close reading skills with regard to primary sources; observation; inquiry; attention to genre, context, intertextuality, and literary influence; awareness of their own assumptions and cultural biases; awareness of audience(s) and effects on readers.

b. They will display judicious use of scholarly resources (e.g., language tools, commentaries, monographs, journals, dictionaries, encyclopedias, electronic databases, library holdings, inter-library loan, web-based tools). They will acknowledge dependence and influence through appropriate notes and bibliography.

c. They will appropriate a range of critical methodologies (e.g., historical, literary, textual, rhetorical, socio-cultural), draw on insights across the range of relevant disciplines (e.g., linguistics; anthropology; sociology; philosophy; archaeology), and recognize the insights and pitfalls of various ideological approaches (e.g., post-colonial, feminist, Marxist).

2. Theological Judgment: Our graduates will understand the fundamental claims and logic of the Christian faith, appreciate the development of Christian theological traditions over time, and be able to think theologically.

a. They will faithfully interpret texts including the Bible and other primary sources in the worldwide Christian tradition.

b. They will fairly evaluate the theological claims of secondary sources and current voices within and outside the Christian tradition.

c. They will thoughtfully address the intellectual and practical issues involving both narrowly theological matters and concerns in other disciplines.

d. They will be acquainted with, and increasingly formed in, the practices that Christian theology serves including worship, fellowship, mission, study (especially of the Bible), and ethical conduct.

3. Ecclesial Engagement: Our graduates will be marked by a passionate commitment to the Christian church and its mission.

- a. They will increasingly recognize connections between personal faith, scholarly inquiry, and the shared life of God's people in the world past and present.
- b. They will sense a harmony between rigorous intellectual inquiry, faithful service, and passionate worship.
- c. They will establish lifelong disciplines marked by theological reflection, Christ-like compassion, and robust engagement in the public square.

What we discovered was that for the most part our students are meeting our expectations, being between developed and highly developed with regard to meeting the department's PLOs. The program is successful in developing students' competence in the study, understanding, and articulation of the Christian tradition in lively conversation with other religious traditions.

Students are successfully going through our program. They are learning to interpret biblical and non-biblical religious literature, understanding the claims and logic of the Christian faith, as well as other faith traditions, and are increasingly committed to the Christian church and its mission. We look forward to spending the next few years discussing and strategizing around a few key questions that emerged from the process of assessing our department. Our Six-Year Report confirms significant achievement in the past, and points us toward future tasks that will improve our program for the sake of student learning and the preparation for our students to succeed in graduate programs and their various life callings and vocations.

II. KEY FINDINGS

The Religious Studies Department has identified three Program Learning Outcomes (PLO). Students are meeting our PLOs within the "developed" to "highly developed" range. Our department goal is to move more toward the "highly developed" mark for all of our students in all of our learning outcomes. Our annual assessments of each of our PLOs provided detailed evidence of student performance and our reflections on each outcome.

The Religious Studies Department made significant changes in the past six years in response to the Program Review Committee's comments about our previous annual reports and the 2010 Six Year Report. Below are the items the Program Review Committee invited us to address, followed by our actions to meet those requests:

1. Review our Program Learning Outcomes and reduce them in number.
Action: In September of 2011 we revised our Program Learning Outcomes, reducing them in number to 1) Hermeneutical Competence, 2) Theological Judgment, and 3) Ecclesial Engagement.
2. Make sure our curriculum was aligned to our Program Learning Outcomes upon refining them.
Action: We categorized our courses according to the PLOs.
3. Act upon the assessment data we have already collected.
Action: In our 2010 Six Year Report we designated RS-180 (Senior Seminar) to be the course from which we would garner all of our direct course assessment data.
4. Post our mission statement, Program Goals, and Program Learning Outcomes Curriculum Map, Multi-Year assessment Plan on the department website.
Action: Done. See Appendix.
5. Revise the RS-180 (Senior Seminar) course rubric.
Action: Done. See Appendix
6. Invite the Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness to our department meeting to discuss our assessment activities and multi-year assessment plan.
Action: The Dean has visited our department meeting, but we need to be better at extending an annual invitation to the Dean. Our department did meet with the Dean prior to the current Six-Year Report and our department chair has communicated with the Dean several times to prepare for the writing of this report.

A. Student Learning

Westmont's Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

The Religious Studies Department fully supports Westmont's Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO) and has enthusiastically engaged our students in the areas of Diversity; Critical Thinking; and Christian Understanding, Practices, and Affections (CUPA).

Diversity

In 2015-2016, Westmont focused its institutional assessment efforts on the institutional learning outcome of diversity. The religious studies department has taken significant strides toward continued renewal of Westmont's diversity efforts. Our department actively seeks ways to increase the visibility and voices of under-represented persons, particularly Christians from outside the Western world, but also from those representing different religious traditions. Compared to the results

of the entire student sample, students in the Religious Studies Department score higher on diversity. In general, we are pleased with our results. However, we also plan to continue to promote diversity through enhancing our curriculum, introducing new perspectives, and engaging professional networks.

Religious Studies Department in Comparison to the College Mean

Diversity indicators	Religious Studies	Mean
Self-Awareness (Cultural)	1.909	1.741
Cultural Diversity (Worldview)	2.182	1.822
Empathy (Perspective Taking)	2.091	1.646
Social Responsibility (Communication)	1.727	1.479
Understanding Systems	1.445	1.479
Faith	2.182	1.616

These are bullet points that serve as evidence for changes we have made since our 2010 Six-Year Report.

What curricular changes were developed during the year to provide greater diversity?

- Introduction to New Testament (RS-010) and Jesus in the Gospels (RS-110) assigned readings from a variety of perspectives, including, for instance, scholars who self-identify as supporting “black theology” and “feminist theology”: i.e., Brian Blount and Beverly Robert Gaventa. Assigned books that provided greater diversity include the following: *Taking up the Cross: New Testament Interpretations Through Latina and Feminist Eyes* by Barbara E. Reid, O.P., *Can I Get a Witness?: Reading Revelation through African American Culture* by Brian K. Blount.
- Doctrine (RS-020) also included the following new readings: Ezigbo, Victor I, “Jesus as God’s Communicative and Hermeneutical Act: African Christians on the Person and Significance of Jesus Christ” in *Jesus Without Borders: Christology in the Majority World*, Eerdmans, 2014; Hollingsworth, Andrea, “Spirit and Voice: Toward a Feminist Pentecostal Pneumatology.” *Pneuma* 29 (2007): 189-213; Yong, Amos, “‘Poured Out Upon All Flesh’: Salvation, the Spirit, and World Pentecostalism,” in *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology*, Amos Yong (ed.), Baker Academic, 2005.
- Reformation and Modern Christianity (RS-120) paid greater attention to topics and readings from the Global South and World Christianity.
- The Practicum Internship course (RS-190) provided expanded options that gave students opportunities to participate in a wider variety of ministries to underserved populations. For instance, new internships were started at Santa Barbara Rescue Mission and Immigrant Hope.

- The 2015 Practicum Internship course (RS-190) included two lectures studying *kenosis* in Philippians 2:5-8 and the implications of privilege. Students were then assigned to spend 90 minutes on their own somewhere where they were “the other” (e.g., ride public transportation, do laundry in the Latino community, attend church in a different ethnic community), and then reflect about that experience. Students were also required to read books that focused on doing ministry within a variety of cultural and economic contexts: e.g., *A Future for the Latino Church* (by Daniel Rodriguez and Manuel Ortiz), *Walking with the Poor* (Bryant Myers).
- The 2014 Senior Seminar (RS-180) included readings on women’s leadership, disability studies and mission, and ethnic intercultural churches, featuring two Asian-American authors. The course also featured Pope Francis’ *Evangelii Gaudium*. The course visited two intercultural churches in Los Angeles as a field trip and visited Koreatown in Los Angeles.
- The 2015 Senior Seminar (RS-180) included the reading of Dr. Martin Luther King’s *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, as a part of a discussion on leadership and social justice.
- Telford Work edited his Doctrine podcast to include nearly 200 images, many of which are of non-Western Christian art or icons. Students were able to absorb a visually Global South.

In what ways did the department bring diverse people and perspectives into its learning community (i.e., guest speakers, full-time or adjunct hires, etc.)?

- This may be the first time that we have a mother teaching fulltime in our department, which models a life that balances teaching, research, and motherhood responsibilities.
- The religious studies department hosted a panel of vocational leaders to speak to students. This panel included a female executive who is leading her company with a business-as-mission approach.
- Our department pursued Dr. Nelson Hayashida as a Leave of Absence replacement for Charles Farhadian in fall of 2014.
- Department hosted Dr. Mark Nanos, a secular Jewish scholar of St. Paul.
- Department hosted Dr. Michael Fox, a Jewish scholar, at the Westmont-UCSB Lecture.
- Department hosted Dr. Jack Sasson, a Jewish Scholar raised in Aleppo, for a lecture.
- A Holocaust survivor, an orthodox Rabbi, and a Reform Rabbi lectured in the Judaism course (RS-138).

In what ways did the department expand its networks and connections in order to identify potential new candidates for faculty, lectures, etc.?

- Two religious studies faculty members were part of the planning committee for the Gaede Institute for the Liberal Arts Conference, “Moocing the Liberal

Arts?" These planning meetings provided opportunities for networking with scholars from across the country and from a wide range of colleges and universities.

- Department member attended conference in Bethlehem in March and networked with Palestinian and Jewish scholars for use in Westmont off campus programs, and possible lectures on campus.
- Department member is President of the Institute of Biblical Research; initiated new women faculty initiative that keeps member in contact with young women scholars and potential professorial candidates.
- Department member became member of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, enabling intentional networking and broadening our understanding of the church.
- Department member received a CCCU planning grant in April of 2016 for a cooperative effort among Westmont, Lithuanian Christian College, Ukrainian Catholic University, and Lviv Theological Seminary (Pentecostal) to study the relationship between church-building and nation-building.
- Department member taught in Eastern Orthodox, Eastern Rite Catholic, Mennonite, Pentecostal, Mainline, Reformed, and Independent educational institutions while on sabbatical.

Action: Our department believes it is doing well in the area of diversity. We plan to continue with our efforts in diversity.

Critical Thinking

In 2013-2014, Westmont focused its institutional assessment efforts on the institutional learning outcomes that "Westmont graduates will accurately evaluate the strength of evidence in support of a claim." The Critical Thinking Assessment Team administered the 15 short-answer "Critical Thinking Assessment Test" (the CAT) to over 90 seniors in senior seminar classes during the spring semester of 2014. College-wide our students performed as well as or better than the national average on each CAT question except one. However, the Religious Studies Department scored 78.9% compared to the national percentage of students with the same average SAT score, indicating room for improvement. Our department also has the highest entering SAT scores among the six departments assessed (Religious Studies, 1333; Philosophy, 1322; Economics & Business, 1123; Sociology, 1119; Computer Science, 1264; Psychology, 1136).

The June of 2014 "Critical Thinking Assessment Test" (CAT) Comparison Report notes that, while the Religious Studies Department is, for the most part, above the national average, areas of critical thinking that can be strengthened are two. First, religious studies students need to improve identifying additional information needed to evaluate a hypothesis: the Religious Studies Department scored 1.17 compared to the national mean of 1.41 for students with the same average SAT score. We were not surprised at this result, since members of our department

already noted that many students needed to improve, for instance, in their ability to evaluate biblical passages for broader themes (e.g., hypotheses) in the contemporary world. We recognize that our students need to develop skills of identifying sources (e.g., theories, theological insights) to employ in order to evaluate claims. Second, the CAT results show that students in religious studies are weak in explaining how changes in a real-world problem situation might affect the solution: the Religious Studies Department scored .30 compared to the national mean of 1.15.

Action. Our department plans to implement more assignments that encourage the development of skills to identify and apply broader sources in order to evaluate hypotheses. Our New Testament faculty has already identified this as an issue. We also need to discuss as a department how to teach students to employ their critical skills to explain the relationship between change and the application of solutions. Such changes may involve creating new assignments or reshaping current ones to promote deep level reading and thinking. We will consider how to provide more helpful information to students so they can determine which information is relevant to the assignment. The Institutional Assessment of Critical Thinking provides helpful suggestions in its Summary of CAT Scoring Debriefing Session.

Christian Understanding, Practices, and Affections (CUPA)

In 2012-2013, Westmont focused its institutional assessment efforts on the institutional learning outcomes that “graduates of Westmont College will *demonstrate literacy in biblical and orthodox Christian faith* (Christian understanding) and *demonstrate faithfulness in Christian service* (Christian practices and affections).” Note that this section is longer than earlier sections because Telford Work, a member of the Religious Studies Department, was lead assessor of this institutional learning outcome.

Toward this end, our team collected data from several sources.

1. Westmont participated in a thirteen-school “Christian Life Survey” and analysis coordinated through Taylor University’s Center for Scripture Engagement. Of our population size of 1262, 502 students participated from across the classes of 2013-2016, for a 40% response rate.
2. A Faith-Learning Faculty Roundtable project developed two sets of recommendations pertaining to tenure and promotion review; and for enhancing students’ faith-learning across the curriculum.
3. Graduating Westmont seniors (25% response rate) gathered to take an electronic survey and view and discuss its immediate results.
4. After this meeting, 25 of these seniors attended one of five focus groups hosted by faculty or staff in which they wrote brief responses to theological questions and answered several questions orally.
5. Student passers-by were interviewed on camera on an ad-hoc set of ‘trivia’ questions concerning the Bible, theology, Christian history, and chapel hymns. The footage was compiled and edited into a twenty-minute video, a

- five-minute short version, and an 80-second trailer to advertise that gathering. Seniors saw the five-minute version at the gathering and discussed their reactions. Faculty also saw the five-minute version at a later gathering and held a discussion of it and of the survey and focus group data.
6. Taylor University supplied statistical analyses of their study data; Tom Knecht of Westmont's political science department ran further statistical analysis to compare first-year students and seniors.

In the broadest perspective, we found:

- Low to middling overall biblical literacy. Students are somewhat familiar with Christian scripture, especially those bits that circulate most widely in churches and popular cultural consciousness. Some students attain higher biblical proficiency; however, there is a widespread and apparently well-founded sense that students are much less biblically literate than evangelicals were two generations or even one generation ago.
- Low to middling hermeneutical and theological proficiency, again concentrated on those theological claims and biblical interpretations that are most prominent in evangelical and wider culture. Some students attain a much higher level of sophistication, while at the other end of the spectrum others show a worrisome lack of sound theological judgment and knowledge.
- High and widespread Christian commitment. Roughly nine-tenths of students can appeal to credible visible evidence of their inward commitment, and nearly all see the same in their fellow students. Students understand and express their faithfulness in largely relational and service-oriented ways.
- Similarity to other schools in the Taylor survey in all of these ways. However, Westmont students do differ from the thirteen-school average in some minor but consistent and important aspects.
- Liturgical facility and familiarity that is narrowly focused on students' own liturgical traditions. Students gain experience and fluency in worship practices while at Westmont, but remain comfortable as a rule only within their own inherited or adopted liturgical habits.
- Sustained and widespread engagement with the Christian faith in and out of the classroom. If we interpret these findings along the lines of James Marcia's four identity statuses of 'foreclosure,' 'identity diffusion,' 'moratorium,' and 'identity achievement,' levels of student (dis)comfort and commitment indicate progress within the necessarily lengthy process of responding to exposure to unfamiliar biblical, theological, ethical, and liturgical expressions of Christian faith.
- Improvement on all these measures as they progress through college. Students demonstrate advances in knowledge, literacy, proficiency, and commitment, and nearly all of them credit Westmont as contributing to that growth. Nevertheless, they lack the confidence that would best encourage them to grow through practice.

- Understanding the role of biblical authority in individual and corporate life has room to grow. However, students do exhibit increased respect for 'human' qualities such as historical and literacy context.
- High spiritual "thirst," unfortunately frustrated by disorientation through exposure to critical issues and multiple perspectives that can paralyze students from pursuing solutions and that can frustrate those longings.

The team forwarded the following suggestions for consideration, and the school implemented several:

- Student 'chaplains' to supplement RAs. This was piloted in 2014-15.
- Sequencing RS GEs to reduce disparity of student preparedness. This was begun in 2015-16, registering students for RS-020 after they have taken IOT/INT.
- An alternative chapel for seniors asking sophisticated questions and developing their senses of theological judgment.
- Opportunities for staff and faculty to grow biblical and theological proficiency and confidence in fielding questions. Faith-learning and Westmont Institute might incorporate more biblical exposure; new faculty might audit religious studies GEs; continuing education.
- A campus-wide conversation regarding Westmont's goals for graduates, which may need revising in light of lower incoming students' biblical and theological exposure.
- Making first-year students aware of the problem and the challenge, and recruiting them to the task of remediation and growth.
- Exploring donor interest in funding "Bible scholarships" contingent on a 1- or 2-unit substantive Bible study each semester, analogous to music scholarships.
- Teaching an "incarnational," pneumatological framework for understanding the Bible.
- New campus traditions such as a Bible preaching or recitation tournament.
- Faculty in all departments might consider whether 'critical thinking' is an inadequate category, since students perceive it as primarily involving deconstruction and skepticism. Labels such as 'cultivating sound judgment and wisdom' may come closer to capturing the spirit of the meaning of 'critical thinking.'
- Integrating Bible and theology more deeply into more of the curriculum and co-curriculum, beyond just RS courses and campus ministries.
- Taking up curricular design for RS GE courses, to distinguish what is considered 'essential' from what is 'important' and what is merely 'worthwhile.'
- Encouraging a 'Bible-bringing' culture where community members were expected to bring Bibles to chapel, dorm discussions of various issues, church, prayer, study groups, daily devotion, personal study, expository preaching, etc.

- Deeper integration of matters of Christian identity and the relevance of Christianity into seniors' major studies across departments.
- Campus ministries might increase efforts to inform "Christian commitment" in more deeply theological and biblical ways.

Action. Our faculty presented at the Brown Bag Conversations on Biblical and Theological Topics throughout the 2015-2016 academic year; the Brown Bag Conversation was a faculty and staff lunchtime lecture series where religious studies faculty presented engaging ideas within their particular discipline, with a view toward encouraging Christian understanding, practices, and affections. Some of the presentations were as follows: "The Omega and the Alpha: Jesus the End, New Beginning, and Center of Everything" (Telford Work); "The Holy Spirit and the Church's Worship" (Maurice Lee); "Breathing Water, Swimming on Air: Problems and Possibilities of 'Culture' in Christian Mission" (Charles Farhadian); "What Difference Did Christianity Make in the Roman Empire and Why Should we Care About it?" (Helen Rhee).

Religious Studies Department Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

In September of 2011, we reconfigured our PLOs in response to the request of the PRC as well as to enhance the learning outcomes of our students. The new PLOs are our current learning outcomes of Hermeneutical Competence, Theological Judgment, and Ecclesial Engagement. Subsequent to our 2010 Six-Year Report, we have designated RS-180 (Senior Seminar) to be the course that generates data for our annual and six-year assessments.

Following the suggestion from the September 27, 2011 PRC Memorandum, we moved to reduce our assessment from testing all three outcomes to focusing on a single outcome each year, which better enables us to establish and assess student learning. Through the process of assessing our students and discussing our findings as a department, we discovered that in general our students are between "developing" and "highly developed" with regard to meeting our PLOs.

The following is a list of highlights, changes, challenges, and steady evidence of program growth related to each PLO in the Religious Studies Department since our 2010 Six-Year Report, organized by our PLOs.

1. Hermeneutical Competence: Our graduates will be able to apply a range of skills in the interpretation of biblical and other religious literature.

Methods: We employed direct and indirect assessment methods to gauge students' hermeneutical competence. Direct assessment methods involved analyzing the summative written assignments according to our assessment rubric and in-class discussions in RS-180 (Senior Seminar). Indirect assessment methods involved student discussions inside and outside the classroom, including end-term student

self-assessment and focus group discussions according to the assessment rubric. For students to achieve recognition as “highly developed” in the area of hermeneutical competency, they would have had to address a range of interpretive concerns (i.e., genre, literary and historical contexts, audiences, presuppositions, relevant critical methodologies) skillfully, critically, and fruitfully.

Findings: Since our 2010 Six-Year Report we discovered that the finding, reading, analyzing of primary sources beyond the Bible is developing for students, and thus needs improvement in order to achieve the level of highly developed. For instance, we noted that students needed to improve in moving from understanding of biblical texts to making and defending moral and theological claims. In the 2015 RS-180 course (Birth and Death) students found many “relevant” biblical texts on specific topics in the class, but they needed improvement in arguing from broader themes in scripture, even when scripture does not mention their topical concern; that is, students need to improve using scripture to form a trajectory to answer questions of the contemporary world. On the topic of euthanasia, for example, a student employed biblical texts about Abimelech and the death of Saul as scriptures that are somehow related, but made no attempt to argue from general biblical perspectives towards death, murder, illness, etc. in scripture, let alone more theologically creative arguments from biblical understandings of “life,” value of life, suffering, etc.

Interpretation: While the students generally scored well (between “developed” and “highly developed”) in most areas, they have room for improvement to achieve stronger skills of hermeneutical competency. We would like to see students employ biblical texts not only to illuminate particular topics explicitly mentioned in the Bible, e.g., “adultery,” “lying,” “stealing,” but also to be competent in applying biblical insights to contemporary ethical and moral topics.

Action: Professors who teach RS-180 are aiming to be more explicit in discussions, exercises, and written assignments in encouraging students to make better use of the resources for biblical interpretation and application. With regard to hermeneutics, our faculty will continue to seek to articulate various strategies and perspectives in order to help students improve their hermeneutical competencies. Such strategies will include, but not be limited to, assignments such as written work and discussion that aim to get students to apply hermeneutical principles to contemporary topics.

2. Theological Judgment: Our graduates will understand the fundamental claims and logic of the Christian faith, appreciate the development of Christian theological traditions over time, and be able to think theologically.

Methods: Direct assessment methods included an analysis of written assignments in RS-180 (Senior Seminar), according to the PLO Assessment Rubric for Theological Judgment. Evaluation of student work ranged from 3 (developing) to 4 (highly developed), what we used to call “good” and “excellent” respectively, with an average of 3.4. Indirect assessment methods included student self-evaluation in RS-

180 (Senior Seminar). Student self-evaluations all fell between “developing” and “highly developed,” with an average score of 3.5. In our previous annual reports, we used the terms “good” and “excellent” rather than “developed” and “highly developed,” respectively. We currently use the terms “initial,” “emerging,” “developed,” and “highly developed” to reflect our institutional categories of assessment better as well as to provide greater consistency across our assessment instruments. For students to achieve recognition as “highly developed” in the area of theological judgment they would have had to demonstrate reasoning that displays critical comprehension and reliance upon the logic, parameters, and significance of orthodox, Christian belief, with unusual insight.

Findings: We discovered that students needed to improve their ability to think and apply theological concepts to everyday topics, particularly to moral and ethical issues. We also recognized that students need a deeper understanding of theology, particularly historical theology. In fact, the courses that students most commonly identified as needing strengthening in our curriculum were theology courses.

Interpretation: Through our assessment activities we discovered that there remains room for growth in the area of theological judgment.

Action: We added two new courses, RS-119 (Early and Medieval Christianity) and RS-120 (Reformation and Modern Christianity), in order to address the need for students to gain greater historical knowledge of theology, since both of these courses blend history and theology. We also hired theologian Sameer Yadav in 2015, who brings immense knowledge and theological creativity to our students and colleagues. Since Sameer’s work straddles philosophical, systematic theology, ethics, and moral theology, our students and department have been enriched by his work with us.

3. Ecclesial Engagement: Our graduates will be marked by a passionate commitment to the Christian church and its mission.

Methods: We employed direct and indirect assessment methods to gauge students’ ecclesial engagement. Direct assessment methods involved analyzing the final written assignments and in-class participation in RS-180 (Senior Seminar) according to the rubric for Ecclesial Engagement PLO. Indirect assessment methods involved asking students the question, “What suggestions do you have for making the Religious Studies major more effective with respect to ecclesial engagement?” For students to achieve recognition as “highly developed” in the area of ecclesial engagement their work would have had to display evidence of mature Christian commitment (e.g., personal faith, Christian community, inquisitiveness, spiritual disciplines, compassion, robust missional and public engagement).

Findings: The evaluation of student written work and in conversation yielded results that showed “developed” to “highly developed” (our equivalent to Good and Excellent, respectively). In the 2015 RS-180 course, the average score for 13 students was 3.3 out of 4.0. Two answers, accompanied by general agreement, were

added to the end-of-semester evaluation question: (1) “We should give more guidance, early in the major and indeed for all students at Westmont, on choosing, being involved with, and making connections to churches”; and (2) “We should have more interdisciplinary teaching and activities.” The following question was asked by a student in the course of the discussion: “How many of us would say they feel moderately secure in each of these areas [i.e., Hermeneutical Competence, Theological Judgment, Ecclesial Engagement]?” All 13 students said they felt moderately- to well-equipped in all areas.

Action: We invited several campus guests to stimulate our community’s thinking about the intersection of Bible, theology, and church. A partial list of guests since our 2010 Six Year Report includes the following: Dr. David Chou, ethnomusicologist (on Mongolian long-songs and the Mongolian church); Dr. Azar Ajaj, President, Nazareth Evangelical Seminary (firsthand assessment of Israel/Palestine situation, unifying Christians for peace); Dr. Amos Yong (Pentecostalism, mission, and globalization); Dr. Viji Nakka Cammauf (mission, poverty, world religions, church in India); Jim Yost (globalization and the church, the nature of the church and ministry in Papua, Indonesia); Dr. Bernie Adeney-Risakotta and Dr. Farsijana Adeney-Risakotta (Islam, Christianity in Indonesia, partnerships, Bible and theology in a Muslim context); Dr. Jim Ault (African Christianity, African church and theology); Dr. Stephen Prothero (discussion of his book, *God is Not One, American Jesus, and Why Liberals Win the Culture Wars*). In addition, some of our courses (e.g., RS-126 and RS-180) included a preaching component that sought more directly to engage the intersection of Bible, theology, and church.

Furthermore, the members of the Religious Studies Department are active as leaders of Off Campus Programs. Bruce Fisk has led several programs in the Middle East and continues to lead Westmont’s Jerusalem Semester program. Helen Rhee started Westmont’s first semester program in Asia; Caryn Reeder has led several programs to Europe and one to the Middle East; Charles Farhadian had led programs to Thailand and India. Our teaching and scholarship are also enriched by our sabbatical and international research projects. Telford Work spent more than 12 months teaching in Asia, Europe, and Africa; Charles Farhadian taught for a semester in Korea; Helen Rhee has ongoing research and work in East Asia; Bruce Fisk regularly does research in Jerusalem based at the École Biblique, a Dominican seminary and library. These faculty experiences directly contribute to student learning in the classroom and in formal and informal conversations.

B. Alumni Survey and Reflections

Procedures. An alumni survey was created by SurveyMonkey based on a template we adapted from the one provided by the Dean of Curriculum & Educational Effectiveness. In March of 2016 the survey link was mailed to 54 alumni/ae (as provided by the office of alumni relations). The survey was anonymous.

Respondents. Fifty-four alumni/ae took the survey. There were an equal number of male and female respondents, that is, 27 (50%) male and 27 (50%) female.

Findings. The alumni/ae survey results were encouraging. The highlights of the survey results are below. Complete questions, response sets, and percentages for every item can be found in the Appendix.

Religious Studies Alumni report a high degree of satisfaction with their Westmont education (54% extremely satisfied; 46% satisfied) and those who have gone on to graduate programs feel well prepared for advanced degrees (51% excellent preparation; 14.29% good preparation; the rest put not applicable). They testify to highly effective teaching in our department (52% superior; 47.6% strong; no lower responses). In written responses most expressed a strong appreciation for the variety of approaches used in RS courses: lecture, discussion, written assignments, question and answer, seminar style, individual projects, Socratic method. A few felt that there was too much discussion: I “did not feel like I could learn as much from peers when they lacked proper education themselves.” When asked what additional courses they would like to see taught, there was a wide variety of responses. Some suggested courses we already offer, for example Judaism and Islam. One requested “general hermeneutics and exegesis”—a course that used to be part of our curriculum. If there were a recurring theme it would be a desire for more practical theology courses: church administration, pastoral care, applying religious studies in life, practical ministry, preaching (there were eight such requests).

These responses suggest that we either need to do a better job of articulating our mission as a liberal arts college and as a department within a liberal arts college (we are not a seminary), we need to move away slightly from our tradition to develop more practical courses as some other Christian colleges have done (e.g., some have a youth ministry track), or encourage more students to sign up for a practicum or internship. While 68% did not participate in a practicum or internship, those who did were very enthusiastic about its beneficial results. This seems to meet the need students have for a more practical approach as can be seen in written responses:

- “practical application of what I was learning in the classroom”
- “prepared me for and connected me to current job”
- “solidified my call to ministry”
- “helped me gain experience in leading ministries”
- “I learned about the day to day functioning of a church”

A majority (35 out of 54) participated in an off-campus program and all seem extremely positive about the experience. One wrote: “It was the highlight of my educational career.” Most former students believe they are better prepared than peers from other institutions (26.8% much better prepared”; 39% better prepared).

One area that may need attention is the relationship between faith and scholarship. Even though most affirmed that their studies strengthened their faith, a few (4) would usually disagree. Most disagreed that their studies weakened their faith, but 1 strongly agreed; 8 would usually agree. Most did not agree that biblical scholarship caused them to lose their faith, but 5 answered: usually agree. Here are some written comments:

- “The RS department developed my critical thinking with regard to and within faith. I no longer call myself a Christian, and while I cannot say my education caused me to stop identifying as a Christian, I can say that it contributed to my identity change.”
- “My studies at Westmont helped me deconstruct my faith in meaningful ways. However, by the time I graduated, I had not been helped to re-construct a newer, more mature faith. I left with great abilities to critique and probe and question intellectually, but with little hope or vision for where I go from here . . .”
- “I have seen the major have a negative impact on fellow RS grads in terms of the deconstruction of the church and the disillusion that has followed for them.”

On the other hand, there were positive comments as well:

- “So thankful for a spectrum of views in the RS department; I found a home in Christianity.”
- “I felt like the opportunity to go deeper in coursework really enriched my faith.”
- “One of the ways that I learned about the integration of faith, learning, and life is from interacting with professors. . . . I think that RS professors taught and interacted with us not only as professors but as disciple makers.”
- “I grew not only in knowledge but in sanctification during my time at Westmont, and for that I am forever grateful.”

Interpretation: Through results of the Alumni Survey, conversations with students in focus groups, and department meetings, we recognize that our faculty needs to make greater efforts to connect their academic life more directly with their personal faith life in the classroom.

Action: While some faculty have added a preaching component to their course requirements, in an attempt to bridge the gap between knowledge and life practice, we will need to spend more time considering ways to demonstrate how Christian faith impacts our personal lives or the lives of others. Most of our guest speakers include remarks about their personal faith. However, our department will be discussing ways in which we can make our personal faith more transparent to our students. Initially we interpreted student comments as wishing for more practical experiences of ministry. However, after assessing our department and asking more follow-up questions to students and colleagues, we learned that there is a difference for students between their desire for practicums and their eagerness to hear more about how Christian faith personally impacts professors’ lives in the classroom. We

want to encourage our colleagues to consider ways to share how their Christian faith genuinely continues to be a vital source of self-knowledge, personal guidance, and hope.

C. Curriculum Review

We analyzed our curriculum in light of our program learning outcomes, our current staffing, our alumni/ae survey, our knowledge of our disciplinary standards and trends, our contemporary social and cultural context, and our comparison with similar institutions, including Azusa Pacific University, Biola University, Gordon College, Messiah College, Taylor University, and Wheaton College.

None of the peer institutions listed in this comparison is completely analogous to Westmont. Most of the institutions listed are much larger in student body size; some have larger endowments, bigger departments and programs, and differ in their institutional and departmental mission and outcomes. Given this variation, it is difficult to assess exactly the points at which differences between Westmont and these institutions signal our relative weaknesses or strengths. Nevertheless, the observations below attempt to make such assessments in three areas: 1) departmental mission and outcomes; 2) courses of study offered; and 3) faculty.

Mission/Outcomes

On the whole Westmont presents a comparatively clear statement of its departmental mission and outcomes, whereas this information is either not prominently featured or lacking in many of the departmental webpages we surveyed. APU's mission statement is unwieldy – it cannot be compressed into a single focused statement of purpose. Biola's is comparable but emphasizes “foundational knowledge” while attending less than we do to personal formation or social responsibility. Gordon's statement is most like ours, but is helpful in adding some note of social responsibility. Messiah offers a description of its programs but no overarching mission statement at all, whereas Taylor's mission statement is rhetorically framed as a purpose statement for their faculty rather than what they wish to see accomplished for their students. Wheaton's statement for its biblical and theological studies department seems almost too minimalistic, saying only that they seek to cultivate Christians who are “biblically rooted and theologically formed.” Our department's mission seems to be, by comparison, more clear and succinct than most of its peers, but could learn from both Gordon and APU to reflect more clearly some aim relative to “outsiders” to the Christian tradition. Whereas we say something about “lively conversation with other traditions” that aim seems to be subordinated to the goal of better understanding the Christian tradition.

Apart from Westmont and Gordon, none of these institutions provides measurable outcomes that might help them assess whether they are fulfilling their stated departmental missions. By comparison, Gordon's list is much larger and includes some redundancies (e.g., “coherent method for reading Scripture” and “criteria for

evaluating hermeneutical method” are listed as distinct outcomes). Our department’s identification of three overarching outcomes better succeeds in laying down manageable targets for assessment that meaningfully reflect the priorities of our curriculum.

One thing that these observations might lead us to recommend, therefore, is to expand our mission statement that more accurately corresponds with our desire to show the relevance of Christian self-understanding for engagement with non-Christian communities and the global church. This might actually bring our mission statement more into line with one of the outcomes we name – that of “ecclesial engagement.” Presumably, what we have in mind by the latter is not ecclesial engagement with non-Christians merely for the sake of helping Christians to understand *themselves* better, but ecclesial engagement with non-Christians for the sake of mission and personal and social transformation.

Courses of Study

As compared with these peer institutions, our course offerings seem just as well suited to our stated mission and outcomes as they do, although their comparative lack of explicit mission and outcome statements makes this harder to assess.

Larger peer departments characteristically offer multiple majors, with APU being the largest (five majors, ten minors). In general, Messiah is most comparable to us in its requirements for world Christianity and non-Christian religions (for the “theology” and “Bible” concentrations) while APU both offers and requires the interdisciplinary crossroads of religious studies (e.g., sociology, psychology and philosophy of religion (e.g., APU religious studies majors must take two of these). Biola, Gordon, Taylor and Wheaton, on the other hand, place comparatively little emphasis outside the mainstream Western Christian tradition. A notable difference between our department and both Gordon’s and Messiah’s is our relative lack of “Christian Ministries” as a dimension of the curriculum. This seems, for us, to raise a further question about what we mean by “ecclesial engagement” as an outcome. If by that we mean “preparation for ministry” then our course offerings may not be sufficient to achieve our stated outcome. Some among our department have expressed disinterest in a “ministry” focus for our religious studies majors. If, on the other hand, we have something else in mind by “ecclesial engagement,” then it might be useful to ask what that is, and what dimension of our curriculum aims explicitly at such an outcome. Our PLO of Ecclesial Engagement will help answer this question.

Perhaps the most distinctive contrast I observed between our course of study and those of our selected peers is that, without exception, they all offer internal concentrations in the various sub-disciplines relative to Christian or religious studies. We had internal concentrations for many years, but judged this to be too unwieldy and intentionally moved away from it about five or six years ago. Given that internal concentrations seem to be standard practice, perhaps it is worth re-visiting whether we had sufficient reason to eliminate them. Another significant

deviation of our program from its peers that seems to merit further assessment and evaluation is our comparative lack of theological course requirements. All of the departments surveyed – and all of the majors within each of these departments – required more theology beyond the general education requirement. The question this raises is whether the second of our three stated outcomes for all of our majors (“theological judgment”) can be adequately served without further theology requirements. We also recognize that theology is taught not only in the “theology” courses, but throughout much of our religious studies curriculum.

Faculty

The information we have gleaned about these departments has come primarily from their websites, and none of them disclosed the size of the student body represented by their department. For that reason, we cannot in general judge from the size of the faculty for each department whether or not they are understaffed. However, in Wheaton’s case, despite their large endowment and apparently large faculty in Bible and Theology, they also house a large graduate program that the department sustains alongside the undergraduate program. They have a faculty of 29 or more but according to their peer review (which Tremper helped to conduct) they are still understaffed for all that they are doing. APU’s extensive use of contingent faculty (47 adjuncts, compared to their 41 full time faculty) also indicates that they are overextended in sustaining their program offerings. Our peer departments are unevenly stacked in the areas of specialization represented by their departments. With the exception of Messiah and Wheaton, all have more NT or OT than Theology, and most have relatively fewer World Christianity, Missiology, and non-Christian religion. Gordon is most heavily weighted toward Christian Ministries and Wheaton has no faculty at all listed as specializing in World Christianity, Missiology or non-Christian religion. By comparison, our faculty seems to have a more even representation of disciplinary specializations in Bible and Theology, while following a general trend in fewer world religion or world Christianity faculty (we have one). This might indicate that our comparative lack of theology requirements is not due to a lack of staff. APU’s, Messiah’s and Wheaton’s departments are stronger than ours in their relative representation of historical theology faculty as well.

The structure of our department’s outcomes suggests that there is more room for curricular definition surrounding “ecclesial engagement.” If that outcome indicates that we aim to prepare students for engagement with non-Christian religions or non-Western Christianity, as opposed to training them in church ministries, then we may be understaffed in this regard. If our department regards “historical theology” as informing our stated outcome of imparting “theological judgment,” rather than, e.g., inculcating historical understanding for its own sake (as might be done in, say, a history department), then our having comparatively few historical theology faculty (only one) may be a less pressing need, insofar as the possible “weakness” of theology in our program is traceable to course requirements rather than staffing.

D. Program Sustainability

In order to understand the program sustainability of our department, we examined the number of majors we graduate each year and the alumni/ae reports, and considered our program's connections to serving Westmont and the larger community, including areas outside of Santa Barbara. Between 2010 and 2015, 72 students graduated from Westmont with a major in Religious Studies.

Religious Studies Enrollments and Major Graduates

SCHOOL YEARS	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Enrollments in Religious Studies Major (per academic school year)	32	32	28	27	23
RS Major Graduates (per academic school year)	20	19	12	11	10

The Program's Demographics

The Religious Studies Department consistently graduates between 10-20 students. The average for annual number of graduates is 14. Currently our faculty is advising 60 students.

Year	Total #	Gender	White #	Non White #	Percentages
2011 Graduates	20	12 Females 8 Males	14	6 (2 Unknown, 3 Hispanic, 1 Asian)	60% Female 40% Male
2012 Graduates	19	10 Females 9 Males	13	6 (2 Unknown, 3 Hispanic, 1 Asian)	53% Female 47% Male
2013 Graduates	12	3 Females 9 Males	8	4 (1 Unknown, 1 Hispanic, 1 American Indian/Alaska, 1 Asian)	25% Female 75% Male
2014 Graduates	11	8 Females 3 Male	9	2 (0 Unknown, 1 Hispanic, 1 Hawaiian/Pacific Islander)	78% Female 22% Male
2015 Graduates	10	7 Females 3 Males	8	2 (2 Multi-racial)	70% Female 30% Male

Non-white student numbers have decreased from 6 in 2012, to 4 in 2013, to 2 in 2014, to 2 in 2015. While it is difficult to interpret the decrease in the number of non-White graduates, we anticipate that this decrease may be a function of economic pressure on families to select a major that seems more career-friendly or that non-White students resonate less with our curriculum and need help adjusting to our pedagogy and content. At any rate, the number is small, so it is hard to be confident about trends. For the most part, the percentages of female to male

graduates is roughly equivalent to college-wide averages, except for the year 2013, which had 25% female and 75% male graduates.

Action: Our department continues to discuss ways to attract and retain majors. Since our 2010 Six-Year Report, we have increased the depth of our curriculum by creating RS-119 (Early and Medieval Christianity) and RS-120 (Reformation and Modern Christianity). We have also included two new courses, which connect students to the medium of film and filmmaking as a tool for communicating biblical and theological ideas. For now these two courses are still in the pilot stage in terms of assessing student interest and future curriculum viability. These two courses are Theology in Film, a 1-unit course where students watch films and discuss theological themes, and Religion and Filmmaking, a 4-unit course where students think about the relationship between worldviews, religions, theologies and learn to produce their own films. In addition, Helen Rhee initiated the first Westmont in East Asia semester program, where students study in China, South Korea, and Singapore. Bruce Fisk is in the second cycle leading the Westmont in Jerusalem program. Charles Farhadian has led four summer programs to Asia. Caryn Reeder has led several summer programs to Europe and the Middle East. Our hope is that these new courses and international study programs will help attract students to our department and enhance student learning along the lines of our PLOs.

The Program's Service to Westmont and Society

Contribution to Westmont's Mission. Much of our teaching serves the wider college community, since three of our courses (Introduction to Old Testament, Introduction to New Testament, and Doctrine) are required for all Westmont students. The average number of students our department served through just those three courses was 950 a year over the years 2011-2015. Given that much of our teaching is geared toward serving the college-wide General Education courses, we have less opportunity for teaching our upper-division courses.

Students per course

	F11	Sp12	F12	Sp13	F13	Sp14	F14	S15
Old Testament	147	85	187	138	153	173	185	179
New Testament	176	141	171	183	164	177	186	153
Christian Doctrine	179	198	88	133	185	98	162	135
Total	502	424	466	454	502	448	533	467
Average Annual Totals		926		900		950		1000

Our students contribute throughout the college community in a wide variety of leadership roles, such as in missions-related work (e.g., Emmaus Road, Potter's Clay), worship (chapel band), dormitory spiritual formation leadership, and in residence assistant positions. Our courses enable students to be thoughtful, faithful leaders on campus.

All of our department members actively serve around town, nationally, and internationally. Throughout each semester we are called upon to preach or teach adult education classes at local churches. One pastors a small church. We frequently lecture at Westmont Downtown, major guild conferences (e.g., American Academy of Religion, Society of Biblical Literature, Patristic Society, American Anthropological Association, American Society of Missiology), and workshops. We serve as consultants to book projects or research and are recognized as being authorities within our guild.

Since 2010 our department has not only contributed to Westmont's off campus programs, but we also have increased our initiatives and leadership in those international study programs. A majority (35 out of 54) of alumni/ae who completed our alumni/ae surveyed participated in an off campus program. For most students, their off campus experience was a highlight of their college career.

Preparation for Future Professions. The Religious Studies major prepares students for a wide variety of careers. Our alumni/ae survey revealed that our students are well prepared for their professions. Graduates comment on how much they personally benefitted from studying in our department; they learn to read and reflect deeply, learn to write well, and think "Christianly" about themselves, the natural world, society, and global realities. As such, our graduates work in a wide variety of professions, and many continue onto seminary and graduate school.

Preparation for Service in Society. Our students are equipped to influence society through their work, writing, teaching, and service. Some of the leading scholars, writers, and pastors today are graduates of our program.

Action. Our assessment has shown us that we need to continue to discuss how our department can be more effective in educating our students to address contemporary issues both locally and internationally. Since our 2010 Six-Year Report we added RS-180 (Senior Seminar), which provides seniors with an integrative learning experience taught by two faculty members from different areas within our department. In October of 2013 we held a RS Pathways event, co-sponsored with Westmont's Career Development & Calling Center. The RS Pathways event featured recent and not-so-recent RS graduates who discussed their transition from Westmont to fulltime work, highlighting the ways in which the RS degree helped them in their personal and professional lives.

E. Additional Analysis

General Education

As noted above, the Religious Studies Department's contribution to General Education includes RS-001 (Introduction to Old Testament), RS-010 (Introduction to New Testament), and RS-20 (Introduction to Doctrine). Our courses fulfill several additional General Education requirements:

Religious Studies Courses in the General Education Curriculum

Common Context	Common Inquiries	Common Skills	Modern/Foreign Languages	Integrating the Major Discipline	Compassionate Action
RS-001: Introduction to Old Testament	RS-139: Islam	RS-125: Theology	Hb-001: Hebrew I	RS-100: Spiritual Formation	RS-113: Church in the NT
RS-020: Introduction to New Testament	RS-142: World Religions	RS-126W: Doctrine of the Word (Writing Intensive)	Hb-002: Hebrew II	RS-131W: Seminar in Theology	RS-150SS: Wealth & Poverty in Christian History
	RS-159: Missiology	RS-126: Doctrine of the Word	Grk-001: Greek 1	RS-180: Senior Seminar	RS-190SS: Practicum
	RS-119: Early & Medieval Christianity	RS-127W: Theological Formation (Writing Intensive)	Grk-002: Greek II		
	RS-120: Reform. & Modern Christianity	RS-127: Theological Formation	Grk-194: Greek tutorials (advanced)		
	RS-151: History of World Christianity	RS-131W: Seminar in Theology (Writing Intensive)			
	RS-158: Christianity in the Roman Empire	RS-131: Seminar in Theology			

Faculty Quality

All members of the RS faculty are active scholars, writers, and teachers (See Appendix for Faculty CVs). We are involved in the Westmont community serving on committees, task forces, and boards. We have all received excellent marks from our alumni/ae (See Appendix for Alumni Survey). Since 2010 we have won 5 outstanding teaching awards (Beers, Farhadian, Fisk, Nelson, Rhee) and 3 outstanding faculty research awards (Farhadian, Longman, Rhee). We are sought out as mentors by our majors and by students outside our department. All of us have earned doctorates and contribute significantly to our guilds. We are grateful for the healthy and life-giving relationship we share as department members, and

we recognize that our collegiality is valued by our students. Our faculty have spent significant time in research and teaching outside of the United States, which has enhanced our teaching and served as a model of global scholarship, teaching, and service.

Global Scholarship and Teaching Since 2010

Holly Beers	England
Charles Farhadian	Indonesia, China, South Korea, India, Thailand, Japan, Singapore, England
Bruce Fisk	Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Spain, Peru
Tremper Longman III	Canada, Hong Kong, China, Sweden, South Korea
Caryn Reeder	Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Ireland, England, Germany, Hungary, Spain
Helen Rhee	Italy, South Korea, China, England, Turkey
Kelly Soifer	Philippines
Telford Work	Ethiopia, United Kingdom, South Korea, Lithuania, India, Singapore, Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia,

Advising

The Religious Studies Department faculty has done an excellent job advising our students. Our students meet with us frequently, often beyond our office hours, for academic and personal guidance on a variety of current and future goals. Since our 2010 Six-Year Report, we realized that our department needs to be more aware of specific graduate school programs (e.g., seminaries, divinity schools) in order to advise our students best depending on the aspirations of each student. In the last few years, a large number of our graduates who go on to seminary have attended Duke Divinity School, particularly because of Duke’s strong program in biblical studies. Our department recognizes that seminary and divinity school education has changed over the years in terms of quality, emphases, and training. Beginning in 2015 our department discussed the programs and professors at various seminaries and divinity schools with a view toward providing better advising to our students. We will continue those discussions.

Facilities

The Religious Studies Department is grateful for sizable offices. We thank the college for installing central air-conditioning in Porter Center a few years ago. We appreciate that last year the carpet in the main areas was changed. The absence of a common meeting space, however, remains an obstacle to our goals. We recognize that most departments on campus have some space to meet, while we have none. In 2007, we lost our only classroom in Porter Center as that space was renovated into two offices to welcome our new faculty members.

We request that Westmont consider building a deck on the southern face of Porter Center that would serve as an outdoor meeting space for academic departments in Porter Center and for our students. Having such a space would facilitate learning

through discussion and interaction in a beautiful setting and not force us to look for empty rooms around campus for our department meetings and student activities. We envision that space – our lab of learning – having comfortable outdoor furniture and one or two large writing tables.

Library Report

This section was prepared by Jana Mullen, Information Literacy Librarian (See Appendix).

Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (IEEI)

(1) Have formal learning outcomes been developed?	(2) Where are these learning outcomes published?	(3) Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine that graduates have achieved stated outcomes for the degree?	(4) Who interprets the evidence? What is the process?	(5) How are the findings used?	(6) Date of the last program review for this degree program.
Yes, the Religious Studies Department's graduates will be able to demonstrate expected competencies in the three department program learning outcomes	www.westmont.edu Religious Studies Major Assessment Rubric and www.westmont.edu Religious_Studies Program-Review.	1. Written assignments in RS-180 (Senior Seminar) according to the PLO Assessment Rubrics for Hermeneutical Competence, Theological Judgment, and Ecclesial Engagement. 2. Student self-evaluations in RS-180 at the conclusion of class, and focus group discussion. 3. Group and individual discussions with students.	All faculty (full- and part-time) in the department review and evaluate the evidence together throughout, and at the end of, each academic year.	The findings are used to make adjustments to our curriculum and activities to maintain and alignment with our PLOs. The chart below identifies some changes that have been made in the last 5 years as a result of the findings from our annual assessment	Annual Report – September, 2015; Six-Year Report, 2010

How are the findings are used

The following list identifies some changes that have been made in the last 5 years as a result of the findings from our annual assessment.

Changes as a Result of Annual Assessment Findings

Program Learning Outcome	Example use of findings
Hermeneutical Competence	The department has developed preaching activities in two upper-division courses to join other exercises strengthening and demonstrating hermeneutical competence.
Theological Judgment	The department wanted to determine whether there are components within the Theological Judgment outcome that are stronger or weaker than others. Focusing on the discrete terms and criteria of the assessment rubric in 2013-14 showed a consistent distribution of student performance. It does not seem that some components are stronger or weaker than others. To deepen students' knowledge base for making sound theological judgments and coming to creative insights and fruitful applications, the department proposed a change in the major core to require a one-year survey of history of Christianity rather than just a semester and mandate a systematic theological focus in Senior Seminar. This change should give students a firmer basis for their theological and biblical reasoning.
Ecclesial Judgment	The department has developed preaching activities in two upper-division courses to join other exercises strengthening and demonstrating hermeneutical competence. The department also initiated a regular annual RS-190 internships and practica course, which has recently been re-submitted for Serving Society GE credit. The 2013 CUPA survey of seniors discussed Christian practices; church involvements figured prominently in students' answers of the activities that most clearly demonstrated Christian commitment. Its results among our graduating seniors confirmed our assessment findings, both direct and indirect, from RS-180 exit interviews and final projects over the past few years. The department is satisfied with our current instrument.

III. LOOKING FORWARD: CHANGES & QUESTIONS

Key Questions

Since 2010, Religious Studies Department faculty has examined data and engaged in ongoing dialogue about department accomplishments and needed improvements. This report provides evidence of the integration of assessments, program analysis, and improvement throughout the Religious Studies Department. Beginning in the fall of 2016, the department commits to examine 6 key questions that have emerged from our program review. The department will examine the following questions with the goal of enhancing student learning.

1. How do we build a robust major that attracts more students?

How can we make our program worth students' time and effort? How do we positively translate our work? For instance, can our RS students receive credit from other disciplines (Departments of Sociology and Anthropology or Political Science)?

2. How do we reconfigure our understanding of Ecclesial Engagement or expand it to include global church realities and non-Christian religions?

As currently conceived, our PLO Ecclesial Engagement communicates the importance of being active in church and Christian ministry. We will consider whether we can reframe this PLO to include understanding of and engagement with the non-Western church and the church with the world; in fact, such a reshaping would impact all three of our PLOs, since the diversity of the global church will be reflected in a variety of hermeneutical perspectives, theological judgments, and ecclesial understandings.

3. How do we balance academic rigor with the development of Christian affections, spirituality, and practice?

By balance our department is referring to the “constructive” and “deconstructive” features of education. Whose responsibility is it to engage the constructive side of education? Is student desire for a practicum in ministry experience a trend to which we need to respond? Or is student desire less about engaging in a practicum than learning about how faculty members incorporate their Christian faith into their daily lives? We want to reinvestigate these student interests and discuss how our department can respond.

4. Should we reconfigure religious studies curriculum into “concentrations” or “tracks”?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of reshaping our curriculum to give students more direction as they earn their degree? In spring of 2008, our department reorganized our major and minor, creating a core of seven required courses for the major, leaving room for students to complete their religious studies units by any other courses they chose within the religious studies curriculum. Would “tracks” or “concentrations” attract student interest in our department?

5. Regarding sustainability, how do we most effectively meet General Education requirements (Common Context courses) and teach major courses so that we can pique the interest of students who do not want to take Common Context courses?

How do we help students who do not want to take Common Context courses, while preparing our majors in our curriculum? For instance, how do we teach General Education students with no background knowledge? A related question is what role does the Religious Studies Department play in the broader college, for instance in the areas of spirituality, biblical literacy, and shaping the evangelical-Protestant Christian ethos of the college?

The Multi-Year Assessment plan highlights Religious Studies Department goals and plans through 2022 (See Appendix). Our department anticipates that these plans may change, but we look forward to engaging these key questions as a springboard for improving our scholarship, teaching, and contribution to the college.