

WELLESLEY COLLEGE

Fifth-Year Interim Report

to the
New England Commission of
Higher Education

FEBRUARY 2024



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Introduction

The period between the completion of the College's accreditation review in spring 2019 and this interim report has been marked by significant events. Not only did we experience the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the College also completed its first comprehensive strategic plan in its recent history. This report has given us a chance to reflect on the challenges, opportunities, and progress we have made over the past five years. This time of pause and reflection has also been an opportunity to look forward and consider the ways in which the strategic plan will continue to guide our work of amplifying Wellesley's mission in a changing world.

The interim report process, which began in spring 2023, was led by a steering committee that met biweekly and monitored progress toward completion, wrote and reviewed particular sections of the report and required forms, and worked closely with the coordinating writer of the report. The steering committee members are:

Carol Bate, chief of staff to the president

Tara Murphy, vice president for communications, public affairs, and global engagement

Andrew Shennan, provost and Lia Gelin Poorvu '56 Dean of the College

Hui Xiong, assistant provost for institutional research and assessment

The steering committee is indebted to the authors and reviewers of all aspects of the report, and particularly these colleagues, who served as primary authors of the standard narratives and the reflective essay:

Marianne Cooley, assistant vice president and secretary of the board of trustees

Crystal Daugherty, vice president for development

Sheilah Shaw Horton, vice president and dean of student life

Michael Jeffries, dean of academic affairs

Deborah Kuenstner, chief investment officer

Megan Núñez, dean of faculty affairs

Piper Orton, vice president for finance and administration and treasurer

Karen Petrulakis, general counsel

Sarah Pociask, associate director for assessment

Carolyn Slaboden, chief human resources officer

T. Peaches Valdes, dean of admission and financial aid

Akila Weerapana, professor of economics



We could not have done this work without our coordinating writer, Chris Hennessey, director of executive communications, who compiled contributions from several authors to create a single cohesive document.

The range of participants who engaged in what is described in this interim report reaches far beyond the principal authors and reviewers. It is a reflection of interactions with many members of our campus community who contributed to the plans and achievements that form the foundation of this report. Finally, the College's leadership, principally the president, her leadership team, and the board of trustees, have reviewed the interim report prior to final submission.



Institutional Overview

Wellesley is one of the most academically challenging institutions of higher education in the country, and we are widely acknowledged as the leading women’s college in the world. We prepare students to realize their own highest ambitions and aspirations—and they do.

For nearly 150 years, Wellesley graduates have been a powerful force for good in the world—pioneering scientists, environmental revolutionaries, U.S. secretaries of state, civil rights leaders, investment trailblazers, network news producers, and genre-defying artists. They are a community of changemakers fiercely dedicated to helping each new generation of students succeed. When it comes to finding a job or changing the world, our students never have to do it alone—they have a community to lift them up every step of the way.

Wellesley is proud of its need-blind admission policy—we admit students regardless of their financial circumstances. Nearly 60% of enrolled students receive financial aid, and the College meets 100% of demonstrated need, including for the 20% of students who are Pell Grant recipients.

At Wellesley, every student is challenged and supported to thrive academically. We call that approach *inclusive excellence*—and it underlies everything we do. Our 500-acre campus near Boston is home to more than 2,300 undergraduates from around the world, representing all 50 states and 90 countries. More than half of the student body is made up of U.S. students of color, 14% are international students, and 21% are first-generation college students. Of Wellesley’s instructional faculty members, 25% are people of color, and 64% are women.

With over 50 majors to choose from, students learn with faculty who are at the forefront of their fields and whose caliber is matched only by their commitment to their students. Students major in economics, physics, and political science, fields where women are traditionally underrepresented, at higher rates than women at other colleges. That is one of the reasons we are the leading U.S. liberal arts colleges for educating women who go on to earn Ph.D.s in the sciences.

More than a college, Wellesley is a force for change in the world. Every day, we prove Wellesley’s founding radical idea—that educating women leads to progress for everyone.



Area of Emphasis #1: Strategic Plan

As Wellesley candidly acknowledges, and we concur, the institution “will do well with undertaking more comprehensive strategic planning that sets a path forward that is both inspirational and achievable, addresses strategic choice, and considers how we re-think the allocation of resources so as not only to ‘add’ to what exists.” Accordingly, we look forward, through the interim report submitted for consideration in Spring 2024, to receiving information about Wellesley’s progress in developing strategic plans that are “systematic, comprehensive, broad-based, integrated, and appropriate to the institution” (2.1) as assurance that the College “plans for and responds to financial and other contingencies, establishes feasible priorities, and develops a realistic course of action to achieve identified objectives” (2.4). We are further guided here by our standard on Institutional Resources: The institution’s multi-year financial planning is realistic and reflects the capacity of the institution to depend on identified sources of revenue and ensure the advancement of educational quality and services for students (7.6).

We began to shape our strategic plan in August 2019, with the goal of completing the work by October 2020. The Steering Committee was appointed that fall and quickly identified four key areas of focus: liberal arts, Wellesley in the world, organization and governance, and community. The committee appointed working groups to explore these areas in greater depth and to engage the community in the plan’s development. The working groups had already begun conducting research and interviews, and involving the community in shaping the plan’s goals and aspirations at a series of forums and meetings, when COVID-19 hit. After taking a short hiatus to focus on the pandemic and the switch to remote instruction, the Steering Committee and working groups restarted their important work with the goal of completing a plan by the end of the 2020–21 academic year.

The expanded time frame gave the entire planning team an opportunity to incorporate into the plan lessons we were learning from both COVID-19 and national conversations around racial justice and economic inequality. It also allowed for a robust community engagement process, which began with a series of more than 20 meetings held in fall 2020 by the working groups, and which continued throughout the winter and spring of 2021, as the plan was discussed with various campus constituencies. The Wellesley College Board of Trustees participated actively and considered the plan at several meetings throughout the planning process. At its May 2021 meeting the board unanimously approved the plan, which we shared with the campus community in July.

The strategic plan is a visionary and inspiring document. Following from the original working groups, the plan focuses on four main priorities—advancing a transformative education, elevating Wellesley’s role in the world, strengthening organization and governance, and building community—and 14 strategic goals divided among the priorities. Under each



of the four priorities is a set of recommendations for how the College can make practical progress toward these strategic goals. The two overarching themes of inclusive excellence and financial sustainability are also included in the plan. The College had made significant progress in these important areas in the years before the plan's development, and their inclusion serves as a reminder that as we move forward to create the change necessary to accomplish the objectives of the strategic plan, we cannot do so at the expense of these goals. In fact, we are working on the plan in a way that supports continued progress toward these two goals. The final part of the plan is a call to action that engages all members of our campus community in the work of strategic planning and invites them to consider their work in the context of the plan.

The full text of the plan can be found at <https://www.wellesley.edu/sites/default/files/assets/departments/about/files/strategicplan2021.pdf>.

The College has made significant progress in implementing the strategic plan over the two and a half years since its completion. Twenty-three projects supporting the goals of the strategic plan have been completed since we began implementation in fall 2021, and 43 projects are currently in progress. Each of the 14 goals of the plan is supported by completed or ongoing projects.

Key projects completed to advance a more transformative education include defining the core objectives of a Wellesley education, restructuring our first-year advising program, refocusing the work of the Office of the Class Deans, and launching the Office of Student Success and the Beal Scholars pre-enrollment program.

Key projects completed to elevate Wellesley's role in the world include developing a new administrative structure to support Wellesley in the World initiatives and coordinate the work of our centers and institutes; hosting wide-reaching public events such as The Economy She Deserves Summit in spring 2022; and developing the pilot of the Hillary Rodham Clinton Center for Citizenship, Democracy, and Leadership, which we will officially launch in spring 2024.

Key projects completed to strengthen organization and governance include providing annual guidance to Academic Council committees that are advisory to the president on priorities for the year; merging four academic departments into two; and merging two committees of Academic Council into one.

Key projects completed to build community include reviewing the College's Honor Code and creating a new Code of Student Conduct; creating summer programs to bring staff and faculty together and provide in-person opportunities to welcome new faculty and staff to campus; and completing renovations on the first residence hall included in our multiphase residential renovation plan.



The integration of this plan into the core work of the College has been critical to achieving progress toward its goals. Annual goals of Senior Leadership reflect the plan’s objectives, and financial planning is aligned with its strategic priorities. The plan informs our annual budgeting process, and it has been a core consideration as we plan for our soon-to-launch capital campaign. Systematic accountability and attention to plan progression through regular reviews of projects, financial sustainability, and inclusive excellence metrics ensures that no one aspect of the plan moves forward at the expense of another. The dynamic nature of the plan and the College’s ability to add, eliminate, or adjust projects allows us to maintain this balance and to respond to internal and external opportunities and constraints.



Area of Emphasis #2: Organization and Governance

As assurance that “faculty have a substantive voice in matters of educational programs, faculty personnel, and other aspects of institutional policy that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise” (3.15), we look forward, in Spring 2024, to receiving an update regarding the College’s continued success in evaluating the effectiveness of its academic and institutional governance structures and aligning faculty and staff resources with curricular and programmatic needs, as further informed by our standard on Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship: The institution periodically evaluates the sufficiency of and support for academic staff and their effectiveness in teaching and advising, scholarship, service, and as appropriate to institutional mission, research and creative activity. The results of these evaluations are used to enhance fulfillment of the institution’s mission (6.14).

The previous accreditation report praised the College’s highly inclusive overall governance structure at levels below the board, noting that the structures in place promoted broad participation of faculty, students, and staff in an array of committees. At the same time, it called on the College to enhance organizational effectiveness and increase transparency for our community. To address these areas, and to meet the goals of the College’s 2021 strategic plan, we have streamlined our governance structures and processes, and we are developing a shared governance grid designed to provide added clarity and transparency regarding decision-making authority over a range of critical decisions. We are also identifying which members of our community should be consulted and asked for recommendations, and who can decide and/or approve or veto particular decisions.

The Academic Council, our faculty body, has also made important changes to key areas of faculty governance. Beginning in spring 2022, the council’s Agenda Committee focused on analyzing elections, evaluating committee structures, and reconsidering the council’s format and structure by comparing it to similar faculty governance bodies at peer institutions.

In May 2023, the Agenda Committee took its first step toward streamlining and improving the organizational effectiveness of its committee structure. The committee dissolved the Diversity Coalition and the Advisory Committee on Minority Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention, creating in their place a single new committee, the Advisory Committee on Equity and Inclusion. The change both further reduced the service burden on faculty and eliminated the lack of clarity that had resulted from overlapping charges of multiple committees. To further strengthen communication between the faculty and the administration, in October 2023 the Agenda Committee announced plans to reinvigorate a faculty advisory committee to the president on a trial basis, composed of the chairs of the Academic Council committees



that already are advisory to the president. During the trial period they will meet twice a semester with the goal of increasing the effectiveness of our governance. If the trial advisory committee is found to be effective, the Agenda Committee plans to propose future legislation to make it a standing committee.

In December 2023, the Academic Council approved several recommendations of the Agenda Committee related to governance. Faculty membership for three committees of Academic Council were changed to allow some faculty representatives to be appointed rather than elected, thereby streamlining the membership process. Faculty membership on both the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee and the Library and Technology Policy Advisory Committee was reduced from six to three. Lastly, three committees were eliminated from legislation, because they either no longer existed or were single faculty appointments without a true committee. As the Agenda Committee continues to review the faculty governance structure, the College expects additional proposals for improving faculty governance over the next few years.

The College has also been actively engaged in improving staff structures to reduce administrative redundancies and improve collaboration. Two significant areas of change have been the integration of the Wellesley Centers for Women into the central operations of the College and the work to bring the Wellesley College Alumnae Association under the umbrella of the College.

It is an exciting opportunity for the Wellesley Centers for Women to be a flagship program of Wellesley in the World. This new structure will support innovative educational programs and research opportunities on campus as well as contribute more globally. To optimize operational efforts, areas of finance, technology, human resources, and post-award grant administration have been centralized with the College.

The Wellesley College Alumnae Association has worked toward improving its organizational model in partnership with the College to strengthen the association itself as well as the College's ability to meet the challenges of the future. This includes the development of a close partnership and reporting relationship with the vice president of communications, public affairs, and global engagement.

As we look forward, the College is also beginning to consider our events structure, and we have recently received the report of an outside consultant who conducted a review of campus events and the College's current structure. The Senior Leadership team will be reviewing the recommendations from the report, and an implementation plan will be developed.



Area of Emphasis #3: Student Diversity

As affirmation of the College’s commitment to inclusive excellence in recruitment, admission, retention, and development of students, the spring 2024 interim report will afford Wellesley an opportunity to update the Commission on its continued success in reaching “its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its students” (Students, Statement of the Standard).

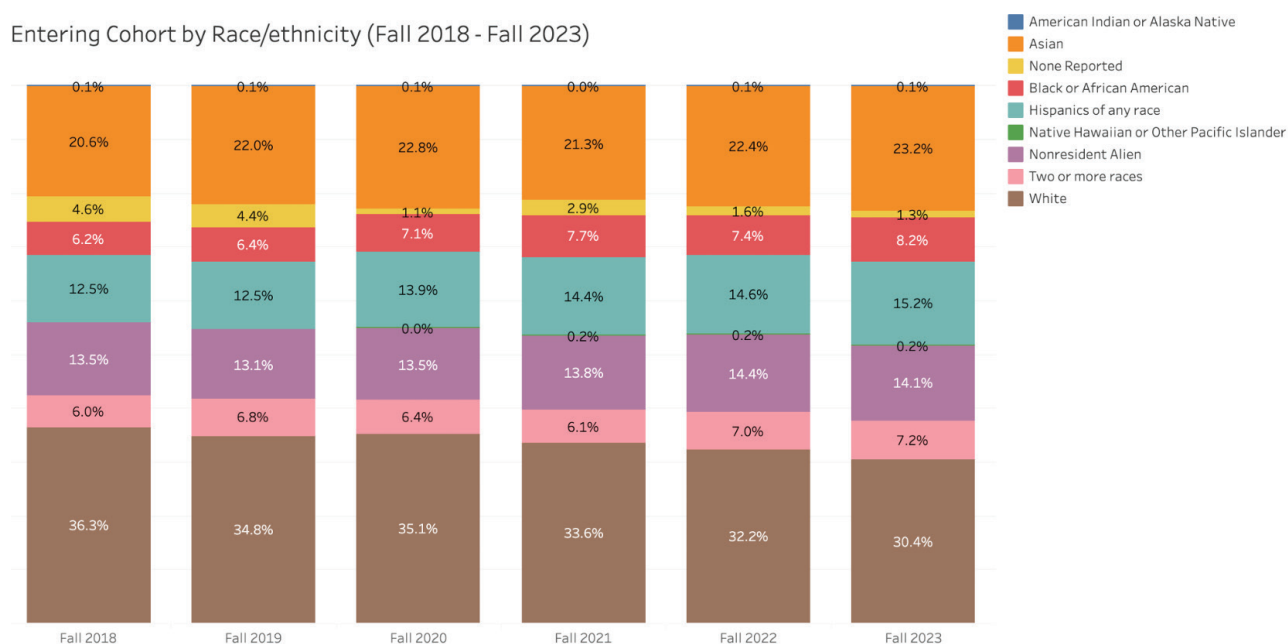
When we submitted our report five years ago, we were focused on maintaining student diversity in concert with an effort to advance the ideals of inclusive excellence. That work had progressed in important ways, despite the two seismic changes the College has weathered: the global pandemic, and the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that ended consideration of race in college admissions. While both significantly affected how we approach student diversity, we have used them as opportunities to put new strategies in place and bolster existing ones to further our goals in this area.

Test-Optional

As discussed in Standard 5, one of the most notable changes the College made during the COVID-19 pandemic was adopting a test-optional admission policy. While we made the policy change to address the lack of testing opportunities during the pandemic period, the admission results indicate that the policy supported the College’s commitment to student diversity. Figure 1 below shows the racial and ethnic breakdown of the cohorts entering the three years prior to the test-optional policy and the three years following.

Figure 1. Entering Cohort by Race/Ethnicity (Fall 2018–Fall 2023)

Entering Cohort by Race/ethnicity (Fall 2018 - Fall 2023)



In fall 2023 the faculty voted to extend the test-optional policy for five years and to review it in fall 2028.

Student Recruitment

Just as higher education institutions were emerging from the pandemic and assessing its impact on the admission process, the next major change was approaching. The Office of Admission had strategically prepared for the U.S. Supreme Court's June 2023 ruling on affirmative action in the college admission and selection process well in advance. Guided by our commitment to expand our outreach, broaden our applicant pool, and increase focus on access and inclusion, the admission team had built an extended fall 2023 travel schedule that combined small-group and individual trips in rural, suburban, and urban settings. Outreach efforts also included group presentations, community-based organization (CBO) visits, college fairs, and a variety of admission-themed workshops.

By November 2023, the team had traveled to approximately 20 states as part of 11 group tours with a mix of institutions from the Ivy League, research institutions, and selective small liberal arts and women's colleges. The team also focused on increasing local recruitment of secondary schools and strengthening school and CBO partnerships in the Boston region, added visits to community colleges, and joined the American Talent Initiative's Transfer Scholar Network.

Along with in-person recruitment travel, the admission team continued to offer robust virtual programming to increase outreach, such as information sessions, faculty roundtables, and our signature VOICE (Vision, Ownership, Inclusivity, Community, and Equity) leadership program. In 2023, a record number of students applied to VOICE, which has historically had a very high rate of attendees who ultimately apply and are accepted to Wellesley. In total, the team hosted 70 virtual events during the recruitment cycle. Lastly, we continued to offer on-campus programs such as student-led tours and Q&A sessions with admission counselors throughout the year. In order to manage the increase in recruitment efforts and support the application review process, the department has hired an additional admission counselor.

Recruitment Communications

Within the realm of strategic communications, the Office of Admission purchased student information from both the College Board Search and ACT Encoura in spring 2023, which laid a strong foundation for the work to come. The expansive earlier purchases meant more students were introduced to Wellesley earlier in their college search process.

The College Board also rolled out a new initiative called Connections—an app that allows students to learn about colleges while letting colleges connect directly with them. The Wellesley team built out digital direct-messaging campaigns to reach even more high school students from across the country.



In the summer and fall of 2023, the team conducted an intensive audit of the email campaigns created for prospective students, with a specific eye on highlighting the many ways they experience Wellesley. We focused on inclusive excellence as a key pillar throughout the campaigns, and we conducted a larger-scale overhaul of email campaigns based on data and feedback on the campaign in the wake of the Supreme Court’s decision.

High school counselors and CBO college advisors have always received email communications from the Office of Admission, and now community college advisors will receive our updates and invitations as well. After the Supreme Court’s decision, Peaches Valdes, dean of admission and financial aid, emailed counselors and CBO advisors to express Wellesley College’s commitment to diversity and inclusive excellence.

The team also expanded communications for our special-group visitors, who are mostly from CBOs or public high schools. Prior to summer 2023, students visiting as part of a special group received no follow-up communications from the Office of Admission. Now, they receive follow-up communications that aim to heighten their interest in the College as well as encourage them to envision themselves at Wellesley.

As the Office of Admission develops and executes additional outreach to cultivate diverse and inclusive prospective student and applicant pools, we will continuously assess these efforts to determine their efficacy and make changes as needed.



Area of Emphasis #4: Culture of Assessment

We look forward, in Spring 2024, to receiving an update on the College’s success in continuing to enhance its culture of assessment with emphasis on implementing direct assessment strategies as evidence that “[t]he institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods and direct and indirect measures to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students” (8.5).

The College will address this area of emphasis in the reflective essay. We have chosen to write a thematic essay addressing Wellesley’s use of direct and indirect assessment measures to understand its progress toward achieving inclusive excellence, a guiding priority of the strategic plan.



Area of Emphasis #5: Distance Learning

“The Commission confirms the interim report scheduled for Spring 2024 and asks that... the report provide an update on the institution’s success in developing, offering, and assessing its current courses and academic programs via distance education.”

Prior to the pandemic, Wellesley did not offer a distance learning curriculum. Like institutions all over the world, we pivoted to an entirely remote curriculum in March 2020 that continued through the remainder of the spring semester. Heading into academic year 2020–21, we reimagined and redesigned our academic calendar, curriculum, and individual courses with robust support from our teaching and learning center, instructional technologists, laboratory support staff, and librarians. Approximately half of the student body returned to campus each semester, predominantly first-years and sophomores in the fall and predominantly juniors and seniors in the spring. Faculty were allowed to choose whether to teach remotely or in-person; hybrid courses were discouraged due to the difficulty in meeting all students’ needs in a mixed format. In fall 2020, 186 (29%) course sections were offered in person and 452 (71%) were offered remotely, and in spring 2021, 154 (25%) course sections were offered in person and 462 (75%) were offered remotely.

As described in more detail in Standard 4: Academic Program, we assessed the remote learning experience with both faculty and students during the 2020–21 academic year. We carried out the first round of these assessments midyear, allowing us to use the results developmentally to improve our spring 2021 courses based on what had and had not worked during the fall. While both faculty and students generally appreciated the quality of the instruction we were able to provide despite the constraints of the pandemic, the community expressed its widely held belief that in-person learning was superior, and thus we returned to an entirely in-person model of instruction for the 2021–22 academic year. Under our current policies, faculty are permitted to use Zoom in their classes only very rarely and under specific circumstances (e.g. to invite an international expert to speak to a class remotely, or to engage with a class of Wellesley students at one of our study abroad sites).

One notable exception to our return to in-person instruction is our summer school, which has remained almost entirely remote since 2020. Offering summer courses remotely provides our students with the flexibility to take a course while fulfilling family responsibilities, working, or completing internships, and many are able to save money by living at home. Because we offer an average of 28 courses each summer, the summer program represents a very small fraction of our curriculum annually. Wellesley College is requesting limited approval for distance education moving forward.



Standard 1: Mission and Purpose

Mission statement: To provide an excellent liberal arts education to women who will make a difference in the world.

Wellesley College's long-established mission has remained unchanged and continues to inform and guide the College's priorities and planning at every step. In our 2018 self-study report, we described in particular the College's efforts to maintain a clarity of mission as we sought to navigate and respond to an era of changing understandings of gender.

Our mission guided the board of trustees in 2015 when it restated our admission policy to clarify that Wellesley admits applicants who identify and live consistently as women, regardless of the gender they were assigned at birth, and at the same time reaffirmed our identity and mission as a women's college.

This policy—that Wellesley is a women's college that admits cis, trans, and nonbinary students who consistently identify as women—remains in place, even as we have encountered occasional challenges from some students and alumnae. These challenges were most visible in the 2022–23 academic year when a student ballot initiative called for the College to modify the admission policy and to no longer use gendered language (*she, her, alumnae*) in official communications. The College's leadership and board responded by reaffirming that Wellesley is a women's college, not “a historically women's college,” the language the student initiative called for the administration to adopt.

At the same time, College leadership made clear that this position did not and should not detract from our commitment to diversity and inclusiveness as a community. Further, they strongly reiterated that we embrace all students, graduates, faculty, and staff, whatever their gender identity, and we reaffirmed our values by taking new steps to acknowledge and respect the individual identities within our community. This work included, for example, new efforts to reduce misgendering by enabling students to upload their pronouns in our records system; improving support and facilities (e.g. all-gender bathrooms) for a gender-diverse population; and adding relevant training resources and staff, including hiring a new director for LGBTQ+ Programs and Services, a position that had been vacant for over a year.

Student concerns about this issue have subsided in the current academic year, but we anticipate that they will frequently recur and that we will need to continue holding in balance our dual identity as a women's college and a community that is gender-diverse.

Other aspects of our mission and values have been tested by the pandemic, but we have come through that crisis stronger and with renewed resilience. For example, we maintained our commitment to in-person education and a residential community throughout the pandemic.



In the 2020–21 academic year we reopened campus, giving all students the opportunity to return for at least one semester. Since then, we have consistently emphasized the value of our in-person academic and research program, and we have resisted significant use of hybrid educational modalities.

During COVID, we also completed the College’s first-ever comprehensive strategic plan, *Amplifying Wellesley’s Mission for a Changing World*, which reinforces our commitment to providing an intellectually rich, residentially based liberal arts education; fostering the diversity and inclusiveness of our community; and enabling our students—and our entire institution—to have a greater, further-reaching impact in the world.

We have continued to reflect deeply—and strategically—on what we must do to continue to effectively and meaningfully educate students to “make a difference in the world.” The new Hillary Rodham Clinton Center for Citizenship, Leadership, and Democracy and the Wagner Centers for Wellesley in the World join other recent initiatives described in our 2018 self-study (e.g. our outstanding Career Education program and Albright Institute for Global Affairs). Taken together, these efforts contribute powerfully to the mission of educating transformative citizens.

As we look forward to the next five years, it will be important for the College to continue to reinforce our dual identity as a women’s college and a gender-diverse community. We will also invest significantly in the development of the Wagner Centers for Wellesley in the World and related initiatives that promote the development of engaged citizens.



Standard 2: Planning and Evaluation

Planning

As highlighted earlier in this report, for the first time in Wellesley's recent history the College engaged in a strategic planning process, beginning in summer 2019. The process engaged all members of the College community through focus groups, input sessions, and status updates to governance bodies such as Academic Council, Administrative Council, and College Government. During spring 2020, work on the strategic plan paused while the College dealt with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the completion of the strategic plan, the College's Senior Leadership moved quickly to develop a plan for implementation. First they designed a leadership structure and project management strategy to assure progress on the plan, then they shifted their focus to working with their teams to develop initial projects that would support its goals.

In fall 2021 a chief of staff to the president was hired with the primary responsibility for serving as the project manager for strategic plan implementation. One of the first tasks was to select and set up a project management system. The chief of staff and the Senior Leadership team selected the Asana system to track progress on tasks, project completion, and goal attainment.

The College continues to engage in facilities renewal planning with a 10-year horizon, informed by past and current building studies. The Campus Renewal Executive Committee (CREC) considers changing and competing needs, adapts the plan accordingly, and makes recommendations to the Campus and Finance Committee of the board of trustees. The Campus and Finance Committee discusses and votes on recommendations to the full board for its approval. The board takes a highly engaged leadership role in decision-making concerning campus improvements and capital planning.

Guided by the campus renewal plan and the strategic plan's overarching goal of financial sustainability, the College continues to engage in robust financial planning with a focus on supporting the strategic priorities outlined in the plan. Financial planning occurs with both a short- and long-term time horizon, considering the constraints, opportunities, and uncertainties facing the institution. The annual budgeting process enables departments to identify their highest priorities, which Senior Leadership then weighs in the context of overall goals and essential trade-offs.



Evaluation

Between 2019 and 2023, Wellesley College demonstrated a comprehensive commitment to academic evaluation and assessment, as highlighted in various initiatives. In fall 2020, the College began a thorough analysis of learning goals and inclusive teaching practices in faculty syllabi. Notably, we found an increase in the inclusion of elements like disability accommodations, availability of extra help, and statements about societal relevance. Learning goal analysis revealed a focus on knowledge acquisition and skills application, with a notable rise in goals related to personal growth. The College revamped its student feedback process, transforming the Student Evaluation Questionnaire into the Learning Experience Reflection form, to emphasize students' reflections on learning. Faculty and student surveys in fall 2020 gauged experiences and adaptations to the term system, highlighting positive perceptions of engagement as well as challenges in areas like office hours. The Summer Research Program consistently assessed student growth, reporting increased confidence in STEM skills and commitment to pursuing advanced degrees. Faculty-advising surveys identified challenges such as lack of rewards for quality advising and time constraints. Training sessions, like the Learning Objective Writing session, aimed to enhance staff skills and knowledge. Additionally, specific curricular assessments, such as the study of BISC/CHEM 116, and departmental surveys (e.g. by the math and education departments) reflected the College's commitment to continuous improvement. The ongoing efforts in biological sciences, the Writing Program, and other areas underscore the College's dedication to refining and enhancing the student learning experience.

During this period, the College actively engaged in various consortia surveys to gain a comprehensive understanding of perspectives across different groups within the academic community. Participation in the COFHE Enrolled Student Survey, COFHE Senior Survey, National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates (NACCC) Student Survey, Gallup-CLTE Student Survey, COACHE Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey, and NACCC Staff Survey allowed the institution to gather valuable insights, serving as essential tools for assessing the experiences and satisfaction levels of enrolled students, graduating seniors, faculty members, and staff. By tapping into this diverse range of surveys, the College ensured a holistic approach to gathering feedback and data, which contributed to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the various perspectives within the academic community.



Standard 3: Organization and Governance

As we have detailed in our response to the area of emphasis concerning academic and institutional governance, the College has made significant progress in updating its governance structures. In addition, the College has made several other positive changes, noted below, and continues to maintain a governance structure that supports the mission of the institution.

Governing Board

Members of the Wellesley College Board of Trustees continue to express high levels of satisfaction as a result of a board reorganization in fall 2017 that sought to improve how the group functions. Previously, the work of the board had been divided among several small committees, many with narrow charges. Members of the newly restructured Wellesley Experience, Campus and Finance, and Wellesley in the World committees all have consequential matters on their agendas. Trustees feel that their time is well spent and that they are able to contribute more meaningfully to College planning.

The board continues to support its members' development and education, including by instituting trustee "labs" designed to share in-depth background regarding particular areas of the College. These labs give trustees information effectively; provide them with access to background materials; and offer them opportunities to engage with faculty and students to consider such areas as sustainability, residence hall renovations, challenges with the current library facilities, and faculty governance. All of this ensures board discussions are as productive as possible.

A new orientation program instituted during the pandemic has become the gold standard for onboarding members of the board. At the start of the academic year, new trustees now connect with Senior Leadership and other key staff in various divisions to learn about issues specific to each area. New trustees also meet with the provost and the general counsel for training on the necessary elements of the Massachusetts Financial Assessment and Risk Monitoring (FARM) related to accreditation and governance; this training was provided to all trustees in fall 2023. Additionally, an annual board lab on the upcoming financial budget helps trustees understand the various required budget metrics for the FARM training.

A few changes to attendance and membership rules and tenure have also streamlined board work. The board's smaller committees continue to meet remotely ahead of the in-person meetings, which they find enhances workflow. Furthermore, following the pandemic the board clarified its attendance policy to reinforce the value of in-person attendance. Acknowledging that trustees' schedules are generally tighter in a post-pandemic world and that several trustees live abroad, the new policy allows members to request permission from the chair for occasional remote attendance.



Although the board decreased the maximum length of service to 12 years in 2011, it changed the bylaws in 2021 to support a brief period of extended service for the board chair, if needed to ensure a smooth leadership transition.

In a break with the past, the board now actively encourages students who serve on the three key committees (Wellesley Experience, Campus and Finance, and Wellesley in the World) to consider serving for more than one year. Students who serve for multiple years tend to gain confidence and contribute more actively and constructively to committee deliberations.

Internal Governance

Wellesley continues to support an inclusive and robust internal governance structure focused on faculty, staff, and student participation.

Prior to the completion of the strategic plan and the renewed emphasis on organization and governance described earlier in this report, in January 2020 the Academic Council voted to dissolve the Board of Admission (which reviewed applications) and to strengthen the advisory role of the existing Committee on Admission and Financial Aid by having it focus on more strategic priorities related to admission and financial aid. Because faculty and students now provide strategic input rather than reviewing individual applications, the College is in better alignment with other institutions and peers, has increased its administrative effectiveness and financial sustainability, and has reduced the burden of faculty service obligations.

As Wellesley embarked on the process of developing its first comprehensive strategic plan, it was critical to consider governance carefully. It was important to develop the plan with the full input of campus constituencies and to ensure that implementation would be embedded into current governance structure. The governance for the planning process included a steering committee composed of senior leaders; working group chairs; and trustee, faculty, and staff representatives. Four working groups were formed, each with a focus on its own strategic priority; they were co-chaired by one faculty and one staff member and composed of faculty, staff, and students. During the process, working groups held open feedback sessions, which allowed all members of the community to participate in the strategic planning process.

The completed plan was shared with the College community in July 2021, and implementation began in fall 2021. Rather than delegating the work of implementation to a completely new governance structure, the work of the plan is embedded in the existing internal governance structure. This approach achieves the goals of actively engaging the community in the implementation of the strategic plan and embedding the work in the ongoing operations of the College. For example, aspects of the transformative education goals are embedded into the Committee on Curriculum and Academic Policy, and organization and governance goals are embedded into the Academic Council Agenda Committee and the Committee on Faculty Affairs.



Members of the College's Senior Leadership team provide oversight of the implementation process, which is facilitated by the chief of staff to the president, who serves as the project manager, and by the Strategic Planning Implementation (SPI) Advisory Committee, composed of faculty chairs of key committees of Academic Council, representatives from the Administrative Council, and key administrative leaders across campus. The SPI Advisory Committee plays an advisory role to the president, provost, and Senior Leadership; helps maintain momentum, relevance, and focus for strategic initiatives; and helps keep the Wellesley community informed about implementation across multiple work streams and progress toward key goals. The president and chief of staff update the trustees on strategic plan implementation progress at each meeting of the board.

During the pandemic, internal governance structures pivoted fairly seamlessly to remote work. Academic Council, Administrative Council, and the student College Government met virtually in the regular cadences without interruption. The emergency management structure maintained the inclusive and participatory nature of the College's internal governance on a much smaller scale. An operations team and subgroups composed of faculty and staff allowed for the input and expertise of our campus community, but the reasonable size enabled the swift decision-making required by the pandemic. A student advisory committee to the vice president and dean of students also provided student input into pandemic operations.

While the emergency structure dissolved with the end of the earlier stage of the pandemic and internal governance structures returned primarily to in-person meetings, some of the pandemic changes remain. Administrative Council continues to meet remotely every other meeting to support the new flexible work schedules for staff, and the student advisory committee continues to advise the vice president and dean of students regarding proposed cultural, procedural, and policy changes. Additionally, we have incorporated some of the successful aspects of the pandemic's emergency management structure into a new crisis management team and emergency operations team structure that we rolled out in fall 2023.

As we look toward the next self-study, we anticipate two major workflows relating to internal governance. To begin, the College is developing a governance grid as part of the implementation of the strategic plan that will clarify and increase transparency around decision-making authority within the institution for different types of issues. Additionally, our non-tenure track faculty recently voted to organize into a union of Wellesley Organized Academic Workers-United Auto Workers. For this group of faculty, we anticipate having to do some work to shift responsibility for and discussions of mandatory topics of negotiations, such as wages, benefits, and other conditions of employment, from committees of the Academic Council to the collective bargaining process.



Standard 4: Academic Program

Wellesley has remained intently focused on upholding an academic program defined by academic rigor, world-class teaching and research, and inclusive excellence. We were committed to sustaining our academic mission even in the midst of the pandemic when a pivot to online—and later hybrid—teaching tested our faculty, students, and staff.

Assuring Academic Quality

The pandemic caused Wellesley, like many other residential colleges, to transition from in-person classes to remote instruction in March 2020. Most students were asked to return home; students who permanently resided on campus or who were forbidden to return to their home address due to travel restrictions remained in campus housing. The College moved all spring courses to a mandatory credit/non-credit grading scale for the spring 2020 semester.

As part of its plan to transition back to pre-pandemic modes of instruction, the College allowed first-years, sophomores, and a limited number of upperclass and international students to live on campus for the fall 2020 semester. In an effort to achieve parity, in spring 2021 all juniors and seniors were invited back to campus, and first-years and sophomores were required to live off campus.

During the 2020–21 academic year, the College elected to offer both in-person courses and remote instruction, depending upon the preferences of the instructors. Due to the high concentration of remote courses and the College’s understanding of best practices for remote learning, Wellesley pivoted from a two-semester academic year with four courses per semester to a quarter system with four terms of two courses each. Faculty and students were surveyed about their experiences during fall 2020, after having completed Term 1 and Term 2. The results of these adjustments were mixed. Most faculty revised previously taught courses to work within the term system and under the constraints needed to safely teach in person (e.g. social distancing, masks) and remotely. Most commonly, faculty reported that they adjusted the pacing, deadlines, and types of assignments included in their courses. Perceptions of student engagement were generally positive in both terms, with the only exception being less use of office hours. Faculty reported high levels of satisfaction with sense of community, ability to stay connected, adherence to the Honor Code, and achievement of learning outcomes. Remote teaching was challenging, and many found that they struggled with trying to accomplish too much in the shortened term. Revisiting course learning outcomes and carefully planning activities to accomplish each one helped with this issue. Also, while collaborating with and learning from colleagues was a success for many, it was also an area faculty found challenging. In terms of their overall satisfaction with the term system, 55% of faculty said they were satisfied or somewhat satisfied.

Similar to faculty, most students reported high levels of engagement in their courses, with the exception of office hours. Most were satisfied with the material covered, the level of challenge,



the balance of synchronous and asynchronous activity, and the support from faculty. Students really appreciated faculty efforts with respect to collaborative learning and community. The pacing of the courses in the term system and the amount of time students could devote to each course posed challenges. Students had mixed opinions on the term system, with 52% strongly or somewhat dissatisfied; respondents said the combination of a compressed calendar, the inequities of remote learning environments, and the difficulty of community-building during the 2020–21 academic year presented several challenges.

In carefully reviewing our response to the pandemic, we have found that faculty and staff performed admirably throughout the 2020–21 academic year. Across campus, our community acted diligently and responsibly to prioritize health and safety. The College made sure instructors had the tools and freedom to teach in the format they felt would be most effective, and students who lived on campus were afforded the opportunity to take some in-person courses and build community with each other.

It is also worth noting that the 2020–21 academic year introduced many faculty and staff to remote teaching and remote work by necessity, and the skills they built in these areas have carried over to subsequent years. However, the pandemic was personally and professionally taxing for students, faculty, and staff. When the College decided to return to its traditional teaching and residential arrangements, health risks notwithstanding, all members of the Wellesley community expressed great appreciation.

The College returned to a fully in-person instructional program and the semester system in fall 2021.

Undergraduate Degree Programs

The highly polarized political environment of the last several years has affected our campus, as has been the case with many of our peer institutions. During the 2022–23 and 2023–24 academic years, two particular issues galvanized students and faculty in ways that made civil discourse and constructive dialogue quite difficult: the College’s admission policy with respect to gender, and the Israel-Hamas war. In both cases, significant differences of opinion arose within both the student and faculty populations. Those opinions were rarely expressed in person, or in ways that led to discernible growth in community members’ ability to speak openly about controversial topics, which are often complex. These divisions and tensions called on us to bolster our commitment to—and our means for—constructive dialogue and communication across differences.

During the 2023–24 academic year, the struggles to cultivate constructive dialogue have been compounded by faculty concerns about academic freedom and freedom of speech, especially as it relates to faculty and students’ rights to express opinions about the Israel-Hamas conflict. The president has repeatedly affirmed the College’s commitment to academic



freedom while acknowledging that we are obligated to uphold the law and protect a learning environment where all students on campus can access their education without being harassed or discriminated against.

The College had dedicated institutional resources to strengthening students' skills in these areas prior to 2022. We made the most significant and consistent investment in the arena of student affairs, with the implementation of residential curriculum focused on identity development, community building, and communicating across differences. Wellesley also hired its inaugural associate provost for equity and inclusion in 2022, who partners with faculty in implementing inclusive pedagogy and addressing issues of equity within instructional spaces.

In the 2023–24 academic year, we augmented these resources with two new initiatives. First, the Office of Career Education and other campus partners launched Wellesley's inaugural Civic Action Lab in August 2023. This three-day program offered to rising sophomores in late August focuses on constructive dialogue, civic engagement, and learning across differences. The program includes field trips within the greater Boston area and a range of engagement activities with faculty and civic leaders beyond the campus. The College plans to offer this to all sophomores and to embed the lab in the new Hillary Rodham Clinton Center for Citizenship, Leadership, and Democracy, to be officially launched in spring 2024.

Second, Wellesley College has joined the Institute for Citizens and Scholars. As one of several institutions of higher education now affiliated with the institute, the College has participated in faculty development opportunities and convenings designed to “build students’ civic capacity inside and outside the classroom, at the workplace, and within the community.”

General Education and Major

During the same general period, prompted by the completion of the 2021 strategic plan, the College set out to reconsider its degree requirements, last updated in the 1990s. Our work also took into account data gathered prior to the release of the strategic plan that showed the existing degree requirements were overly complex relative to those of peer institutions and poorly understood by students, faculty, and staff.

The Committee on Curriculum and Academic Policy (CCAP), chaired by the dean of academic affairs, began reviewing the degree requirements in fall 2022. After an additional information-gathering period and repeated engagement with faculty, the committee determined that the faculty remained steadfastly committed to the traditional qualities of liberal arts education. The faculty further affirmed that degree requirements must prioritize both a breadth and depth of study, by requiring students to take courses in a broad range of academic disciplines and to gain expertise in a specific discipline through completion of a major. During the 2022–



23 academic year, CCAP proposed a new set of requirements that would reflect this guiding commitment to a liberal arts education while providing a more straightforward explanation of the academic program and its purpose.

In April 2023, CCAP submitted to the College's faculty governance body a proposal that made the case for preserving the core elements of the Wellesley degree (including a writing requirement and a non-English language requirement) and argued for further requirements in the social sciences, natural and physical sciences, and the humanities. The proposal suggested renaming and simplifying the discipline- and field-based categories of knowledge while ensuring that students continue to take courses across the curriculum. CCAP also proposed a revision of the College's multicultural education requirement, which faculty and students found problematically vague. After productive discussion, the faculty chose not to adopt CCAP's proposal in spring 2023. The committee returned to its work, guided by the same goals, in fall 2023, and it aims to put forth a new proposal for revised degree requirements in spring 2024. In addition to the revision of degree requirements, the College continues to work on refining how it defines a Wellesley education.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit

All classes carrying a full unit of credit meet a minimum of 150 minutes per week, and we calculate that the Wellesley unit is equivalent to four credit hours. The workload for a full unit Wellesley course is a minimum of 12 hours per week for the 15 weeks of the semester, including reading period and final examinations. The Office of the Registrar maintains policies on transfer credits and their articulation in relation to our requirements. We have clear guidelines for the types of courses we do or do not accept for transfer, and requests for transfer credit are considered for each individual. We maintain agreements for our visiting students as part of our Twelve-College Exchange Program and with Spelman and Mills colleges. The College has clear policies for students who are not continuously enrolled, including extensive policy regarding leaves of absence. Graduation requirements are also clearly stated, and students can check their progress toward general degree requirements through an online portal.



Standard 5: Students

Creating an empowering and transformative experience for our students continues to be our top priority. Since our last accreditation review, we have not only ensured a safe and inclusive environment but have amplified our efforts to better support prospective and current students.

Admission

Wellesley's ability to enroll a diverse student body is critical to our mission and to creating the learning environment necessary to educate and prepare future leaders. Despite both a global pandemic and a Supreme Court ruling in summer 2023 that fundamentally altered the admissions landscape, our dedicated admission and financial aid team met these once-in-a-generation challenges quickly and creatively by adapting and instituting new policies and procedures.

Because the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for prospective students to take in-person exams, the College suspended the requirement of standardized tests for applicants for a one-year trial period. We extended the suspension for an additional three years, through the admission cycle ending in spring 2024, and this past fall, after a review of admission data, the faculty voted to extend the test-optional policy again through the admission cycle ending in spring 2029. For all applicants, we have also added assessments in math and English knowledge in the context of individual school offerings to ensure that we enroll an academically strong student body.

Also in response to the pandemic, we pivoted to a fully hybridized recruitment structure. Online and digital recruitment included a platform for student-to-student engagement and communication. We also employed virtual faculty and student roundtables, student-to-student online chats, a virtual series called AlumConnects that pairs prospective students with alumnae, webinars, and virtual tours. For in-person recruitment, we added self-guided tours and information sessions with admission counselors and students. We reinstated student-led tours on campus in spring 2023.

As was detailed earlier in this report, the College was well prepared for the Supreme Court's rulings on affirmative action in college admissions. We have reimagined the selection process without the consideration of race/ethnicity to build a prospective student pool that will be diverse; expanded outreach efforts from communications, to travel, to campus programming; and provided staff with the training and language needed to conduct their work across recruitment, selection, and yield functions.



Student Services and Co-Curricular Experiences

We have made progress across multiple fronts to strengthen and deepen the student experience at Wellesley. These changes reflect our commitment to supporting student success; building on our creative residential curriculum; enhancing and bolstering mental health and counseling services offered by a diverse group of therapists; and providing necessary support for student growth, development, and retention.

Our Student Financial Services team has made important changes to our financial aid policies and services to better serve students. Most prominently, in fall 2022 we invested more in financial aid by expanding our “no loan” policy to include families whose annual earnings are less than \$100,000. After a restructuring in Student Financial Services, the implementation of a new student-focused caseload model, and new leadership in key enrollment planning roles, Student Financial Services is now focused on exploring packaging models (such as no loan, reduced loan, and wrap-around student services) that will enhance support for a growing middle-income population along with addressing changes in the new FAFSA.

By creating an Office for Student Success, we have increased critical support for our first-generation students, giving them greater access to meaningful resources for academic support and wellness and additional programming. Retreats and other off-site programs have further strengthened the students in this community by minimizing isolation and building a sense of belonging. The office has also deepened its connection to a variety of cohort-based programs at Wellesley such as Posse, the McNair Scholars Program, the Beal Scholars Program, and QuestBridge, which support these student populations.

Our residential curriculum continues to be an important means to build community and inclusion through its three pillars: sense of belonging, self-awareness, and inclusive excellence. Professional staff create lesson plans in these areas that residence hall student leaders use to educate, motivate, and inspire their peers. Assessment of the curriculum is ongoing. We have also expanded support for resident assistants by providing training and programming in areas such as intercultural development, mental health first aid, and fostering constructive dialogue. As resident assistants and house presidents have increased their level of responsibility and their skill set due to the training, we have also increased their compensation.

During the pandemic, we made concerted, extensive efforts to improve the residential experience for students, including instituting significant health and wellness measures to keep students safe, such as single rooms for all students, while promoting connection through residential blocks that clustered four to six students into groups that could unmask, dine, and share space together. The College also adjusted co-curricular activities—notably, athletics and recreation came to a competitive pause during the peak phase of the pandemic, but were eventually able to resume with some health and safety guidelines. Recruiting athletes was



particularly difficult in the COVID environment, and teams are just now beginning to recover from that time. Following the pandemic, our recreation offerings continue to attract a record number of participants, and we have reintroduced more outdoor adventure programming.

Residential renovations have been a priority for the College. A new agreement with the state has allowed us to begin improving the appearance, accessibility, and functioning of our buildings. The work in our first residential building was completed in summer 2023, and student feedback has been positive. Work will continue in our Tower Hill neighborhood this summer and will eventually reach all residential buildings.

In fall 2019, the College entered a partnership with Newton-Wellesley Hospital and the Mass General Brigham network to provide health services for our students through Newton Wellesley Collegiate Health. This new partnership has ensured our students have access to the most up-to-date testing technology, treatments, and health care, which was particularly important during the pandemic. To better address our students' well-being and create more cohesive care, we are in the midst of planning a new campus building that will house both our health and counseling services. During the construction phase, we have integrated the work of these related services more fully and moved them to shared space in an existing building. To better identify students who need mental health support, we have taught mental health first aid to community members—over 100 faculty and staff are now certified, as well as all the student leaders in the residential spaces.

A collaborative effort between the departments of student life and academic affairs has made significant positive changes to our first-year advising model. Senior faculty are taking on a more active role in first-year advising, and we provide them with greater resources. In addition, we have reorganized the class dean model to be more responsive to student needs by using technology to free up more time for face-to-face conversations. We implemented these changes to the first-year advising program in fall 2023, and we will assess the impact of these changes as time progresses.

The College has also enhanced student policies significantly. Most notably, during the 2022–23 academic year, following a comprehensive review of the current Honor Code, the College expanded the Honor Code procedures to create a Code of Student Conduct, developed with input from the student and faculty members of the Honor Code Council, College Government, residence hall house presidents, and professional student affairs staff, with advice from legal counsel. After it was reviewed by the Academic Council and the board of trustees, the student chief justice and administrators began putting the new code into practice during fall 2023.

Wellesley continues to provide leading-edge career support to students, with nearly 100% of each graduating class having actively engaged in our “4-in-4” model, which is built upon four major areas of development across the undergraduate years: self-assessment and career



exploration, networking, experiential learning, and career competencies. The critical work of Career Education helps our students explore and reflect on how they want to use their liberal arts experience to launch meaningful careers and purposeful lives. During the pandemic, Career Education launched a nationally recognized virtual micro-internships initiative to ensure students could participate in valuable summer experiential learning opportunities at a time when in-person internships were largely placed on hold. Virtual career advising and alumnae mentorship ensured consistent levels of career development for all students, and post-graduation outcomes remained unaffected. Students have the option to choose virtual career advising and virtual micro-internships post-pandemic as they have proven valuable in ensuring equitable access for all students. Comfort with Zoom has further expanded our ability to bring alumnae knowledge from around the globe to campus.

Our admission team has begun assessing the efficacy of recruitment effort expansion in response to both COVID-19 and the Supreme Court's decision on affirmative action in higher education. As part of this process, we will examine the impact of the test-optional policy on first-year students' transition and overall academic success, and we will study the effectiveness of prematriculation programming (e.g. the Beal Scholars Program) to determine whether it is possible to expand such offerings to other first-year student cohorts.

The student life team will focus on integrating the various programs across campus in partnership with academic affairs to bring the residential curriculum to its full potential. We will strengthen the relationship between counseling and health services in the new building and incorporate wellness practices across the campus. The intercultural team and the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life will become more involved in the advising programs to bring a fuller student-focused approach to advising. Partnerships with Public Safety, which has been moved to the student life division to increase safety education and connection to crisis management in student spaces, will focus on safety education, including increased emphasis on personal efficacy in safety and emergency preparedness.



Standard 6: Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship

Since our last self-study, the pandemic's impact has been the dominant factor in shaping the evolution of the faculty and how we have approached our teaching and research mission.

Just prior to the pandemic, Wellesley rebalanced our faculty FTE, reducing the overall number of tenure lines from a high point of 258 to a new board-approved cap of 231, and restoring the faculty and the student-faculty ratio to their 2009 levels. This was accomplished primarily through a voluntary retirement program.

Our goal since then has been to maintain the faculty at this new level, which was undoubtedly made more challenging by the complications brought on by the pandemic. Between 2021 and 2023, for example, 22 tenured faculty members retired, approximately twice the number we typically see over a two-year period. In response, the provost accelerated the pace of tenure-track hiring, bringing 11 new tenure-line faculty to Wellesley in the 2022–23 academic year. About 10 to 11 additional hires are expected in 2023–24.

Beyond our response to pandemic challenges, we continue to prioritize diversifying our faculty. Though we have more work to do, our efforts so far have been successful: The proportion of faculty of color has increased from 24% in 2018–19 to 32% in 2022–23. Wellesley is currently fourth in the nation among liberal arts colleges regarding the percentage of faculty of color, according to a *Chronicle of Higher Education* analysis of U.S. Department of Education data.

We are also thinking strategically about the balance and departmental makeup of the faculty. We have begun building interdisciplinary capacity via joint appointments (between two or more departments and programs) and engaged in more division-level consultation about emerging staffing needs. To further support and emphasize the value of this approach, the provost's office has clarified policies and procedures related to joint appointments. Notwithstanding the concerns of humanists about the shift in enrollments toward STEM and quantitative disciplines, we remain focused on the importance of maintaining a healthy balance among the arts and humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. The tenure track searches the provost's office has authorized for the current academic year and for 2024–25 are evenly balanced across the three divisions.

We were not surprised that the Wellesley faculty, always extraordinarily dedicated to their students' education and intellectual and personal development, met the pandemic by stepping up their dedication even further. Faculty were diligent, flexible, and supportive as students faced significant hurdles, such as social and physical isolation; worsening anxiety and depression; the challenges of remote instruction; health measures such as masking; and, of course, illness. The faculty's overriding priority was to ensure that students enrolled from 2020 to 2023 received the full benefit of a transformative Wellesley education.



It should be noted that the amount of work this required took a substantial toll on faculty's research and scholarly pursuits. For science faculty, the pandemic disruptions came on the heels of facilities-related disruptions associated with the construction of our new \$215 million Science Complex.

The College responded energetically to the pandemic's negative impact on faculty research. In 2021–22 and 2022–23 the provost's office allocated special research funding for all assistant and associate professors (\$7,000 per year for assistants, \$3,500 per year for associates, on top of regular research funding and startup packages). For those approaching tenure, the College extended tenure timelines by one year and revised tenure and promotion procedures to ensure that COVID-era effects were adequately represented in faculty members' records. The College also revised the forms that track faculty members' professional activities ("activity sheets") to capture service often considered "invisible" (such as mentoring students and contributing to inclusive excellence), which might not otherwise have been recognized and accounted for in tenure and promotion reviews.

Available data suggest that we have maintained our leading position among liberal arts colleges in terms of faculty research productivity. The most recent (2021) National Science Foundation Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) rankings showed Wellesley ahead of our most direct peers (Williams, Amherst, Smith, Swarthmore, and Bowdoin) in terms of securing federal grant support. In addition to receiving impressive grant funding from the NSF, the National Institutes of Health, and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, our humanities faculty recently secured a major \$1.5 million grant from the Mellon Foundation in support of a Humanities Hub in our soon-to-be-renovated main library.

While we are generally successful in retaining our high-performing and increasingly diverse faculty, we occasionally lose both prospective and current faculty to national research universities, and the number of counteroffers made to prospective faculty has approximately doubled over the past five years.

We are also facing increasing demands from non-tenure track (NTT) faculty, who make up 169 out of the total 413 faculty in the most recent year and who provide dedicated, high-quality instruction to our students. Over the past several years, these faculty have pressed the College to provide compensation, benefits, and research support more equivalent to those provided to tenure-line faculty. The College has increased compensation for this group through two special adjustments. In July 2020 (at the beginning of an academic year in which salaries across the College were frozen), NTT faculty hired since 2008 received a 9.09% increase. In July 2022 most NTT faculty received salary increases above those given to other faculty and administrative staff. At the same time, the administration has continued to underscore that differences in compensation and status appropriately reflect the different roles tenure-line and NTT faculty play, and the different expectations the College has of faculty in the two categories.



Despite the College's efforts to engage directly with NTT faculty and to raise their compensation, the College was notified at the end of the fall 2023 semester that a group of NTT faculty members were considering unionizing in affiliation with the United Auto Workers (UAW). In the weeks that followed, the College made clear that we value these faculty and respect the many ways they contribute to the excellence of our academic program and to the experience of our students, and that the College would remain committed to providing pay and benefits that are competitive with other institutions regardless of the outcome of the election.

The vote on the union took place January 29 and 30, 2024, and the union was ratified. The College expects to begin negotiation on a contract in the next few months. We are also thinking through what impact this decision will have on our shared governance model as several of the committees of Academic Council have a focus on faculty wages and benefits within their purview.

This will be a new chapter for the College, and for the new chief academic officer, as the current provost, who has served in that role since 2004, will step down in June 2024. As part of her work, the newly named provost, Courtney C. Coile, will continue to support a faculty of scholar-teachers who are distinguished by their dedication to undergraduate teaching, their research productivity, and their diversity and gender balance. The resources needed to recruit and retain a liberal arts college faculty of that kind will only increase, and faculty recruitment and retention will be central goals of Wellesley's forthcoming comprehensive campaign, whose quiet phase is about to begin.



Standard 7: Institutional Effectiveness

Since the previous interim report, and despite the impediments created by the pandemic, the College has made data-driven decisions to support staff development, education, and wellness, and create a stronger, more resilient workforce. In the same period, we have enhanced institutional effectiveness by making progress on campus renovation projects, ensuring financial strength, and improving operations in key areas.

Human Resources

In response to significant disruptions caused by COVID, the College temporarily moved to fully remote work and instituted temporary furloughs and a temporary suspension of 403(b) contributions. Following the pandemic year, we resumed 403(b) contributions with a new formula that provided more equitable contributions for lower wage earners. We also restored suspended 403(b) contributions from the previous year.

Led by a collaboration between Human Resources and the Office of the Provost, we met the pandemic's fiscal demands and other workplace challenges by instituting a "future of work" initiative that put in place a flexible work program for administrative staff and included a revamped leadership development program to address how best to manage outcomes in a hybrid environment.

Recognizing that more complex personal situations arose from the pandemic, the College was purposeful in adding support for employees, including increased accommodations. For example, a new program called Wellthy provides faculty and staff concierge services for a range of caregiving resources.

After the Commonwealth of Massachusetts adopted the paid family and medical leave (PFML) law during the pandemic, our human resources office hired a third party to help expedite leave requests for staff. We also conducted a review of current benefits to ensure that PFML worked effectively in concert with our other leave policies. We have also bolstered efforts to educate the community on the resources available to them. The broader benefit, which provides leave benefits for a wider net of family members, has resulted in higher usage across the College.

As the peak of the pandemic passed, Wellesley was not immune to the "great resignation." In line with our strategic plan, and to better understand community wellness, satisfaction, and sense of belonging, we surveyed our administrative staff and used the data to respond to their needs and to inform our goals and objectives. For example, we adapted our professional learning and development programs to provide greater focus on inclusive excellence.



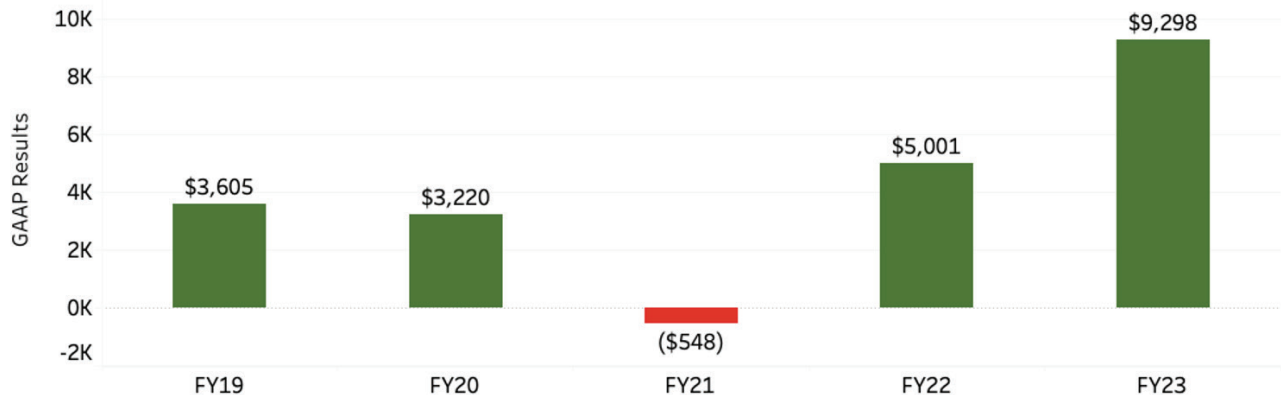
The human resources team has also made a dedicated effort to build union leadership/management relations through the work of the director of employee and labor relations. Wellesley’s primary union, the Independent Maintenance and Service Employees Union of America (IMSEUA), transitioned to new leadership and new legal counsel, and the College hired a director of labor relations in 2022. These changes provided the foundation for respectful negotiations that led to a new four-year union contract in June 2023 for dining services and facilities staff.

Financial Resources

As noted, the operational and financial interruption caused by COVID was immense. The following examples demonstrate our ability to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances. By taking advantage of the Federal Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) COVID relief funds, we provided significant additional financial support to students, covered the cost of critical COVID expenses (testing and safety measures), and partially offset reductions in net tuition revenue.

Over the past several years, our financial health has remained strong, and in four of the last five years (FY19–FY23) we achieved a positive operating margin, with only a modest deficit in the fifth (FY21). The chart below illustrates the annual net operating revenue for the last five years.

Figure 2. Five-year Annual Net Operating Revenue (\$ in thousands) FY 2019–FY 2023



We continue to plan for possible pressures on net tuition income, partially offset by increased distribution from the endowment, driven by extraordinary FY21 returns.



Several strategic financial moves have enabled key priorities to advance or be completed. We secured \$150 million taxable borrowing from NYLife in June 2020 to complete critical campus renewal projects, despite COVID-related disruptions in supply chains and construction. This included the completion of the \$215 million Science Complex in February 2022 and the replacement of the co-generation plant in June 2021. We refinanced our tax-exempt debt for savings in April 2022; refinanced variable rate debt in June 2021; and extended a line of credit with favorable terms through 2026. We have maintained our strong credit rating.

The College's ability to fundraise robustly continues to play an important role in institutional effectiveness. Since the conclusion of our last campaign, our development team has raised significant gifts for capital projects (\$68 million from FY19 to FY23) and launched planning for the next campaign based upon the priorities of the strategic plan. As part of that process, and under the leadership of a new vice president for development, we will conduct a capital campaign feasibility study in spring 2024 in anticipation of launching the quiet phase of a new capital campaign in FY25. After many years of consistent performance around the \$10 million level, the College's annual fund fundraising efforts, which bring in critical unrestricted funds to support the operating budget, have seen four years of increasing returns, rising above the \$12 million level in FY23.

We also continue to manage and utilize our endowment effectively and strategically. As a result of exceptional investment returns in FY21, the value of the endowment has increased to \$2.9 billion, which represents \$1.23 million per student, and long-term investment performance continues to be strong with endowment returns in the top quartile for the previous three-, five- and 10-year periods. The College increased endowment distribution from \$90 million in FY18 to \$110 million in FY23, and the budgeted distribution for FY24 stands at \$120 million. The effective spending rate in FY23 was 3.9%.

In April 2022, the board voted to use \$125 million of endowed funds to address critical repairs in several buildings with failing systems. These repairs were deemed necessary to address extensive deferred maintenance on campus that has been a longstanding issue, even as we made our best efforts to address repairs whenever possible. In addition, the number and severity of recent system failures heightened the need to increase the pace of renovation and repair in order to avoid programmatic disruption and risks to health and safety. Financial conditions also supported acceleration of campus renewal, with market conditions pointing to a multiyear period of lower investment returns on the endowment and the inflation of construction costs likely to remain high for the next several years.

Human Resources and the Office of the Provost continue to perform pay equity studies for faculty and staff based on gender and race/ethnicity. Additionally, the provost's office and the Office of Finance and Administration continue to review market data for faculty salaries, and we have made adjustments to starting salaries as well as adjustments for current faculty. Human Resources is currently conducting an outside benchmarking study for administrative salaries and a new salary structure.



Information, Physical, and Technological Resources

In February 2022, we completed a multiyear project to renovate our Science Complex. The renovation, which included the demolition of the former Sage Hall and the construction of a new state-of-the-art research, innovation, and teaching building, was the largest and most significant capital project ever undertaken by the College. The renovated complex allows our faculty to carry out cutting-edge research in facilities that enable unprecedented collaboration across disciplines—all while deeply engaging our students in their work. Our ability to recruit the most promising young faculty is enhanced, and we are able to bring even more Wellesley students, from all backgrounds, into the culture of science.

To prepare for the launch of a 10-year residence hall renovation plan, the College signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB). In summer 2020, the College accelerated deferred maintenance to repair the envelopes of five residence halls and replace elevators to prepare for the implementation of the multiyear residential plan to support the MOU. The plan calls for each large residence hall to be renovated over two summers, which involves replacing HVAC and other infrastructure, upgrading spaces, repairing roofs and mortar, and increasing accessibility to meet MAAB requirements. Work on the first building, Severance Hall, was completed last summer. This summer work will continue in Tower Hall, our largest residential building, and Clafin Hall.

In addition to the work in our residence halls, and enabled by the board's decision to allow the use of \$125 million of endowed funds, we have made critical repairs in several academic buildings. These projects include a revitalization of the Clapp Library that will include a major space renovation and new HVAC systems; critical repairs to the HVAC system in the academic building that houses the social sciences; critical repairs to the Davis Museum's HVAC system and building envelope; a fully renovated pool house; critical masonry and other repairs and updating in the academic building that houses our humanities program; and the construction of a new building to house health and counseling services that will replace the smaller, less energy-efficient existing building.

In 2022 the College exceeded the 2036 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction target established in our "E2040" strategic sustainability plan, with GHG emissions now just about half of what they were in 2010. We accomplished this through the replacement of the central utility plant, implementation of energy conservation measures in campus buildings, and overall efforts to reduce energy use. The E2040 plan also sets the goal of first replacing our buildings' steam heat with low-temperature hot water heating systems, to be followed by installing geothermal energy as the primary source of heating and cooling. We will evaluate the Inflation Reduction Act energy tax credits to determine timing for our geothermal energy plans.



The College's division of Library and Technology Services (LTS) supports the academic program in full and across all departments, from routine help with the use of learning management systems to using virtual reality in classes. LTS maintains excellent library services with access to physical and digital resources, including hundreds of thousands of digital book titles; direct access to nearly 111,000 electronic journals; and a top of-class interlibrary loan operation. The library's makerspace offers a wide range of services to faculty and students, including sewing and virtual reality simulations. The library renovation work, which began in spring 2024, will enhance accessibility, replace outdated building systems, reinvigorate student study spaces, add teaching space to the Wellesley College Archives and Special Collections, and introduce a café to this part of the campus. The creative relocation of library services during the yearlong renovation ensures continued access to services and resources.

LTS supported our response to COVID in multiple ways. Its staff helped us adopt Zoom as a College-wide platform; trained the faculty in remote instruction in collaboration with the director of the Pforzheimer Learning and Teaching Center; provided technology assistance and resources to allow students to engage in remote education; and enabled several administrative departments to move to Zoom Phone so that they could offer remote support to students, parents, and others. To support the health and safety of the campus community during the pandemic, LTS developed a system that fully managed COVID testing on campus, from scheduling students and employees for testing, to ensuring testing compliance, to communicating the COVID data to campus partners so that they could expeditiously isolate students who tested positive.

LTS's advances to College systems goes beyond its responses to the pandemic. It has also bolstered the College's cybersecurity measures. More than 95% of our services now require Duo two-factor authentication. We have worked with OculusIT, an IT services company, to upgrade our on-premises operating systems to be compliant with the most recent and secure versions; help ensure we follow best practices and have the best possible security controls; provide services that alert us to—and resolve—network or security incidents; and perform internal vulnerability testing once a year. We have also hired GreyCastle Security to perform external penetration testing once every two years.

The College has also aggressively moved various systems to the cloud, thereby distributing the information to multiple vendors and reducing the risk of compromises. These vendors and systems are thoroughly vetted both initially and annually for security compliance standards. Currently, more than 90% of our services are cloud based, and we are in the process of architecting several remaining on-premises services to also move to the cloud.



Standard 9: Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure

Integrity

In the years since our last report, we have made important strides to ensure the integrity of the College's mission and its vision for the future.

Risk management, mitigation, and compliance have been key focal points. In addition to hiring our first general counsel and expanding the Ombuds Office, the College hired a full-time risk manager in March 2020. (Previously, this critical compliance function was managed by an independent contractor on a part-time basis.) As the worst of the pandemic's impact began to recede in January 2022, the College elevated this role to a director-level position, reporting to the general counsel. The director of risk management also works very closely with the associate vice president and controller regarding financial compliance issues and insurance. In August 2023, we added a legal assistant and deputy Title IX coordinator, who supports the legal, risk management, and non-discrimination functions. The expansion of these functions supports the College's ability to consistently review internal policies and assure the institution's compliance with external legal and regulatory requirements.

During the 2021–22 academic year, with the input and oversight of the board of trustees, the College also developed and put in place an Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) framework that provides a systematic approach to the identification, prioritization, and management of risks and opportunities facing the College, bringing focus to the most significant risks. As part of that mandate, annually (or more frequently), the ERM oversight committee, assisted by the director of risk management, obtains and reviews updated information from responsible risk managers across the College. The ERM oversight committee is composed of key stakeholders, including the president, provost, general counsel, chief human resources officer, vice president for finance and administration, and vice president and dean of students. At the trustee level, the board's Audit Committee also annually reviews and discusses the ERM process, the top risks facing the institution, and the status of efforts to mitigate those risks, involving other board committees as necessary.

Transparency and Public Disclosure

We have worked extensively to ensure that our website effectively and transparently communicates our mission as well as our institutional policies, structures, and governance to the public. In this way, the website serves as an essential interface for all key stakeholders, particularly prospective students and their families.

Over the past 10 years, the College's website grew to include more than 60,000 pages as a result of two primary factors: a lack of clear governance policies for website content, and the impulse to make the website "all things to all audiences," which was encouraged by the lack



of a robust intranet for community members. To address these and other issues, in 2021 the College set out to completely redesign its existing public website and to create a new intranet platform in parallel.

We conducted extensive discovery research with existing and prospective students, faculty, and staff to better understand our audiences' needs. Our findings highlighted the importance of more user-friendly design and navigation for the public website. Faculty, staff, and students have been engaged throughout this process, and the new website and intranet we are developing will reflect their needs, input, and feedback.

These key goals have guided the website revision, which will be completed in the spring 2024 semester:

- A new, fully accessible website that prioritizes prospective students and families, along with prospective faculty and staff.
- A more user-friendly content management system.
- A new intranet that supports students, faculty, and staff, with content organized around key tasks and information essential to the experience of learning, teaching, and working at Wellesley.
- A new website governance structure that engages faculty and staff in setting policy and developing training guidelines for content creation and editing, for all digital platforms.
- More comprehensive and frequent training for content creators and editors to ensure that they can add timely content and remove outdated and extraneous information.

Prospective and current students and families who visit our new website will easily be able to find the information they need. The accessibility features will allow all members of the public and the campus community to access important information.



NECHE Reflective Essay

Wellesley College stands out as one of the leading institutions for student success nationwide, with an average first-year retention rate of 95% and an average six-year graduation rate of 92%. More importantly, we are committed to the ideals of inclusive excellence, deeply embedding its practice in how Wellesley pursues its mission. As both an institutional goal and an overarching priority of the College's strategic plan, we begin from a foundation that sees inclusive excellence as a call to enable every Wellesley student to realize her full academic potential. This means we seek to ensure that all students' academic experiences, from their course of study and major to their academic development across their four years here, are not limited by their race, ethnicity, nationality, or socioeconomic status.

Since 2016 we have measured our progress toward this ambitious goal by sustained scrutiny of transcript-level data and by curricular and pedagogical experimentation based on the evidence our data analysis has revealed.

A 2016 analysis of Wellesley students' academic experience over the prior 16 years served as the baseline study for our inclusive excellence work. The author of this study, Professor of Economics Akila Weerapana, has collaborated with our Office of Institutional Research to track and better understand this vital aspect of educational effectiveness. Scrutinizing the period from 2000 to 2016 (a period during which Wellesley student demographics diversified significantly), the 2016 study found compelling evidence that students' experience had been heavily influenced by race and ethnicity in two respects:

1. The pattern of course enrollments and majors demonstrated significant variations between the academic experience of African American and Latinx students, Asian American and international students, and white students. (See Table 1.)
2. There were also significant discrepancies in grades received by different student populations. African American students' grades were on average about one-third of a grade point lower than white students' grades (i.e., a full +/- of a letter grade). The gap was smaller but similar for Latinx students, while international students and Asian American students' grades were on a par with those of white students. The grade differential was even greater in quantitative disciplines such as economics, computer science, mathematics, and natural sciences. (See Table 2.)

A question at the heart of the 2016 study has remained central to our work more broadly: To what extent do the gaps in grades reflect different levels of pre-college preparation? The 2016 study found that some of the disparity could indeed be ascribed to lower levels of preparation (especially in quantitative skills) and correlated with socioeconomic/first-generation status. However, the study also revealed that some of these gaps did not close over students' time at Wellesley and instead grew in the sophomore year and even into the junior year. This finding forced us to acknowledge that Wellesley's existing targeted interventions in the first year, necessary as they undoubtedly are, may not be sufficient to address gaps that persist throughout a student's career at Wellesley.



Table 1: Relative Likelihood of Enrollment, Compared to White Students (Weerapana, 2016)

	Average 2000–2004	Average 2005–2009	Average 2010–2014	Average 2015–2016	Full Sample Average
Humanities					
African American	0.520***	0.612***	0.808***	0.797***	0.658***
Latina	0.827***	0.831***	0.758***	0.742***	0.789***
Asian American	0.817***	0.848***	0.777***	0.818***	0.813***
International	0.696***	0.600***	0.783***	0.804***	0.703***
Languages					
African American	1.071*	0.942	0.911**	0.929	0.961*
Latina	1.135**	1.038	0.966	0.977	1.029
Asian American	0.872***	0.871***	0.911***	0.825***	0.875***
International	0.963	0.926**	0.936**	0.817***	0.918***
Soc. Sci (non-econ)					
African American	1.237***	1.246***	1.289***	1.237***	1.248***
Latina	1.142***	1.130***	1.213***	1.100***	1.147***
Asian American	0.908***	0.868***	0.814***	0.785***	0.856***
International	0.780***	0.756***	0.815***	0.825***	0.782***
Economics					
African American	1.186***	1.107	0.760***	0.875	0.979
Latina	0.844**	0.951	0.981	1.359***	1.034
Asian American	1.994***	1.925***	1.799***	1.784***	1.893***
International	2.646***	2.846***	2.440***	2.582***	2.630***
Phys/Nat. Science					
African American	0.852***	0.803***	0.884***	1.046	0.881***
Latina	0.856***	0.860***	0.902***	0.829***	0.881***
Asian American	1.043**	1.215***	1.284***	1.203***	1.188***
International	0.852***	1.115***	0.820***	0.774***	0.908***
CS/Math					
African American	0.953	1.031	0.767***	0.796***	0.900***
Latina	0.834***	0.909	0.860***	0.946	0.898***
Asian American	1.308***	1.129***	1.228***	1.464***	1.260***
International	1.715***	1.565***	1.594***	1.663***	1.679***

Entries show the relative likelihood (compared to white students) of enrolling in an academic area. For example, from 2000 to 2004, an African American student was 48% less likely than a white student to choose a humanities course and 23.7% more likely than a white student to choose a (non-econ) social science course. Asterisks indicate statistical significance. *** p<1%, ** p<5%, *p<10%



Table 2: Relative Likelihood of Majoring, Compared to White Students (Weerapana, 2016)

Race/Ethnicity/ National Origin	Average 2000–2004	Average 2005–2009	Average 2010–2014	Class of 2015	Full Sample Average
Humanities					
African American	0.617***	0.568***	0.758	0.861	00.651***
Latina	0.731*	0.947	0.665**	0.467	0.759***
Asian American	0.794**	0.835**	0.643***	0.844	0.762***
International	0.631***	0.302***	0.653***	0.654	0.521***
Languages					
African American	1.079	1.234	0.909	0.646	1.051
Latina	1.294*	1.167	1.198	1.635	1.228**
Asian American	0.574***	0.474***	0.692***	0.528*	0.565***
International	0.763	0.479***	0.614***	0.436*	0.582***
Soc. Sci (non-econ)					
African American	1.229**	1.340***	1.522***	1.749***	1.378***
Latina	1.183*	0.979	1.291***	1.209	1.156***
Asian American	0.964	0.829***	0.770***	0.760*	0.848***
International	0.819**	0.694***	0.785***	0.927	0.771***
Economics					
African American	0.972	1.193	0.642	0.333	0.886
Latina	0.630	0.969	0.799	1.805	0.871
Asian American	2.788***	2.568***	2.447***	2.283***	2.594***
International	4.418***	3.706***	3.907***	3.201***	3.988***
Phys/Nat. Science					
African American	0.746	0.557*	0.517***	0.938	0.632***
Latina	0.742	0.861	0.620**	0.815	0.739**
Asian American	1.111	1.409***	1.325***	1.610**	1.319***
International	0.414***	1.850***	0.560***	0.855	0.923
CS/Math					
African American	0.275*	0.210	0.212**	0.385	0.256***
Latina	0.145**	0.421	0.508	0.000	0.343***
Asian American	1.647***	1.474*	1.241	1.416	1.436***
International	2.496***	3.654***	2.192***	2.341***	2.722***

Entries show the relative likelihood (compared to white students) of majoring in a particular academic area. For example, from 2000 to 2004, an African American student was 38.3% less likely than a white student to major in the humanities and 22.9% more likely than a white student to major in a (non-econ) social science. Asterisks indicate statistical significance. *** p<1%, ** p<5%, *p<10%



The 2016 study prompted a concentrated effort from the faculty to address these patterns. This was also a pivotal moment for College leadership, with the inauguration of a new president who brought heightened attention to the importance of inclusive excellence. To build on this attention and new institutional focus, the provost's office organized two all-faculty retreats, and many departments scrutinized their curricula with reference to these systematic discrepancies. Led by Megan Núñez, professor of chemistry and Nan Walsh Schow '54 and Howard B. Schow Professor in the Physical and Natural Sciences, in 2017–18 Wellesley's science faculty submitted a grant application to the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) that was centrally concerned with reshaping the culture and pedagogy of our programs to make them more inclusive. Wellesley's grant was one of only about 30 awarded in spring 2018.

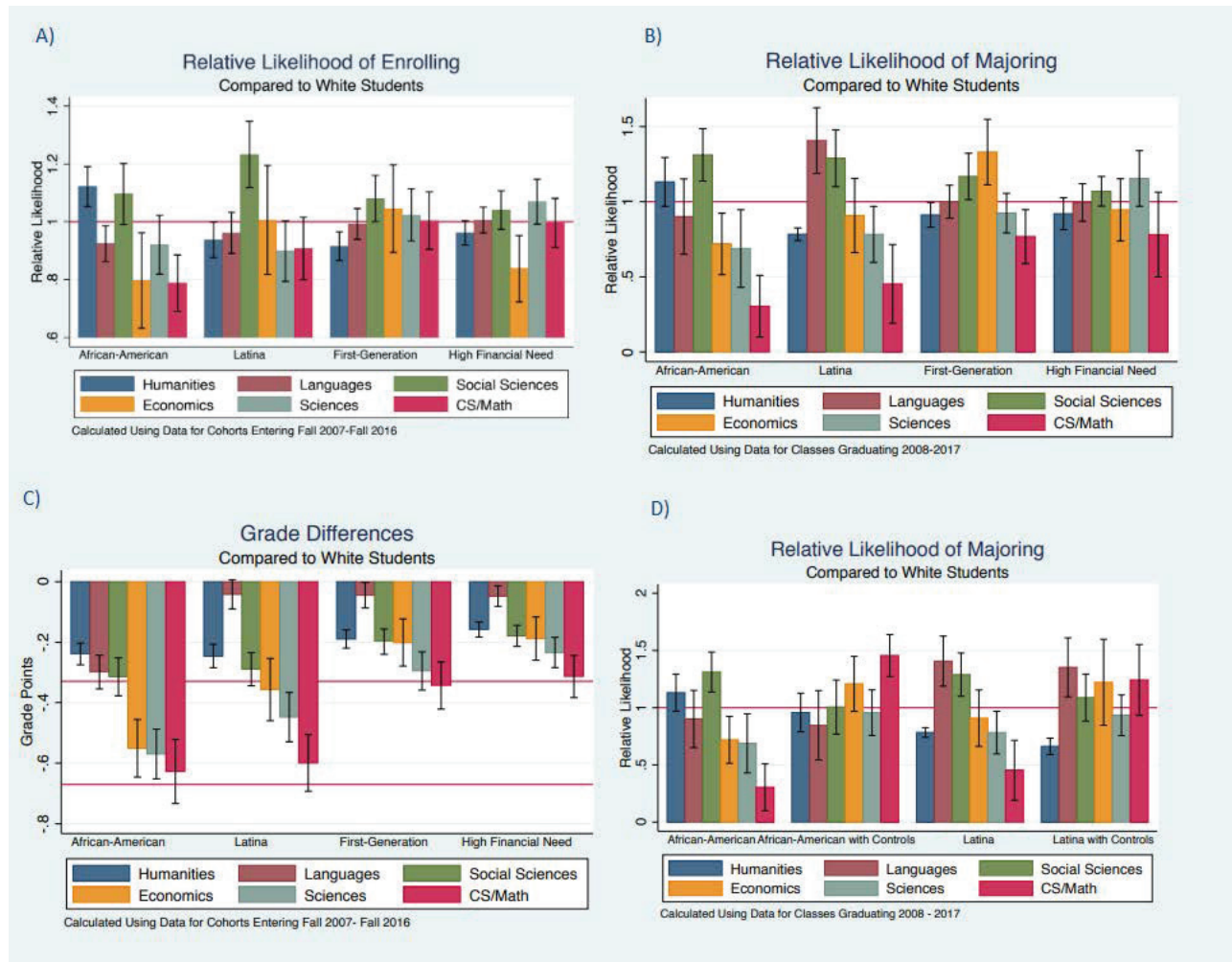
Our STEM strategy, aided by the HHMI grant, has involved a two-pronged approach of professional development and training for faculty and staff combined with student support programs. The former has required faculty to face the uncomfortable truth that ingrained and systemic problems in their teaching practices may have been detrimental to the success of underrepresented minority (URM) students. In response, 90 faculty have participated in a series of weeklong "change agent" trainings that have challenged them to critically interrogate their classroom practices and helped them make the personal transformation and professional commitment necessary to create more equitable classrooms. That has enabled them to provide the support URM students need to persist and thrive in STEM.

In recent years, the College has also increased research opportunities for URM students and created better-articulated pathways to help them persist in science from the very start of their college careers. This work has garnered us prestigious grants focused on increasing diversity in STEM. The U.S. Department of Education's McNair Scholars Program award is supporting URM as well as first-generation and low-income students at Wellesley in their completion of undergraduate science degrees and pursuit of Ph.D.s. The College has admitted five STEM Posse Scholars cohorts, and grants from the Sherman Fairchild Foundation have enabled Wellesley to increase URM student research participation. Finally, a multiyear award from the Luce Foundation is supporting research activities for juniors from underrepresented groups who are majoring in the physical and computational sciences and who want to go on to graduate school.

As we were beginning this work in STEM, we also deepened our analysis of student experiences by examining student outcomes by socioeconomic status (using the expected family contribution to the cost of attendance) and asking new questions about the influence of race and ethnicity on outcomes (Weerapana, 2018). This 2018 study found that the differences in terms of enrollments (Figure 1A), majors (Figure 1B), and grades (Figure 1C) are much more pronounced when considering race and ethnicity versus socioeconomic status. This study also found that when we took into account entering test scores, African American and Latinx students actually had a latent preference for STEM and economics courses that was constrained by lack of quantitative preparation (Figure 1D). As shown below, the reality of this latent preference has been borne out by subsequent experience.



Figure 1. Enrollment, Major, and Grade Trends



By 2020 we had amassed clear evidence to show that the pedagogical and other innovations we were making across the curriculum—and particularly in quantitative disciplines—were beginning to have an impact on URM student success (Weerapana, 2020). In the five most recent graduating cohorts at that point (the classes of 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020), the rates at which African American students majored in economics and STEM had increased dramatically. Latinx students had made significant gains in computer science and mathematics and smaller gains in economics and science majors. The smaller gap previously observed between majoring patterns of first-generation/high financial need students and white students as a whole had disappeared altogether. There was a similarly positive trend in course enrollments.

However, the 2020 evidence also showed that our efforts hadn't yet resulted in narrowing grade discrepancies. The author of the study concluded that “we have done better with the inclusion part than with the excellence part of inclusive excellence.” He argued that the



College needed to give students more help in tackling the first-year curriculum in spite of their differential preparation. He pointed to data that showed approximately half of the persistent grade gap had to be attributed to what was happening at Wellesley, while the other half could be attributed to student preparation prior to enrolling.

Wellesley has responded to these challenges by vigorously pursuing curricular innovations, including new courses offered by a number of large academic departments. Three curricular examples show how we have sought, in different ways, to improve educational outcomes of students with differential levels of preparation.

Before describing each of these innovations, we should explain an important part of Wellesley's academic program that is relevant to these efforts. All Wellesley students must complete a two-part quantitative reasoning (QR) and data literacy (DL) requirement. The first part is a QR test all entering students take during first-year orientation. Students who do not achieve a satisfactory score must enroll in a specially designed introductory course, QR 140, that prepares them for college-level work in quantitative disciplines. In most years, approximately 10% of an entering class takes QR 140, but that number increased somewhat during the pandemic. The QR requirement is a vital element of our highly demanding educational program, but there is no doubt that it has complicated the effort to make quantitative disciplines accessible to all our students as in the past it has delayed access to departmental gateway programs. This is also an issue that the three innovations described below aim to address.

- The chemistry department created an introductory chemistry course (CHEM 105P) for students who arrive at Wellesley with limited preparation in chemistry and/or limited quantitative reasoning skills. The course, which meets five days per week, covers the same material as the College's gateway course to the chemistry major (CHEM 105) but does not require completion of QR 140 as a prerequisite and does not assume any high school chemistry background. It has helped more than 150 students gain entry into the major by providing additional instructional support.

CHEM 105P has had a positive impact on the chemistry department and on the College. CHEM 105P students are persisting in STEM at the College and achieving at high levels. Many of those who have successfully passed the course have gone on to major in chemistry and biochemistry and have been selected for the McNair Scholars program at Wellesley. Many other CHEM 105P students have gone on to major in STEM disciplines, including biological sciences and neuroscience.

- In 2022–23 the economics department introduced ECON 101P and 102P. These courses are alternative versions of the existing ECON 101/102 (Introduction to Microeconomics/Introduction to Macroeconomics) sequence. They are open, but not limited, to students who have not yet satisfied the College's QR requirement, and first-generation students



and students who receive a low score on the QR test are invited to enroll. One benefit of offering this sequence is that students who do not pass the QR test can begin their study of economics immediately, instead of having to take QR 140 before enrolling in ECON 101. The team-taught courses also include additional meeting time to provide extra support for the mathematical and technical aspects of course material. Additionally, both instructors offer extensive office hours in each semester. The P courses are capped at 30, like other sections of 101/102, and do not require additional staffing resources, as they replace a section of 101/102 in the curriculum.

When faculty introduced these courses, they aligned them with a pre-existing half-credit course, Wellesley Initiative for Scholars of Economics (WISE). WISE is designed to deepen students' engagement with economic research and is directed at students who might be less likely to persist in the discipline. Students in ECON 101P and 102P are strongly encouraged, though not required, to enroll in WISE, and they receive priority in registration. Students from other ECON 101/102 sections may be admitted to WISE on a space-available basis. This approach has alleviated the challenge of developing technical exercises for WISE and helped to build a strong community within the P sections.

The data for these courses are encouraging even at this early stage. In the first year of 101P/102P, 19 students enrolled each semester, with five students moving from 101P to 102 and seven from 101 to 102P. As expected, students in the P sections began the course with relatively weaker quantitative skills, receiving a mean score of 47% on the QR test, versus 70% for students enrolled in other 101/102 sections. Despite this, students in P sections persisted in economics at comparable, or even higher, rates than students who took 101/102. We continue to monitor student outcomes and will use that data to make adjustments as needed.

- Our biological sciences department has also followed this approach by pursuing a curricular redesign effort focused on the introductory courses. Faculty conducted a survey in spring 2019 to better understand the student experiences in their gateway courses and in the department as a whole. The survey revealed that students generally found BISC 110: Introductory Cellular and Molecular Biology to be particularly challenging, and in response the department created a new P version of this course, BISC 110P. The new course could be taken by students who had not passed their QR test (previously a requirement for BISC 110) or who self-reported weak high school preparation in biology. It enables all students to start taking biology in their first semester at Wellesley, if they wish. The course is capped at 16 students and meets an additional two times each week to go over the lecture and lab material, with additional hands-on activities and problem-solving exercises.

Additionally, faculty have revised the laboratory curriculum in both BISC 110 and BISC 111: Introductory Organismal Biology to involve additional community-building skills and more time to introduce and practice challenging content and skills, to make sure the workload is manageable and the content is accessible to all students taking the courses.



Some faculty have also adopted a “flipped” classroom model to give students more time to digest lecture content.

In spring 2023, biological sciences faculty surveyed their students again to learn about the impact on the student experience. A team of faculty, staff, and students are currently comparing data from the 2023 and 2019 surveys to evaluate progress and make additional recommendations to the department.

Even as faculty and staff were developing, implementing, and analyzing these and other innovations, the College was, of course, confronted by the challenge of the pandemic. Faculty and College leadership feared the progress we had made between 2016 and 2020 might be reversed as a result of the pandemic, which exacerbated already existing inequalities in educational experience (at all levels, from K–12 to graduate level). To help us understand and proactively address the changes occurring on our campus, we conducted several internal assessments:

1. We analyzed course syllabi from fall 2020 (when our program was partly in-person and partly remote) and compared them to syllabi from prior to the pandemic to better understand trends in syllabus composition and deepen our understanding of how courses might be changing.
2. We surveyed faculty and students about their experiences with teaching and learning (both remotely and in person) in fall 2020.
3. We conducted another internal inclusive excellence study to look at the demographic shifts in our student body, enrollment patterns, and grades (Weerapana, 2023).
4. We analyzed the impact of several programs designed to enhance academic opportunities and success for students from underrepresented groups.

Our analysis and comparison of all syllabi collected in fall 2018 (previously collected for our reaccreditation) and syllabi submitted by faculty in fall 2020 revealed an increase in the use of inclusive syllabus elements. These included information about academic accommodations, availability of extra help, inclusion/belonging statements, community norms/expectations, statements about society and current events, and flexibility of assessment formats and deadlines. We also noted decreases in the prevalence of some syllabus elements, which can be largely attributed to logistical teaching changes due to the pandemic. For example, with students attending class remotely, co-curricular activities were less likely to be included in syllabi, and attendance and participation were less likely to be factored into grading. Also, while specific office hours were less likely to be listed on syllabi in fall 2020, many professors opted for office hours by appointment, usually virtually.

The faculty and student surveys in fall 2020 yielded constructive comments and high response rates (63% for faculty, 37% for students). Looking at the themes for what was



successful during the fall 2020 semester, faculty and students mentioned collaborative learning most frequently. Learning from each other in tight-knit, interactive classrooms is a valuable part of the Wellesley experience and something students and faculty sought as they learned and taught in fall 2020. Interestingly, “building community” and “peer learning” were in the top five for what faculty felt did not work well. It is encouraging that there were many positive experiences with collaboration, peer learning, and community, even in our remote and socially distanced classrooms, and it is also not surprising that many faculty felt that these learning environments were not quite as connected and collaborative as they have been in the past. Consistent with the increase in inclusive syllabus elements noted in course syllabi, students found it helpful when instructors offered flexibility and support in their courses and signaled availability in their office hours. Overall, students expressed positive views on course activities and opportunities to engage with course material and peers.

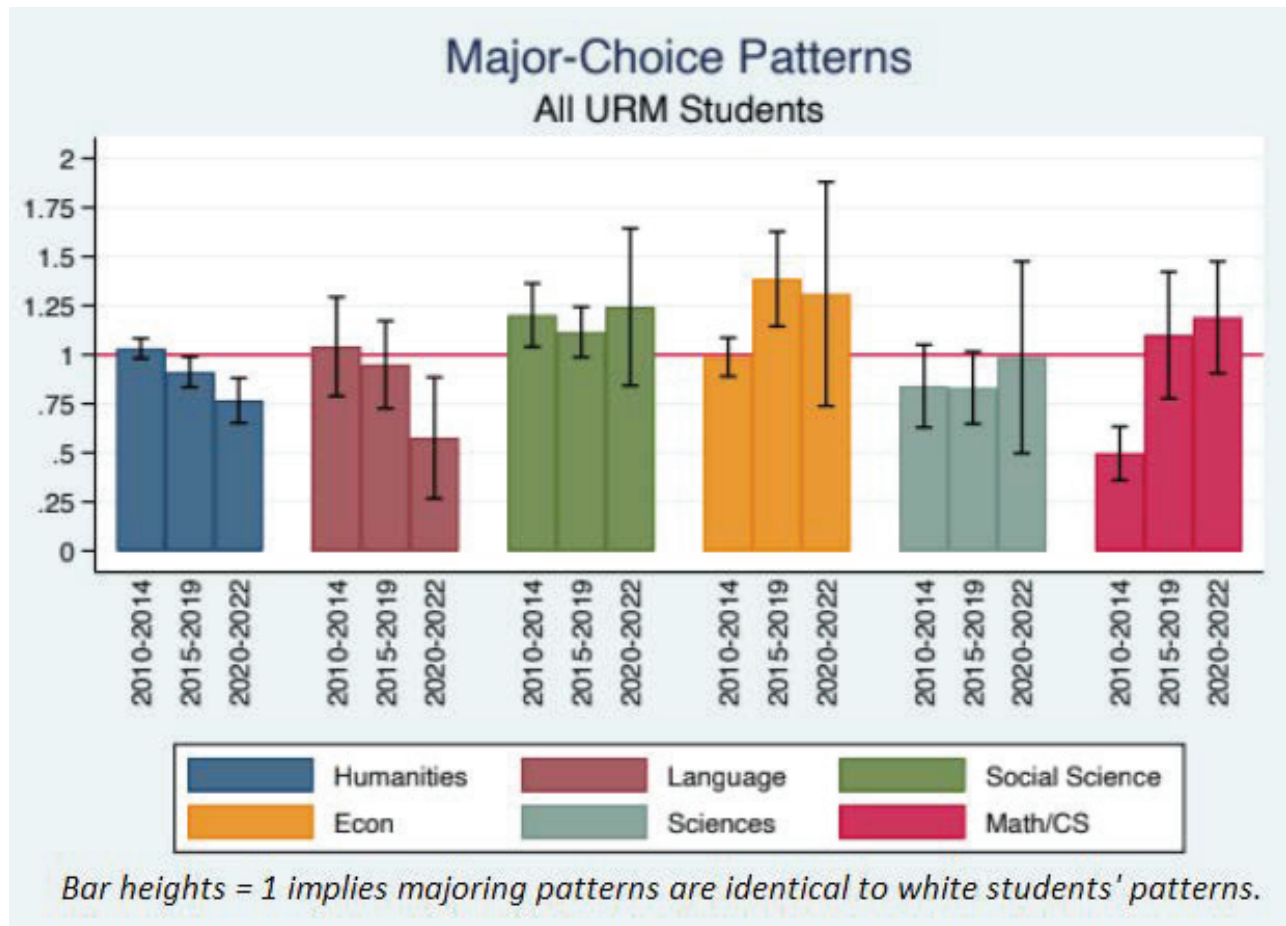
The results of our internal inclusive excellence study (Weerapana, 2023) showed that the demographic shifts in our student body, which had been occurring since 2000, accelerated during the pandemic. The College admitted a larger number of first-generation, high financial need, and underrepresented minority students (Table 3). In that context, it was remarkable to see how successfully we had maintained the progress toward inclusion in terms of enrollments and majors. Students from underrepresented groups are now majoring in STEM and economics at rates that are on a par with or even exceed the rates of white students (Figure 2).

Table 3. Breakdown of Students by Racial, Ethnic, and Socioeconomic Characteristics

Race/Ethnicity/ National Origin	FY Cohort 2010–2014		FY Cohort 2015–2019		FY Cohort 2020–2022	
	# of Students	% of Cohort	# of Students	% of Cohort	# of Students	% of Cohort
Total	619	100%	631	100%	596	100%
African American	36	6%	40	23%	49	8%
Latina	59	10%	83	13%	99	17%
Asian American	142	23%	143	23%	128	21%
International	66	11%	83	13%	84	14%
White	268	43%	237	38%	193	32%
Multiracial	38	6%	42	7%	40	7%
Unknown	10	2%	2	0.3%	3	0.4%
First-Generation	73	12%	102	16%	117	20%
High Need	108	18%	131	21%	140	23%
URM	133	21%	175	28%	194	33%



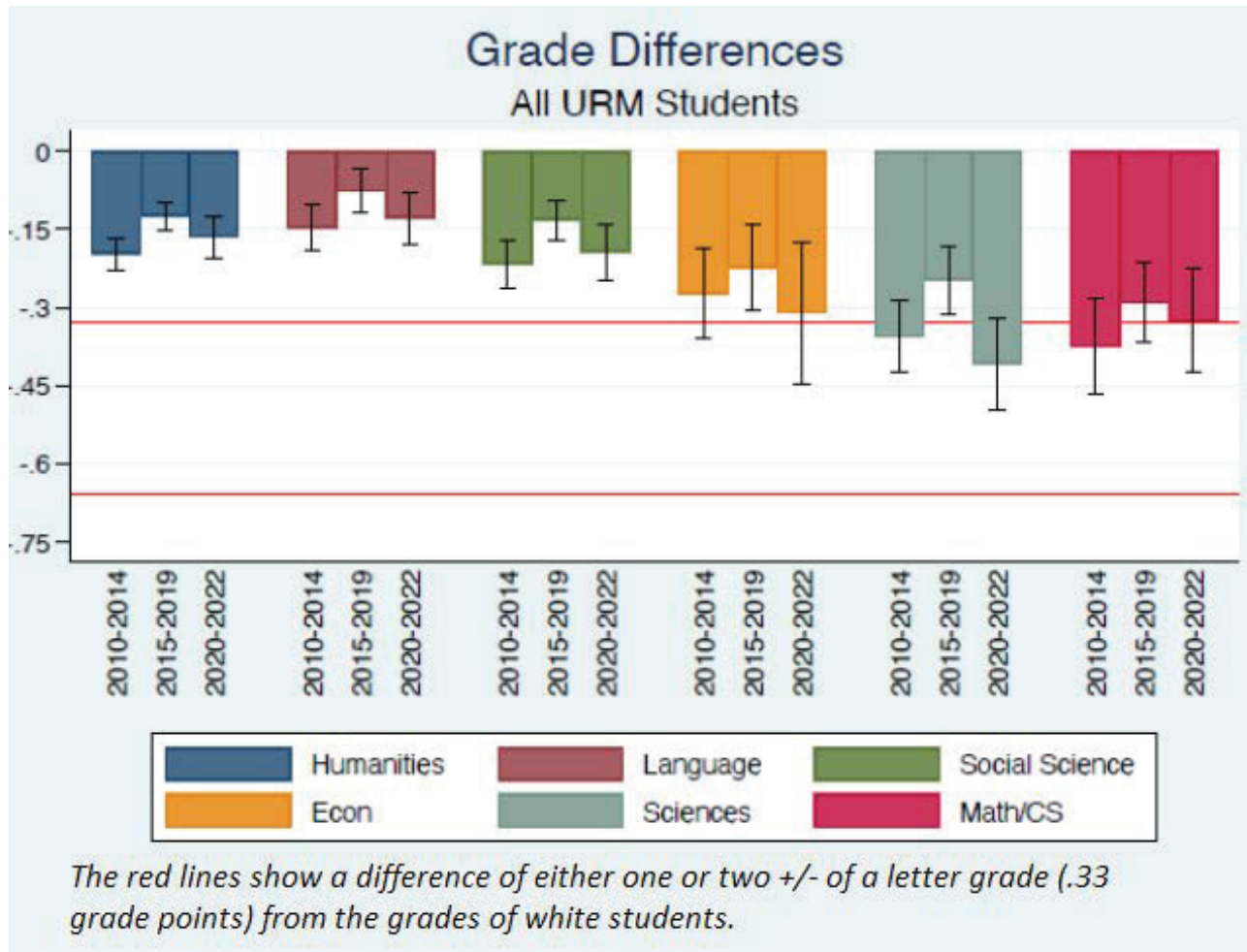
Figure 2. Relative Likelihood of Majoring Across Different Areas of the College



We view this as a very positive outcome, yet two areas continue to cause concern. First, the 2023 study finds that the grade gap continues to be a challenge. Indeed, the gap widened between 2020 and 2023 (Figure 3). Why hasn't this had an impact on course enrollments? The study surmises that the answer may lie in the fact that grades across the board have risen during the pandemic years. Absolute grades for students from underrepresented groups have not declined, they just haven't risen as fast as other students' grades.



Figure 3. Grade Differences Across Areas of the College



Second, underrepresented groups and high financial need students are now less likely to major in humanities than white students and have overall enrollment patterns that more closely resemble those of Asian American and international students. This relatively recent trend for Wellesley has coincided with a longer-term trend, at Wellesley as at many other institutions, away from humanities and humanistic social sciences and toward STEM majors.

Faculty in Wellesley’s humanities departments recognize that they must adapt to meet these challenges. They are exploring some of the same innovations that have been so successful in STEM and quantitative fields. The College recently secured a \$1.5 million grant from the Mellon Foundation to pursue a 3 ½-year project that will unite the College’s humanities departments through the themes of democracy, environmental justice, and identity. More than 50 humanities faculty are participating in this initiative designed to revise introductory curricula, expand student-faculty research collaborations housed in a new Humanities Hub, and connect humanities students to nonprofits and cultural and arts organizations outside the College. We believe this major initiative has the potential to replicate some of what our STEM departments achieved through the 2018 HHMI grant.



To bring this account of our work to advance and assess inclusive excellence up to the present, the Office of Institutional Research, again in collaboration with Professor Weerapana, very recently completed a study of the impact of the following six programs at Wellesley, which are designed to enhance academic opportunities and success for students from underrepresented groups:

- The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program (now ended), supporting undergraduates coming to Wellesley from Africa.
- The Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, supporting students from low-income, first-generation, and historically underrepresented groups in preparing for and entering doctoral study.
- The Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program, supporting students who are interested in pursuing doctoral work in humanities and humanistic social sciences and who will contribute to the program's goal of increasing the diversity of faculty in these fields.
- The Posse Foundation Program (now ended), supporting five cohorts of STEM students from Houston, Texas.
- The QuestBridge Scholars Program, supporting low-income students coming to Wellesley through partnership with the QuestBridge nonprofit organization.
- WellesleyPlus, a first-year experience program designed to assist first-generation and underresourced students with their transition to college by providing a range of academic and social opportunities.

The study reveals that, when accounting for all observable differences such as race, ethnicity, standardized test scores, and financial need, participants in the Mastercard, McNair, and Posse programs exhibit a higher likelihood of majoring in STEEM (STEM plus economics) fields compared to nonparticipants. Furthermore, program participants are more likely to graduate from Wellesley, with particularly noteworthy effects observed among Posse, Mastercard, McNair, and Mellon participants. Notably, Mastercard, Posse, and McNair students are significantly more likely to graduate in four years than nonparticipants with similar characteristics.

Finally, our career education data provide a clear picture of how our graduates are faring and of the longer-term success of our efforts toward inclusive excellence. We initiated data collection in 2016 according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers first-destination outcomes standards. For the class of 2023, 96.6% were employed, enrolled in graduate school, serving in the military, or participating in a formal service program within six months of graduation. No race/ethnicity group fell below 95%. Latinx graduates held the highest outcome rate in 2023 at 98.4%. This was followed by Asian graduates at 96.3%, African American graduates at 96%, and white graduates at 95.3%.



Institutional Plans

For nearly 150 years, Wellesley College has been providing an excellent liberal arts education to women who will make a difference in the world. This continues to be our core mission. Our challenge for the next five years is to continue to execute the College's strategic plan while deepening our focus on inclusive excellence and fostering a campus culture that supports free expression at a time of growing social and political divides.

Our strategic plan is a powerful compass that helps us focus on our four key priorities: advancing a transformative education, elevating Wellesley's role in the world, strengthening organization and governance, and building community. The principles of inclusive excellence and financial sustainability guide all of our work.

In the area of inclusive excellence, we will deepen and expand our efforts in several important ways over the next five years.

First, in the wake of the Supreme Court decision on race-conscious admissions, we will think strategically and holistically to ensure that we continue to recruit a student body that is diverse across many different dimensions. This diversity is one of the factors that makes a Wellesley education so transformative and prepares our students to be the leaders our communities and world need—in this moment, and in the future.

Our need-blind admission policy is essential to our ability to recruit a diverse class. We must continue to focus on our financial sustainability so that we can strengthen our commitment to meet the needs of all students and families. We are also considering how best to recruit our students. Our strategies include continuing our test-optional policy for the next five years and reevaluating its effectiveness; building our virtual and in-person outreach in communities where Wellesley is less known; and strengthening our relationships with community-based organizations that work with diverse groups of students, while maintaining our holistic approach to admission review.

Second, we will continue our data-informed approach to evaluating and strengthening inclusive excellence. Ten years ago we began tracking how students from different demographic groups chose their majors, and we began a concerted effort to train our STEM faculty on inclusive pedagogies and approaches. Since then, we have doubled the number of underrepresented minority students majoring in STEM subjects.

We are now exploring differences in academic performance more deeply while expanding our data-informed approach by conducting a comprehensive analysis of our cohort-based mentoring and student support programs. These include WellesleyPlus (for first-generation students), Posse, QuestBridge, the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program, the



Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, and the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program. Based on this analysis, we hope to identify key factors for success and apply these to WellesleyPlus, which is our largest and most inclusive cohort-based student success program and embedded in the recently created Office of Student Success.

As we have progressed in our work on inclusive excellence, we understand more about its multiple dimensions. Creating an environment where all students thrive academically requires fostering a culture that values free expression, models respect for diverse opinions, and encourages listening and learning across difference. This is essential both to our students' education and their development as citizens in a pluralistic democracy. Given the political and ideological polarization in our society, this can be challenging on our campus, which is why we have made it a priority.

Our multilayered approach starts with our residential curriculum, which develops our students' sense of belonging and community. Last year the student leaders of our Residential Life program—house presidents and resident assistants (RAs)—participated in a series of Constructive Dialogue Institute training modules designed to teach them to have conversations across difference. Our residential curriculum builds on this foundation with a yearlong focus on belonging and community, and on learning across difference.

Additionally, last year we piloted—and in 2024 we will launch—the Hillary Rodham Clinton Center for Citizenship, Leadership, and Democracy, which will be open to all sophomores. The HRC Center will prepare Wellesley students to wrestle with real-world challenges and develop the skills active citizenship and inclusive leadership demand. Each year, as part of the center, Wellesley will convene a summit and host events that bring together civic leaders, policymakers, and scholars focused on issues critical to our democracy.

Finally, Wellesley belongs to a consortium of colleges and universities, convened through the Institute for Citizens and Scholars, that is focused on strengthening our ability to prepare students to be active citizens in a democracy. As part of this consortium our faculty are participating in programs about how to discuss challenging issues in the classroom. This is also part of the ongoing work of our associate provost for equity and inclusion. We plan to reach out to more faculty, as well as student-facing staff, to create a culture that values free expression while upholding respect for differences.

The years of hard work by our entire community, the enduring power of our mission, and the clarity of our institutional values put Wellesley in a strong position to build on the progress and momentum evidenced in this report. At the same time, we recognize that we must remain focused on the future of the College and the role it can play in the world; the evolving needs of our students, faculty, and staff; and the strategic, forward-thinking planning required to ensure Wellesley can overcome any challenges that may lie ahead in a way that strengthens the institution as whole.





