



The Robert E. Webber

Institute for Worship Studies

2023 Institutional Research Report

As of January 22, 2024

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I. INTRODUCTION

This 2023 research report documents a number of key indicators and evaluations related to the institutional effectiveness and student learning of the Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies (IWS). The Institute publishes an annual institutional research report each Fall, with this 2023 edition being the 9th year of its publication. This annual research report provides the results of some of the most essential assessments and evaluations, which are organized around the general areas of institutional effectiveness and student learning.

II. INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The institutional effectiveness information will primarily focus on the assessments of the Strategic Plan Evaluation and the On-campus Intensive Session Evaluation. The Strategic Plan Evaluation is conducted on an annual basis, while the other two evaluations are done twice per year during the on-campus intensive sessions. Additional assessments are also included, such as some of the results of the Fall 2023 stakeholder survey.

A. Strategic Plan Evaluation

The strategic plan information identified herein is based on evaluating the 2020-2025 Strategic Roadmap. This plan is based on a connectedness among the Institute's mission, vision, goals, and objectives, with the institutional goals and objectives derived from the Institute's mission. While progress reports on the Institute's strategic plan are provided twice per year to the Board of Trustees and the Strategic Planning Committee, a more formal and comprehensive survey-based strategic plan evaluation is provided on an annual basis, known as the stakeholder survey, which was most recently done in Fall 2023. The Fall 2023 stakeholder survey consisted of 22 questions, including 1 question asking the respondent's primary role at IWS, 16 questions with a Likert Scale format, 4 open-ended items based on an analysis of the Institute's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, and 1 referral question. Survey respondents included students, alumni, faculty, staff, and board members.

Among the survey's Likert Scale questions were 15 items (Questions 2 through 16) that assessed the perceived fulfillment of the Institute's mission and goals. Based on a Likert Scale of 1-5, indicating low to high agreement with the statement, overall, respondents indicated a 4.64/5.00 perceived agreement with the Institute fulfilling its mission (Question 2). Also, survey results on the items addressing the 14 institutional goals (Questions 3 through 16) averaged a 4.59/5.00 response.

SWOT Analysis

The Fall 2023 stakeholder survey also revealed the following ranked top items among institutional Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). This was collected by gathering open-ended responses from the stakeholder survey on each SWOT area and coding the qualitative data according to common themes:

Strengths

1. Curriculum
 - Includes worship focus, practical/contextualized, balanced, relevant, academic excellence
2. Faculty
 - includes staff/leadership
3. Mission/Vision
 - includes strong biblical/historical focus overall

Weaknesses

1. Curriculum
 - Includes syllabus inaccuracies, inconsistent rigor between courses, syllabus and Canvas inaccuracies, lack of engagement with contemporary worship trends, lack of change in course offerings, flexibility and length of courses
2. Financial Concerns
 - Includes concerns for student tuition, financial aid, and institute overall
3. Lack of Visibility/Marketing

Opportunities

1. Curriculum Revision
 - Build on opportunities afforded by the pandemic to rethink both content and delivery: more online options, offer electives/tracks/certificates
2. Recruitment
 - Opportunity to expand student recruitment efforts in general
3. Produce More IWS-themed Content
 - Examples include opportunities to produce online resources, books, music, seminars, worship resources, etc.

Threats

1. Finances
 - Long-term financial sustainability
2. Cultural Changes
 - Examples include decline in church attendance, fewer full-time ministry jobs, increased government oversight
3. Division Threats
 - Threats posed by theological, denominational, and/or worship style divisions

SWOT Summary Statement: As a result of conducting this 2023 comprehensive evaluation of the institution’s strategic plan, it was determined that, as a whole, based on Likert Scale items, the institution is successfully fulfilling its strategic intentions. The prioritized SWOT Strengths include consistently fulfilling the institutional mission and goals and objectives, with particular effectiveness with curriculum strength, faculty and staff, and the institute’s mission and vision. Areas of perceived Weaknesses include needing to address concerns raised over reviewing curriculum, finances, and visibility of the institution and marketing.

B. On-Campus Intensive Session Evaluation

The data in Table 1 derives from the End of On-campus Intensive Session Evaluation survey that all students complete at the end of each on-campus intensive session week. The question directly asked in each survey was “How would you rank the community gatherings this session?” The last four sessions are shown for reference and comparison.

Table 1 - Average survey item response rating per session with 1-5 Likert Scale.

Survey Item Focus Area	June 2023	January 2023	June 2022	January 2022	June 2021
Community Gatherings Question	4.7	4.5	4.7	4.4	4.3

Summary of On-campus Intensive Session Evaluations: Due to the pandemic, the June 2021 session moved to a partially-online, partially-in-person format. During the January 2022 and June 2022, the majority of students attended in person with a question about community gatherings. The data is included here for reference. Community gatherings appear to be generally improving since the pandemic according to the data shown above.

III. STUDENT LEARNING

The Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies utilizes a variety of assessments to measure student learning, including the measurement of the degree to which courses fulfill program learning outcomes, as well as retention rates, graduation rates and spiritual formation as reported in the online Student Achievement and Institutional Effectiveness page. The measurement of fulfilling program learning outcomes is conducted at the completion of each course in the Course Evaluations in Populi, while the other assessments are determined on an annual basis. IWS has launched an Academic Assessment Plan in 2020. The plan continues to assess program objectives through the use of student evaluations, which are indirect measurements. In order to provide direct measures, faculty have provided grading rubrics for specific assignments. These will be evaluated for effectiveness in meeting program objectives for both degree programs. The intended result is a more thorough and consistent program review that will lead to continuous improvement in academics.

A. Academic Assessments

At the conclusion of each course students complete a 1-5 (low to high) Likert Scale Academic Assessment instrument, known as Course Evaluations in Populi, to measure student perception of the degree to which specific courses fulfilled designated program learning outcomes. The current program learning outcomes were first assessed in the June 2016 session. The DWS and MWS programs each have seven learning outcomes, as listed below, with the average responses for the June 2022 session also identified. June 2022 is the most recent term for which complete student data is available, since, at the time of this writing, extended schedule students have not yet completed coursework (and thus have not submitted course evaluations) for either the January 2023 or June 2023 terms.

Doctorate of Worship Studies Program Learning Outcomes & Data

DWS Program Learning Outcomes

1. (LO 1) Biblical foundation of Christian worship: The student will understand, as well as demonstrate the ability to articulate and evaluate, worship rooted in and declaring the story of the triune God as expressed in the Scriptures.
2. (LO 2) Historical development of Christian worship: The student will understand, as well as demonstrate the ability to articulate and evaluate, major trajectories in the practice of Christian worship through culture and time for use in assessing current expressions of Christian worship.
3. (LO 3) Theological reflection on Christian worship: The student will understand, as well as demonstrate the ability to articulate, a scripturally rooted, historically informed Christian theology of worship to guide the planning and evaluation of Christian worship.
4. (LO 4) Cultural reflection on Christian worship: The student will understand, as well as demonstrate the ability to articulate and evaluate, ways in which culture informs and shapes expressions of Christian worship, past and present.
5. (LO 5) Missiological reflection on Christian worship: The student will understand, as well as demonstrate the ability to articulate and evaluate, the centrality of God's mission, with respect to the Church's worship, founded on the scriptural revelation of the Triune God.
6. (LO 6) Methodological skills for studies in Christian worship: The student will demonstrate the ability to research, evaluate and articulate concepts related to Christian worship, using scholarly materials (primary and secondary) and the theological action-research methodology.
7. (LO 7) Ministerial skills in Christian worship: The student will understand, as well as demonstrate the ability to articulate, implement and evaluate, key concepts related to Christian worship in a particular setting.

Table 2 – DWS Average rating responses per session compared to last 5 sessions.¹

DWS Program Learning Outcome	Average responses for June 2022	Average responses for past 5 sessions (Jan 2020 through Jan 2022)
LO 1	4.54	4.8
LO 2	4.71	4.5
LO 3	4.66	4.7
LO 4	4.15	4.4
LO 5	4.55	4.5
LO 6	4.74	4.5
LO 7	4.64	4.6

Summary of DWS academic assessment changes: When comparing the June 2022 responses with the average responses for the past 5 sessions, 4 out of 7 DWS Learning Outcomes had minimal changes of less than 5 percent. The following 3 out of 7 Learning Outcomes reflected changes greater than 5 percent: DWS LO 1 (-5.7%), DWS LO 4 (-5.7%), DWS LO 6 (+5.3%).² These changes should be monitored in comparison to next year's Institutional Research Report.

¹ DWS 801 data from June 2022 is not included in this as no data could be pulled from Populi for that course for June 2022. DWS 801 data also includes different session span due to available data.

² Note that the following percentages were determined by first subtracting the most recent year (Average responses for June 2022) from the Average responses for past 5 sessions. Then dividing that difference by the Average responses for past 5 sessions, and finally multiplying the result by 100.

Master of Worship Studies Program Learning Outcomes & Data

Masters of Worship Studies Program Learning Outcomes

1. (LO 1) Biblical foundation of Christian worship: The student will understand, as well as demonstrate the ability to demonstrate the ability to articulate and evaluate, Biblical evidence for worship as participation in the story of the Triune God.
2. (LO 2) Historical development of Christian worship: The student will understand, as well as demonstrate the ability to articulate and evaluate, the historical development of Christian worship practices and theology.
3. (LO 3) Theological reflection on Christian worship: The student will understand, as well as demonstrate the ability to articulate and evaluate the role of theology, philosophy and epistemology in Christian formation.
4. (LO 4) Cultural reflection on Christian worship: The student will understand, as well as demonstrate the ability to articulate and evaluate, the role of contextualization in engaging God's people in the dialogue of worship.
5. (LO 5) Missiological reflection on Christian worship: The student will understand, as well as demonstrate the ability to articulate and evaluate, the centrality of God's mission with respect to the Church's worship, including its global dimensions.
6. (LO 6) Methodological skills for studies in Christian worship: The student will demonstrate the ability to research, evaluate and articulate concepts related to Christian worship, using scholarly materials, as well as apply them to the spiritual life of the believer, with an emphasis upon the planning of corporate worship.
7. (LO 7) Ministerial skills in Christian worship: The student will demonstrate the ability to integrate and evaluate MWS course objectives within a local ministry context through specific, intentional and strategically supervised efforts.

Table 3 - MWS Average rating responses per session compared to last 5 sessions.³

MWS Program Learning Outcome	Average responses for June 2022	Average responses for past 5 sessions (Jan 2020 through Jan 2022)
LO 1	4.87	4.8
LO 2	4.41	4.4
LO 3	4.65	4.4
LO 4	4.35	4.8
LO 5	4.3	4.6
LO 6	4.65	4.5
LO 7	5	4.8

Summary of MWS academic assessment changes: When comparing the June 2022 responses with the average responses for the past 5 sessions, 4 out of 7 DWS Learning Outcomes had minimal changes of less than 5 percent. The following 3 out of 7 Learning Outcomes reflected changes greater than 5 percent: MWS LO 3 (+5.7%), MWS LO 4 (-9.4%), MWS LO 5 (-6.5%).⁴ These changes should be monitored in comparison to next year's Institutional Research Report, especially MWS LO 4.

³ Note: Average responses for June 2022 include courses WR501, BIB501A and BIB 501B for the first time since recording and calculating this data.

⁴ Note that the following percentages were determined by first subtracting the most recent year (Average responses for June 2022) from the Average responses for past 5 sessions. Then dividing that difference by the Average responses for past 5 sessions, and finally multiplying the result by 100.

Summary of DWS & MWS Academic Assessment Changes

When comparing the June 2022 responses with the average responses for the past 5 sessions, 8 of the 14 Learning Outcomes had minimal changes of less than 5 percent. The following 6 Learning Outcomes reflected changes greater than 5%:

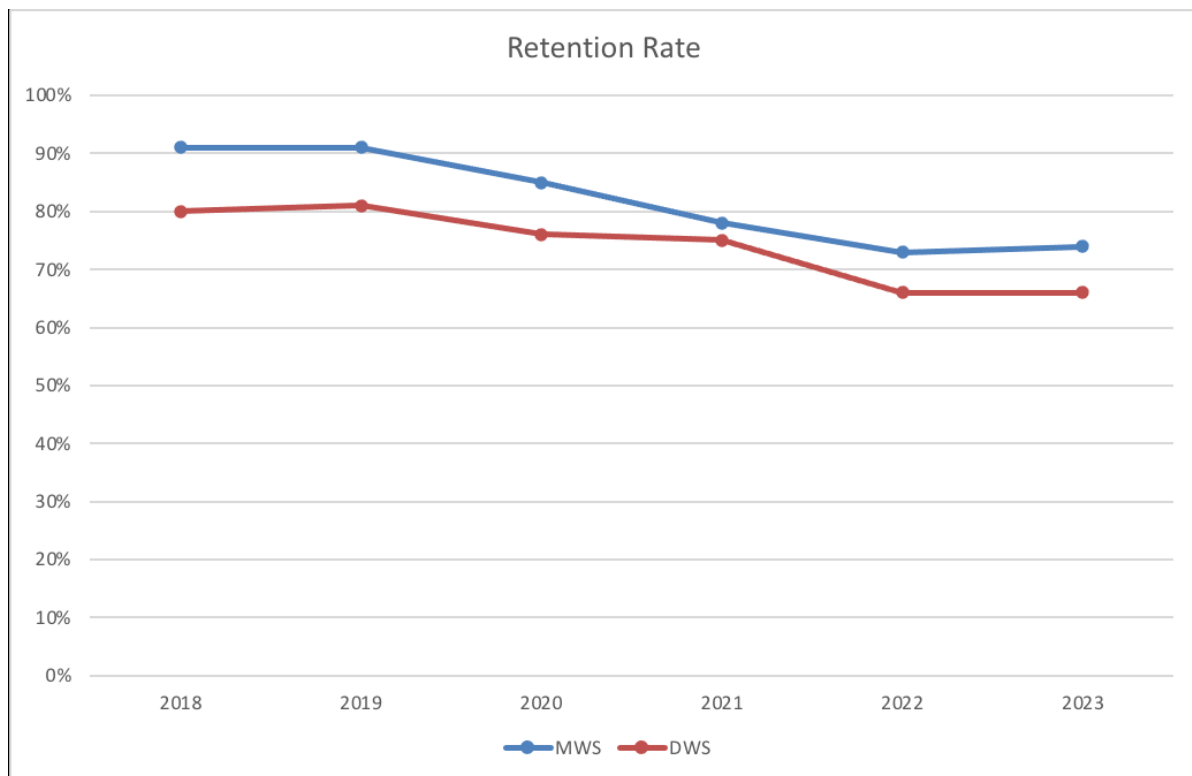
- **Negative changes:**
 - DWS LO 1 (-5.7%),
 - DWS LO 4 (-5.7%)
 - MWSLO 4 (-9.4%)
 - MWS LO 5 (-6.5%)

- **Positive changes:**
 - DWS LO 6 (+5.3%)
 - MWS LO 3 (+5.7%)

In conclusion, there were more negative changes than positive changes. The highest change overall was MWS LO 4 (-9.4%). These changes should be monitored in comparison to next year's Institutional Research Report, especially MWS LO 4, to determine if this is a trend or simply an irregular occurrence.

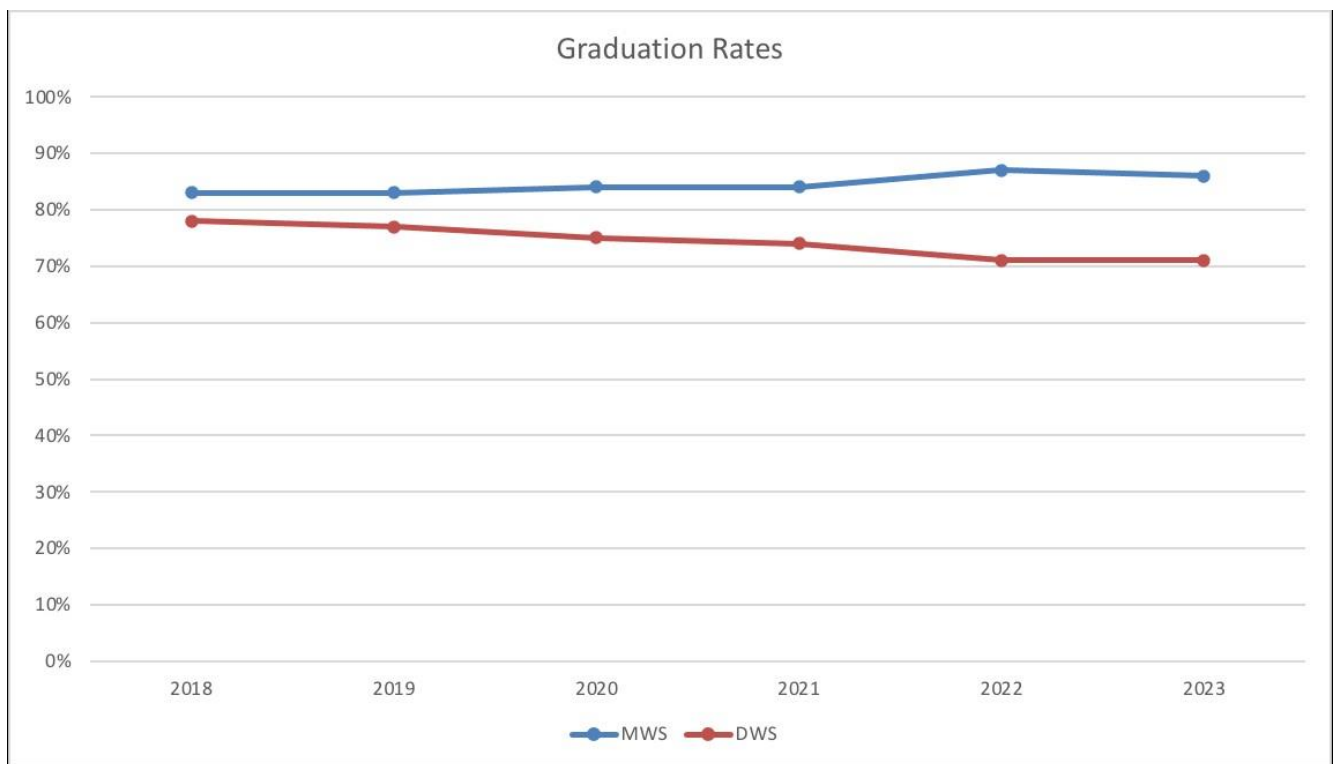
B. Retention Rates

The Institute's retention rate is defined as the percentage of new, non-visiting students who successfully complete MWS 501 or DWS 701 and return within two sessions for MWS 502 or DWS 702. The graph below highlights retention rates. The years on the x-axis represent the year that the retention rate was computed, not that year's incoming cohorts. Each data point is a sliding window of 3 years' worth of incoming cohorts. (For example, 2023 = the January 2020 to the June 2022 cohorts).



C. Graduation Rates

Over the past 10 years, 368 students enrolled in the DWS program. 71% of these students graduated with the full degree (DWS) or certificate (AGCWS). (How this is calculated: new students that began in the January 2007-June 2016 cohorts who graduated in or before June 2023.) Over the past 10 years, 164 students enrolled in the MWS program. 86% of these students graduated with the full degree (MWS) or certificate (GCWS). (How this is calculated: new students that began in the January 2009-June 2018 cohorts who graduated in or before June 2023.)



D. Spiritual Formation

In addition to measuring student learning in the traditional areas of academic discipline knowledge and understanding, retention rate and graduation rate, the extent to which the Institute supports the spiritual development and formation of students has also been assessed. Specifically, the Fall 2023 stakeholder survey assessed key spiritually related areas including the extent to which the Institute cultivates Christ-like leaders for the global church and offers a semi-monastic on-campus experience.

These factors were assessed by the following two questions on the Fall 2023 Stakeholder Survey:

1. Cultivation of Christ-like servant leaders for global church. Survey item (Question 6): IWS cultivates Christ-like servant leaders for the global church, shaped by the Divine Narrative rather than the cultural narrative. Faculty: 4.46, Staff: 4.54, Board: 4.8, Students: 4.76, Alumni: 4.67, Overall (weighted): 4.67.
2. On-campus experience: Survey item (Question 15): IWS offers an on-campus experience that is semi-monastic, designed to create a strong sense of community among the students, faculty, staff and alumni of IWS that can be continued and enhanced in the online environment. Faculty: 4.73, Staff: 4.62, Board: 5, Students: 4.65, Alumni: 4.76, Overall (weighted): 4.71.

Table 4 – Stakeholder Survey item response rating with 1-5 Likert Scale.

Survey Item	Overall (weighted) 2023	Average of Overall (weighted) responses 2020-2022
Cultivation of Christ-like Servant Leaders	4.67	4.71
On-Campus Experience	4.71	4.61

Summary of spiritual formation assessment: When comparing the survey results from Fall 2023 with the average of the previous three years' surveys, the two areas identified in the questions showed minimal changes of less than 5 percent.

IV. CONCLUSION

This report provides the Institute's stakeholders with important information primarily related to institutional effectiveness and student learning. The results will be forwarded to key administrators for their use in reviewing programs and services under their direction, with potential changes made based on their applicability and relevance. Also, the Board and the Strategic Planning Committee will receive this report.