

Institutional Report

Submitted to the

Western Senior College and University Commission

by

United States University

in support of the

2014-15 Reaccreditation Process

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Introduction

United States University (USU) is a for-profit educational institution based in Chula Vista, California. USU currently provides undergraduate and graduate programs in business, education, health science, and nursing to over 400 students. Instruction is provided in both onsite and online modalities. The current mission statement is shown here:

United States University provides professional and personal educational opportunities, with a special outreach to underserved groups. Through campus and online courses, the university offers affordable, relevant, and accessible undergraduate and graduate degree programs and certificates in a supportive, student-centered learning environment.

Institutional History

In 1997, United States University began its institutional history as InterAmerican College (IAC). Its initial focus was the provision of educational opportunities to working adults, Latinos, and educated immigrants to increase bilingual capacity in education and healthcare in Southern California. IAC was committed to providing affordable educational opportunities to its target population, a commitment continued by USU to this day.

History of Educational Offerings

IAC's first program offering was the BS in Science. A second early IAC offering was its Pasante program, an undergraduate BA in Interdisciplinary Studies. This completion program was designed to enable immigrants who had the majority of their courses from foreign institutions to earn their degree in the United States.

IAC also focused on the need for bilingually and culturally proficient educators by receiving approval from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) to offer a BA in Liberal Arts and Single/Multiple Subject Teaching Credentials. Development of these offerings was assisted by two grants from the Department of Education, the first for tuition assistance in preparing bilingual teachers (awarded in 2000), and the second to provide assistance to nontraditional students to prepare for teaching careers (2005). A grant from the Reuben H. Fleet Foundation of the San Diego Foundation assisted IAC in adding math and science concentrations to its undergraduate teaching preparation offerings. In 2011, the MA in Education was added to this set of educationally-oriented programs and credentials.

In 2005, the California Wellness Foundation awarded IAC a planning grant to develop a nursing program. An 86-credit Entry Level Masters (ELM) was approved by the California Board of Nursing (BRN) in 2008, and the Master of Science in Nursing Family Nurse Practitioner (MSN-FNP) was approved by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WSCUC¹) in 2009 and by the BRN in 2010.

Nursing and health care remain core areas in the university's educational offerings. Currently², the university offers undergraduate and graduate programs in health science (BS and MS in Health Science), nursing (BSN and RN to BSN), MSN-Administration/Education, and MSN-Family Nurse Practitioner), education (MA Education), and business (BA Management and MBA). Multiple subject and single subject Teaching Credentials are also offered.

¹ The new acronym, WSCUC, is used throughout this document, including when referencing activities occurring prior to the acronym change.

² In 2013, the university ceased enrolling new students in its BS Science, BA General Studies, BS Liberal Studies, and BS Spanish programs.

Move from nonprofit to for-profit status

In 2009, IAC received initial accreditation from WSCUC. At that time, WSCUC also approved a structural change from nonprofit status to for-profit status. This change took place in April 2010, and the school was renamed United States University. In 2010, the mission and vision of the university were combined into a single statement. In 2013, this mission was rearticulated to expand the definition of underserved groups.

At the time of conversion to USU, a new management team (president, provost, CFO, and CIO) was put in place. They immediately began an ambitious program of expansion, receiving approval for the development of new programs (BA and MS in Health Science, BS and MS in Nursing, BA Management and MBA, MA Education). Approvals were also received from WSCUC for online delivery of numerous programs. The new administration moved the original National City, CA site to a larger close-by site in Chula Vista, CA. Upon WSCUC approval, USU opened a second site in Cypress, CA. A new enterprise system was developed by the CIO, introduced to the Board of Trustees in April 2011, and implemented later that year. Named Next Generation Learning (NGL), the system was designed to provide accurate and efficient tracking of admissions, registration, course offerings, and other elements of university activity. NGL was also designed as a learning management system for distance education offerings.

The rapid expansion of site and programs placed a strain on the institution's marketing and admissions capacity; projected enrollments and revenue were not achieved in 2011 or 2012. As the NGL system did not include complete financial reporting, a different third-party system was used. However, that system was not integrated with NGL and the reporting of financial data was not accurate. By late 2011, the university found itself in fiscal difficulty.

Administrative Reorganization

In early 2012, the Board of Trustees, recognizing the university's precarious financial position, initiated a series of actions to fully identify and address the issues. It was quickly determined that USU was in dreadful condition and knew that the assemblage of a leadership team was time critical. An established, systematic approach to guide effective administration and management was non-existent. There was little to no transparency related to governance with sparse or no record of board actions or committee activities. It seemed the university had been run like a factitious family enterprise rather than an institution of higher education. Further, there seemed to be little attention paid to educational effectiveness. The university proceeded to engage the services of an experienced postsecondary financial professional. With over 30 years of financial management leadership, Mr. Timothy Fischer was well equipped to tackle the problems USU was facing.

Mr. Fischer analyzed the issues facing USU and implemented activities which improved USU's capacity for accurate and timely fiscal analysis. He was appointed interim CFO, and following the resignation of the president and the provost was appointed interim president. Upon completion of a thorough analysis of all aspects of university activities, he presented the Board of Trustees with a 90-day plan for improvement in June 2012. Mr. Fischer joined the Board of Trustees in October of 2012.

Also early in 2012, the Board of Managers of USU sought additional financial sponsorship to ensure the stability of the institution and its ability to fulfill its mission. The search led to the appointment of Dr. Oksana Malysheva, President and CEO of Linden Education Partners, to the Board of Managers and election to the Board of Trustees.

A search for the USU President concluded in July 2012 with the appointment of Timothy Cole, who took office on July 16. Mr. Cole brought to the university more than 10 years' experience in higher education administration, including both national and regional accreditation, and online

teaching experience. His extensive experience as a President/Chief Executive Officer of public corporations included responsibilities similar in complexity and precision to those existing in higher education.

Following conversations with staff and board members as well a thorough review of WSCUC Standards and Criteria for Review (CFR) President Cole's first two weeks were spent reflecting on the major deficiencies that were so evident and visible. The picture of the university's functioning that President Cole presented to the board at its August 2012 meeting was a dismal one indeed. He consolidated most major positions on the Chula Vista campus for greater efficiency in administration. The president then began to staff major administrative positions with highly qualified individuals averaging decades of experience, a portion of which were troubled institutions.

From the myriad of critical problems, each requiring attention, the immediate priorities were fiscal, regulatory and enrollment issues. Thus, the first hire was a Vice President of Compliance and Regulatory Affairs (Ms. Robyn Burrell) with over 20 years' experience in financial aid activities in for-profit educational settings. Ms. Burrell immediately began to address an unfortunate legacy of financial aid irregularities, a task which required audit of more than 200 financial aid files. She implemented new systems and processes which have resulted in full compliance with all federal financial aid requirements; no issues have arisen, and none are expected.

Quickly, thereafter, President Cole hired as Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Mr. Douglas Jenson, who brought to the position more than 20 years' experience in accounting, audits, and financial management, most recently in for-profit educational institutions. Mr. Jenson began to develop a 2013 budget, based on limited available enrollment data and the work of the new VP Admissions (Ms. Phyllis Hauptfeld) and VP Marketing (Ms. Jennifer Martinez), each with more than 10 years' experience in their respective areas. A marketing plan was created (as a plan had not been included in the inherited Master Plan), admissions counselors' hired, and inquiry-application-enrollment tracking of new students was established, with resulting immediate increases in new enrollment.

The reconstitution of the USU Leadership Team was completed when Dr. Steven Stargardter took the position of Provost in the first month of 2013. The absence of an institutional culture focused on student learning, program review and the measurement of educational effectiveness needed to be addressed immediately. Dr. Stargardter's assessment, after due reflection, was that USU was an institution in disarray and the upward climb would be steep and arduous. Dr. Stargardter brought to the university over 30 years' experience in higher education, teaching and administration, having served as a faculty member, a dean, an academic vice president, and university president in his career, including extensive experience in regional accreditation. Within two weeks of his arrival, the university was informed of a Special Visit scheduled by WSCUC for April, 2013. Also serving as the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO), the majority of the new Provost's efforts from January to March were focused on familiarizing himself with the status of the academy and making immediately required changes (e.g., hiring of a College of Business Dean), while simultaneously developing the required report for the Special Visit.

Vitae of the CEO, CFO, Provost, and vice-presidents of admissions³ and marketing are provided in appendix AR-1. Additional accomplishments of these administrators in their first two years are documented in section CFR 3.6.

³ The current vice-president of admissions has recently tendered her resignation and will not be with the university at the time of the offsite review. The university will seek a similarly qualified individual to fill this position. Currently an interim director of admissions is being trained to continue the duties of this position.

In the most recent four years of its 20-year history, the institution has undergone four major changes. The first was the 2010 change from a nonprofit college to a for-profit university. The second was the large number of new programs and modalities approved between 2010 and 2011⁴. The third was the complete change in university leadership in mid to 2012 to early 2013. The fourth is the recent change of ownership from Significant Ventures to Linden Education Partners.

Institutional History with Accreditation Agency

United States University began its educational history as the private, nonprofit InterAmerican College and enrolled its first students in 1997. IAC was granted Eligibility to seek Candidacy for Accreditation by WSCUC in 1999. Candidacy was denied following a comprehensive visit in 2002, but Eligibility was continued. Candidacy was granted in 2005, following Capacity and Preparatory (CPR) and Educational Effectiveness (EE) reviews. Following a scheduled Special Visit in 2007, IAC was placed on warning as a result of its precarious fiscal position and its need to establish data-driven planning and decision-making, as well as the need to provide evidence of academic rigor, student learning assessment, and program review.

Prior to this Special Visit, in conversation with IAC President Reymundo Marin (currently an interested member of the Board of Trustees), WSCUC Executive Director Ralph Wolff indicated that IAC's financial resources did not indicate sufficient stability for accreditation and discussed the possibility of conversion from a nonprofit to a for-profit institution. Executive Director Wolff was instrumental in introducing IAC to Dr. Michael Clifford of Significant Ventures, LLC (SV).

Warning was continued following the 2008 CPR visit, with lack of compliance with Standards 2 (core educational functions), 3 (resources and structures assuring sustainability) and 4 (commitment to learning and improvement) cited as issues. The EE visit for initial accreditation was scheduled for spring 2009. Discussions with SV led to the submission of a Substantive Change Proposal for Change of Ownership. The required visit for this change was combined with the EE visit and took place in April 2009. At its June 2009 meeting, the WSCUC Commission removed the warning, granted initial accreditation, and approved the structural proposal for change in ownership and conversion from a nonprofit to a for-profit institution. The conversion was completed in December 2009.

The institution name was changed from InterAmerican College to United States University. A structural visit was completed in spring 2010 and a Special Visit was conducted in fall 2010. An Interim Report was submitted to WSCUC in March 2012. The action letter subsequent to review of this report mandated a progress report to be provided in April 2013.

On January 29 2013, USU was informed in a letter from WSCUC liaison Dr. Barbara Gross Davis that the progress report scheduled for April 2013 had been changed to a Special Visit. The primary focus of the visit was described as the impact of changes in USU leadership and the capital infusion resulting from a recent financial transaction. Issues of third-party comments and a signed complaint also comprised elements to be reviewed in this Special Visit. In February and early March, administration, faculty, and staff, assisted by an independent consultant, embarked on a major effort to create a self-study and provide required documentation of progress in re-establishing compliance with all accreditation standards. Based on the self-study and visit, USU was placed on probation.

The most recent interaction with WSCUC is related to a substantive change proposal requesting approval for a change of ownership from SV to Linden Education Partners. Following

⁴ Of the eight degree programs in which USU is currently enrolling students, seven were approved between 2010 and 2011. Five of the seven were approved for both onsite and distance education, and approval was granted for a sixth distance education offering in 2013.

proposal review and the required site visit, the evaluation team recommended approval of the change. This recommendation was confirmed by the WSCUC Commission at its June 2014 meeting. The Department of Education (ED) has been notified of this approval and the university has received temporary ED approval, pending review of the full submission.

[Appendix I-A](#) contains recent documents related to the accreditation history of USU as summarized above. Included in this appendix are the April 2013 and May 2014 evaluating team reports and the 2013 and 2014 Commission action letters. [Appendix I-B](#) provides a timeline table of the academic, institutional, and governance changes in the history of the university.

Documents required as supplemental to this self-study are included in the following appendices: Self-Review under the Standards and the Federal Compliance Checklist are included as [appendix I-C](#); the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators is included as [appendix I-D](#); and the Compliance Checklist is included as [appendix 1.7-A](#).

Document Preparation and Organization

The process of composing this self-study began in August 2013 with a Self-Review under the Standards. Results of this review informed both efforts at achieving compliance with all accreditation Standards and Criteria for Review and the short-term strategic planning process, thus aligning all major university activities toward a single goal.

This document is the result of collaboration among various administrative leaders and constituents of the university. Input from faculty, deans, and administrators provided data regarding processes and evidence of CFR compliance prior to the circulation of the initial draft. Initial and revised drafts were circulated among academic and administrative leadership (including deans, core faculty, and board members); suggested revisions and additional evidence were incorporated. Constituents with regional accreditation experience (including members of the Board of Trustees) reviewed the document for demonstration of compliance with standards and CFRs, and provided suggestions to guide activity between the submission of this report and the April 2015 site visit. The penultimate draft was made available to the university community on the website, with comments solicited through an anonymous survey. The final draft was reviewed for accuracy and completeness prior to submission.

The university was advised by its accreditation liaison, Dr. Barbara Gross Davis, that this document should not take the form of the newly developed 2013 components, but rather address each Criterion for Review separately and comprehensively. Each Standard and CFR is addressed separately in this document. Standards 2 and 3 sections begin with a description of the processes by which issues were examined and prioritized. Each Standard and related CFR section concludes with a summary indicating progress made and activities underway. The self-study summary aligns university activity with the recommendations of the April 2013 and May 1, 2014 evaluation teams and the corresponding Commission action letter.

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

Institutional Purposes

1.1 The institution's formally approved statements of purpose are appropriate for an institution of higher education and clearly define its essential values and character and ways in which it contributes to the public good.

Upon WSCUC recommendation, the United States University President's Leadership Team reviewed the mission statement approved in 2010 by the Board of Trustees and crafted a revised statement. The original mission statement and the suggested revision were included in a survey of all board members, staff, core faculty, and adjunct faculty. The data indicated that 68% of 67

respondents approved the revised statement “quite a bit” or “very much.” Numerous suggestions were received from the community regarding specific wordings and inclusion/exclusion of certain elements.

These suggestions were reviewed and, on the basis of community comment, a second revision was crafted. This second revision was sent to all USU board members, staff, and faculty (both core and adjunct) in a second survey, resulting in an increased approval (71% of 58 respondents) and additional suggestions for rewording. This second set of community suggestions was reviewed and additional editorial changes were made. The final revision was approved by the USU Board of Trustees at its October 2013 meeting.

In neither survey did any constituents express any extreme negative response to the proposed revision(s). Several of the comments received in the course of this two-survey communication with the USU community related not to the mission statement itself, but expressed appreciation for the process and involvement of all community members in this major revision. The original mission statement, subsequent revisions based on community comment, and the final revision of the statement are shown in [appendix 1.1](#).

In keeping with CFR 4.7, the wording of this statement reflects changes in the higher education environment, broadening the university’s target population to include changes in the composition of underserved groups and making more explicit its expanded focus on distance learning.

The rearticulated mission statement and its earlier revisions were made available to USU’s WSCUC staff liaison Dr. Barbara Gross Davis who, in a telephone conversation with ALO Dr. Stargardter, indicated she did not think this revision required a substantive change proposal. The original and revised statements were also discussed at a fall 2013 meeting among Dr. Gross Davis, WSCUC President Dr. Petisko, and USU President Cole. It was again determined that the revision did not require submission of a substantive change proposal.

1.2 Educational objectives are widely recognized throughout the institution, are consistent with stated purposes, and are demonstrably achieved. The institution regularly generates, evaluates, and makes public data about student achievement, including measures of retention and graduation, and evidence of student learning outcomes.

It is important to reiterate the lack of an institutional orientation to educational objectives or the collection and evaluation of data about student achievement, thus the change to an environment where Faculty and academic administrators cooperated in a review and revision of Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and alignment of Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) with PLOs/ILOs is a significant one. The revisions were approved by the Academic Committee of the Faculty Senate. A five-year cycle of program review and learning outcome assessment was also developed and approved. The revised ILOs and PLOs were included in the 2014 Catalog revision and are aggregated here in [Appendix 1.2-A](#). The program review and learning outcome cycles are shown in [Appendix 1.2-B](#). Please see CFR 2.7 for information about completed program reviews.

In accordance with the accreditation requirement that a minimum of one core competency be assessed in the first review under the new Standards, USU chose critical thinking as the focus of 2014 assessment. Please see CFRs 2.4 and 2.6 for a description of the assessment process and results. Learning outcomes aligned with information literacy and quantitative reasoning are scheduled for assessment in 2015.

Retention and graduation data are made available on USU’s website on the Gainful Employment pages accompanying each program description. Please see CFRs 2.7 and 2.10 for information about retention and graduation data, including benchmark comparisons.

Integrity and Transparency

1.3 The institution publicly states its commitment to academic freedom for faculty, staff, and students, and acts accordingly. This commitment affirms that those in the academy are free to share their convictions and responsible conclusions with their colleagues and students in their teaching and writing.

The university is committed to academic freedom for all constituents. USU's Academic Freedom Policy is included in both the USU Faculty Handbook ([appendix 1.3](#)) and the 2014 catalog (page 29). The Faculty Handbook states that "the right to academic freedom is the right of every faculty member." The handbook also contains information on the process by which a faculty member can initiate an investigation of an alleged violation

1.4 Consistent with its purposes and character, the institution demonstrates an appropriate response to the increasing diversity in society through its policies, its educational and co-curricular programs, its hiring and admissions criteria, and its administrative and organizational practices.

Diversity is one of the core values of United States University and is exhibited in all elements of university activity. Diversity is addressed in Institutional Learning Outcomes (catalog, page 10) and attention to diversity is included in all Program Learning Outcomes.

USU's commitment to diversity is articulated on page 14 of the current catalog. The majority of USU's core faculty, adjunct faculty, and academic administrators are from underrepresented groups.

Coursework at both the undergraduate and graduate level also directly address diversity. All undergraduate students are offered COM105 – Intercultural Communication, and additional diversity-related courses are available in the program offerings. For example, the BS Health Science degree requires students to complete BHE308 – Cultural Competence in Health Care, and the MS Health Science requires MS504 – Cultural and Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Health.

[Appendix 1.4](#) provides additional information documenting the university's commitment to diversity. The appendix lists each program's diversity-related learning outcome and coursework addressing diversity. This appendix also includes comparisons of current faculty ethnicity and gender with known ethnicity and gender information for the most recent student enrollment term (summer II) and 2010-13 graduates of currently offered programs. Explanations for the variances are provided.

In student course evaluations, students are asked to rate the degree to which the instructor encouraged diverse points of view. In the most recent available data (summer I evaluations), 77% of the 97 respondents replied "almost always" and another 13% responded "most of the time," with an average rating of 4.42 on a scale of 1-5.

In early 2013, complaints alleging discrimination and harassment were lodged against the university. These complaints were externally investigated and found to be without merit. One of the purposes of the April 2013 Special Visit was noted to be complaints alleging discrimination and harassment lodged against the university through the WSCUC complaint process, to which the university responded fully in the April 2013 self-study. As complaints were not addressed in either the April 2013 team report or the July 2013 action letter, the university assumes that evidence provided regarding the dismissal of these complaints was accepted.

Any complaint by staff, faculty or students is taken seriously and appropriate attention is applied to the situation so that an amicable outcome is reached. The university encourages complaints to be resolved at the lowest level possible, but procedures are in place in the event resolution is not reached.

Between August 2012 and July 2014 there were 21 complaints submitted through the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH). One individual filed 90% (19 of 21) of these complaints following resignation. One additional complaint was documented by a demand letter and subsequent ongoing legal action. USU categorically denies all allegations made. The original complaints and all correspondence among organizations related to the complaints will be available for review at the time of the visit.

1.5 Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, or religious organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose and operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.

USU is a for-profit institution with both a Board of Trustees (BoT) and a Board of Managers (BoM). Issues of the areas of responsibility of each and the latter's degree of influence on the former were raised in the April 2013 Site Visit Report and related Commission Action Letter. The work of reconstituting a board comprised of individuals with depth and breadth in higher education began in earnest. As noted in the current Board Bylaws: "The Board of Managers does not compromise the responsibilities of the Board of Trustees in its oversight over the university. Other than those provided in these Bylaws, there are no powers reserved for the Board of Managers." ([Appendix 1.5, section 2.1](#)). The interactions between the ownership and governance entities are free from interests that could compromise the institution's mission. The responsibilities of the Board of Trustees are described in section 1.2 of the Bylaws.

As included in the USU Board Bylaws ([Appendix 1.5, section 2.2](#)), the Board of Managers has responsibility for sale/merger of USU or its assets, issuing of equity securities, leases of real estate transactions, and distribution of surpluses or profits. In its budget approval process, the BoM is required to give priority to sustaining and enhancing the educational mission and academic infrastructure of USU to insure effective student learning and student success.

The Board of Trustees is currently composed of three interested and twelve independent members. Independent members comprise the majority of members on each standing committee. A full description of the process by which this reorganization took place is included in the Standard 3 introductory material. In a recent Board of Trustees self-evaluation, responses indicated both agreement with and awareness of the board's responsibility for academic matters, including monitoring educational effectiveness.

Board Bylaws were revised in 2013. Prior to approval by the Board of Trustees, Bylaws were submitted to WSCUC general counsel for review to assure compliance with the WSCUC Policy on Independent Governing Boards. The university received verbal assurance from WSCUC staff that the revised Bylaws ([appendix 1.5](#)) were consistent with this policy. The university Board of Trustees approved the revised Bylaws at its January 2014 meeting. Though there is more to accomplish, the evidence supports the quick pace of transformation of the board, and the process is ongoing.

1.6 The institution truthfully represents its academic goals, programs, services, and costs to students and to the larger public. The institution demonstrates that its academic programs can be completed in a timely fashion. The institution treats students fairly and equitably through established policies and procedures addressing student conduct, grievances, human subjects in research, disability, and financial matters, including refunds and financial aid.

USU's website (<http://www.usuniversity.edu/>) and catalog ([appendix 1.6](#)) provide students and the public with accurate and comprehensive information. Policies and procedures related to students, including information on refunds and financial aid, are provided in the 2014 catalog, which is available online.

Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) are shown on page 10 of the 2014 catalog. Online and catalog program descriptions include Program Learning Outcomes. Each online program description includes a “Gainful Employment Disclosure” which provides information on program costs and completion information. As the majority of USU programs began in 2011 and many USU students are not enrolled full-time, completion information is not available for all programs. As students graduate from programs, the information provided online will be updated.

1.7 The institution exhibits integrity and transparency in its operations, as demonstrated by the adoption and implementation of appropriate policies and procedures, sound business practices, timely and fair responses to complaints and grievances, and regular evaluation of its performance in these areas. The institution's finances are regularly audited by qualified independent auditors.

In response to WSCUC recommendations, USU undertook a review of all policies and procedures and updated/revised all material in accordance with recommendations. The Compliance Checklist ([appendix 1.7-A](#)) indicates where all information can be found. The recently revised Employee Handbook ([appendix 1.7-B](#)), available electronically to all university employees, provides information on all policies, as well as procedures for addressing complaints and grievances.

USU has also implemented a revised budget development policy, incorporating data from programs and admissions to assure evidence-based enrollment and revenue projections. Financial reports are reviewed monthly by the Leadership Team, by the Board Finance Committee at each of its meetings, and presented to the full board for review at each meeting. Enrollment and revenue projections are tracked by term by program, college, and non-program revenue source. [Appendix 1.7-C](#) includes the most recent board financial and enrollment presentations. USU's finances are audited annually by a qualified independent auditing firm and reviewed by the Board Audit Committee. USU operates on a calendar year. The 2013 audit is included as [appendix 1.7](#).

1.8 The institution is committed to honest and open communication with the Accrediting Commission; to undertaking the accreditation review process with seriousness and candor; to informing the Commission promptly of any matter that could materially affect the accreditation status of the institution; and to abiding by Commission policies and procedures, including all substantive change policies.

USU has been and will continue to be committed to honest and open communication with the accrediting commission. The ALO has consistently kept WSCUC informed of any activity at USU which could materially affect the institution's accreditation status. Some recent examples are provided here:

1. When USU revised its Mission Statement, the ALO provided the revision and the original statement to the institution's WSCUC liaison for a determination of whether the revision constituted change sufficient to warrant a substantive change proposal. The question was also raised at a meeting among the USU President and the WSCUC President and staff liaison. In both cases university representatives were informed that a substantive change proposal was not required.
2. As noted earlier, revised Board Bylaws were submitted to the university's WSCUC liaison for review by accreditor's general counsel to assure compliance with the Policy on Independent Governing Boards.
3. Prior to submitting a substantive change proposal for change of ownership, the proposed new owner and USU staff members participated in a preliminary meeting with WSCUC and its liaison to obtain direction regarding the process and met all deadlines for the proposal submission and review.

Standard I Summary

As recommended by the July 2013 action letter, USU undertook a comprehensive review of its mission statement (1.1), soliciting comment from all staff, faculty (core and adjunct) and members of the Board of Trustees. A re-articulation of the mission statement was approved by the board in October 2013. Prior to approval, the statement was provided to WSCUC representatives to assure that a substantive change proposal was not required (1.8).

The university commitment to diversity (1.4) is clearly documented in its catalog, and in its nondiscrimination policies which are included in the Faculty and Employee Handbooks. The ethnic diversity of the university's staff and faculty is further evidence of its commitment in this area. Both Institutional and Program Learning Outcomes include at least one diversity-focused objective. The university commitment to academic freedom (1.3) is publicly articulated in its catalog and documented in the Faculty Handbook.

The university Board of Trustees (1.5) has undergone significant changes, with a new Board President and seven additional new independent members since the April 2013 visit. The percentage of independent board members has increased. Revised Bylaws were submitted to WSCUC for legal review to assure conformity with accreditor policy. These revised Bylaws distinguish between the roles of the Board of Trustees and the Board of Managers and include commitment to the educational purposes of the university. Four board committees meet regularly and report to the full board at each of its quarterly meetings. Evaluation procedures for the president have been developed as well as a Statement on Trustee Responsibility and Governance. Since April 2013, the board has engaged in a self-evaluation and two workshops led by a consultant from the Association of Governing Boards (AGB). The recent change of ownership was accomplished with consultation with WSCUC on all aspects of the process (1.8).

All policies and procedures have been reviewed, revised, and made available to all staff and faculty through the updated Employee and Faculty Handbooks (1.7). University finances are regularly monitored by the Leadership Team and the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees, and undergo annual independent audits (1.7)

Institutional, Program, and Course Learning Outcomes have been reviewed and revised, under the direction of the Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate (1.2) Institutional Learning Outcomes and Program Learning Outcomes are available online and in the university catalog. Course Learning Outcomes are included in program curriculum maps and in each course syllabus. Each program description on the website includes gainful employment information, and retention/graduation data as available are included here. A five-year cycle of program review has been developed, with the first reviews available in spring 2015.

The university is committed to building on the improvements made since the April 2013 site visit, with particular attention to continuous implementation of program review and learning outcome assessment and making results available to the public.

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

In his first several weeks as provost (January, 2013) Dr. Stargardter reviewed the status of the university's academic offerings and staff, finding numerous issues to be addressed. Chief among these were the lack of college administration and faculty participation in decision-making, insufficient core faculty and overreliance on adjuncts, lack of rigor in coursework (with few textbooks assigned or examinations administered), absence of a comprehensive program review system or outcome assessment activity, and a learning management system which was both problematic in its navigation capacity and insufficient to provide the variety of learning experiences

required for quality distance learning (only texts could be posted, no video capacity, numerous broken links, etc.) Institutional and academic data were virtually nonexistent, with no program-level data easily available. (The enterprise system reports utilized modality and site [online, Chula Vista, Cypress] as the major unit of analysis.) He immediately set about developing collegial relationships with college deans and faculty, actively soliciting their participation in decision-making, while simultaneously developing the self-study required for the special visit of which he was notified in late January. Following the April site visit team report and the July action letter, he devoted all his time to improving the quality of academic offerings, assisted by a revitalized and committed academic administration and faculty. This section describes some of the results of their efforts.

Teaching and Learning

2.1 The institution's educational programs are appropriate in content, Standards of performance, rigor, and nomenclature for the degree level awarded, regardless of mode of delivery. They are staffed by sufficient numbers of faculty qualified for the type and level of curriculum offered.

USU offers programs through four colleges: Arts & Science (BS Health Science and MS Health Science), Business (BA Management and MBA), Education (MA-Education and Teaching Credential), and Nursing (ELM/ABSN, BSN, MSN-Administration/ Education, and MSN-Family Nurse Practitioner). Summer II 2014 enrollment by program and modality is shown here:

<i>Program</i>	<i>Enrolled</i>	<i>Modality</i>	<i>Faculty</i>
BA Management	75	Online	1 full-time
BS Health Science	112	Online	1 full-time
BS Nursing (ELM/ABSN track)	33	Onsite	1 full-time
BS Nursing (RN to BSN track)	25	Online	1 full-time
MA Education	14	Online	1 part-time
MBA	11	Online	1 part-time
MS Health Science	12	Online	1 part-time
MSN (Administration/Education tracks)	26	Online	1 full-time
MSN (Family Nurse Practitioner track)	58	Onsite	1 full-time

Each of the three undergraduate and four graduate programs offered at USU was designed in terms of content and nomenclature to conform to industry standards. The ABSN and MSN-FNP nursing programs conform to standards set by the California Board of Nursing in content, performance and faculty. The undergraduate and graduate health science programs were developed in conformity with standards of the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing. The MA Education program curriculum and learning outcomes were developed in accordance with standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Program Learning Outcomes and curriculum requirements in the BA Management and MBA programs were revised to conform more closely to standards set by the International Assembly for College Business Education (IACBE).

Each program is staffed with a core faculty member, full-time for those programs with enrollments sufficient to warrant a full-time core, and part-time for programs with low enrollment. As program enrollment increases, core faculty will increase correspondingly. College deans are also qualified to teach in the programs they supervise and at times provide instruction in certain courses.

The university is aware of this CFR guideline of a full-time faculty member for each graduate program. However, the three graduate programs with part-time core faculty (MBA, MSHS, MAED) currently have enrollments (<15) that cannot support a full-time faculty. Core faculty in associated undergraduate programs work collaboratively with graduate faculty to assure that students in these programs receive the highest quality of education and service. Undergraduate core faculty all

possess terminal degrees in their areas of expertise and are qualified to provide such assistance. Enrollment in these programs is carefully tracked; small graduate programs will be the initial focus of a program viability analysis to be undertaken in 2015. When a graduate program enrollment approaches 30 students, the core faculty position will be expanded to a full-time position.

Core faculty are supplemented by a cadre of over 70 active adjuncts. Recently college deans reviewed the qualifications of all adjunct faculty and removed from active status those faculty whose qualifications and degrees were unsuited to the courses and levels taught, or reassigned qualified adjuncts to courses appropriate to their experience and training. [Appendix 2.1](#) provides detail regarding core and adjunct faculty composition and degree level.

The provost believes that those with expertise in the particular disciplines should appoint adjunct faculty. At USU, this task falls within the roles and responsibilities of the college deans. The Human Resources Department has procedures for hiring adjunct faculty. Resumes are screened for qualifications, an application process is undertaken, and qualified candidates are forwarded to the appropriate college dean, after which an interview process ensues. Care is taken to match the qualifications and educational/professional experience of the adjunct in question with the description and outcomes of the course in question. If the results of the interview are positive, a hiring recommendation is presented to the provost. Some examples of adjunct qualifications and assignments are described below. (See [appendix 2.2](#) for full vitae for these adjunct faculty members.)

- Dr. Jack Nassar holds a DBA and MBA in Strategic Management, and has eight years of onsite and online teaching and course development experience, in addition to an ongoing consulting and coaching practice. He has been hired to teach qualitative management-related coursework in both the undergraduate and graduate business programs (BA Management and MBA).
- Dr. Sunil K. Dixit is an adjunct faculty member teaching finance-related courses in the BAM and MBA programs. His doctoral work included research in finance, accounting, auditing, law, and management, and he holds the MBA in finance. He has broad national and international professional experience in a wide range of financial areas.
- Dr. Goran Trajkovski has 12 years of experience in developing and providing undergraduate and graduate distance education courses with an emphasis on information technology. He holds a doctorate in Technical Science, and MSc in Mathematics and Computer Sciences, and a BSc in Applied Informatics. He has a wide range of current and prior professional academic and nonacademic experience and has published widely in the field. Dr. Trajkovski is currently teaching Computer Literacy in the general education curriculum and Health Informatics in the BS Health Sciences program.
- Dr. Judith Mairs-Levy holds a doctorate in Health Education and a Master of Public Health degree. Her professional experience includes serving as a public health research analyst and consultant and health education counseling. Dr. Mairs-Levy is currently teaching Health through the Lifespan in the MS Health Sciences program.

Adjunct course loads are reviewed by term to assure that no adjunct faculty is overburdened with teaching requirements. No adjunct faculty member may teach more than three courses in any single term; the majority teach one or two courses. Adjunct faculty reviews include, but are not limited to, evaluation instruments provided to the students at the conclusion of each course.

Adjunct faculty are involved in academic administration. The president of the Faculty Senate is an adjunct faculty member. The Academic Committee of the Faculty Senate, while chaired by a core faculty member, includes adjuncts among its members. Adjuncts participate in developing processes for assessment and in conducting assessment of program learning outcomes. Stipends are available for adjunct faculty participating in governance activities.

College deans have a variety of processes for assuring inclusions of adjunct faculty in decision-making processes. The dean of the College of Business communicates frequently with adjuncts, both individually and collectively, updating them on business programs and USU activity. The deans also solicits ideas for program improvement (curricula, textbooks, learning outcomes, academic rigor, etc.), and has found business college faculty to be both accessible and very willing to participate in these conversations. The business dean has also set up a Google Group to communicate with both adjunct and core faculty. All core and adjunct faculty are members. The purpose of the group is to share news, questions, concerns ideas. Other college deans utilize similar methods of maintaining contact with adjunct faculty.

The focus in late 2013 and 2014 has been on implementing the core faculty staffing plan, developing a faculty senate and senate committees to undertake the work of program review and learning outcome assessment, and developing professional development opportunities for both core and adjunct faculty. In late 2014 and 2015 accomplishments in these areas will be supplemented by creating policies describing the roles and responsibilities of adjunct faculty in these areas, including a compensation plan for participation in academic administrative and assessment activities.

2.2 All degrees—undergraduate and graduate—awarded by the institution are clearly defined in terms of entry-level requirements and levels of student achievement necessary for graduation that represent more than simply an accumulation of courses or credits. The institution has both a coherent philosophy, expressive of its mission, which guides the meaning of its degrees and processes that ensure the quality and integrity of its degrees.

Admission requirements are provided in the course catalog for all programs. Graduate programs require a prior undergraduate degree relevant to the graduate content area or completion of additional prerequisites for students whose undergraduate degrees are in other areas.

All degree programs (undergraduate and graduate) conclude with a capstone course which requires students to synthesize and integrate knowledge and skills acquired in their educational experience. This integration is incorporated throughout other courses in the program as well. For example, in the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) program, students complete NURS360/360L, which “provides an opportunity for the nurse intern to incorporate all previous learning and clinical experiences and apply those in selected clinical settings.”

The university’s Institutional Learning Outcomes are a reflection of its mission and values, and Program Learning Outcomes align with the institution’s goals for student learning. Institutional Learning Outcomes are also aligned with WSCUC core competencies and Program and Course Learning Outcomes are aligned with university ILOs, providing a seamless alignment of USU’s educational activities with both its own philosophy and accreditation requirements. Evaluation of student achievement of course objectives is a part of each course requirement (see section 2.7 for additional information in this area.)

Consistent with its mission, programs in nursing and health science are the cornerstone of university offerings; these areas have been shown to be the most productive employment areas in the present economic climate. The university also provides educational opportunities in business and management, as such knowledge is critical in all organizational activity. Teaching credentials and a graduate education degree meet the need for qualified education professionals, similarly meeting the spirit of the university mission.

In its graduate programs, the university offers education and administration foci to provide the specialized knowledge required for workplace success. The university has developed a series of vocationally-related credentials and certificates through its new Division of Extended Education to serve the needs of those in its mission-centered target populations who would benefit from certificate offerings.

An example of interaction between institutional philosophy and educational activities is the recently developed Certificate in Global Health. USU, in collaboration with Pacific State Medical University, Vladivostok Russia, will offer four courses online in Global Health, Health Literacy, Health Communication and Inter-professional Education. Courses are to be taught by a multi-national faculty whose ultimate goal is achieving equity in health for all people worldwide.

2.2a Baccalaureate programs engage students in an integrated course of study of sufficient breadth and depth to prepare them for work, citizenship, and life-long learning. These programs ensure the development of core competencies including, but not limited to, written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking. In addition, baccalaureate programs actively foster creativity, innovation, an appreciation for diversity, ethical and civic responsibility, civic engagement, and the ability to work with others. Baccalaureate programs also ensure breadth for all students in cultural and aesthetic, social and political, and scientific and technical knowledge expected of educated persons. Undergraduate degrees include significant in-depth study in a given area of knowledge (typically described in terms of a program or major)

United States University offers three undergraduate programs: BS Nursing (RN to BSN), BS Health Science (BSHS), and BA Management (BAM). All include general education coursework addressing breadth requirements and core competencies as noted above. Students beginning their undergraduate experience at the university are required to complete general education requirements in the following areas: Communication, Critical Thinking, Mathematics/Science, Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences, Cultural Studies, History, Information/Computer Literacy, and International Studies. [Appendix 2.2a-A](#) aligns general education courses with Institutional Learning Outcomes and these content areas. Course descriptions are available in the university catalog. Transfer student transcripts are reviewed to assure that transferred coursework meets the breadth requirements of the programs.

General Education courses have their own set of Program Learning Outcomes, which are aligned with the Institutional Learning Outcomes and the core competencies noted in this CFR. These learning outcomes and their alignment are shown in [appendix 1.2-A](#). General Education learning outcomes assessment is included in the learning outcome assessment cycle shown in [appendix 1.2-B](#).

The university's three undergraduate programs also include in-depth study in the area of business (BA Management), health science (BS Health Science) or nursing (RN to BSN). The 120-credit BA Management major requires 48 credits (16 3-credit courses) in areas including introductory courses in business mathematics, and business information systems, ethics, human resources, project management, organizational behavior, accounting finance, law, data analysis, and a capstone course integrating knowledge. The 120-credit BS Health Science major requires 51 credits in health science content, and includes courses in anatomy, microbiology, human physiology, epidemiology, nutrition, courses related to societal, environmental, and cultural issues in healthcare, and integration of knowledge in a capstone course. The 123-credit RN to BSN program requires an Associate Degree in Nursing for admission and includes transfer of 32 credits from this degree, supplemented by 21 additional nursing-related units, an additional 30 credits in health-care related courses, and 30 general education credits. The RN to BSN program also concludes with a capstone course integrating knowledge achieved in the program. [Appendix 2.2a-B](#) provides detail on core course requirements for each of these undergraduate programs.

2.2b The institution's graduate programs establish clearly stated objectives differentiated from and more advanced than undergraduate programs in terms of admissions, curricula, standards of performance, and student learning outcomes. Graduate programs foster students' active engagement with the literature of the field and create a culture that promotes the importance of scholarship and/or professional practice. Ordinarily, a baccalaureate degree is required for admission to a graduate program.

All graduate programs offered by United States University require an undergraduate degree. As noted above, USU offers three undergraduate and associated graduate programs (BAM/MBA, BSHS/MSHS, BSN/MSN). In the College of Business, the coursework and objectives of the BA Management program are focused on management knowledge and skills, while the MBA program is broader in focus and includes more in-depth coursework in organizational change, finance, and economics. In general, BAM courses focus on introductory knowledge and skills, while MBA courses provide more in-depth understanding of the areas introduced in the BAM program. A similar progression is seen in a comparison of BSHS and MSHS program learning outcomes and coursework. In the College of Nursing, the objectives of the BSN program are focused primarily on enhancing the knowledge and skills of the working RN, while graduate nursing programs extend the BSN knowledge into the specific areas of administration/education or practice (Family Nurse Practitioner). As such the nursing graduate programs are inherently, by their different objectives, qualitatively different from the undergraduate educational experience.

2.3 The institution's student learning outcomes and standards of performance are clearly stated at the course, program, and, as appropriate, institutional level. These outcomes and standards are reflected in academic programs, policies, and curricula, and are aligned with advisement, library, and information and technology resources, and the wider learning environment.

In 2013, college deans and the Academic Committee of the Faculty Senate undertook a revision of both Institutional and Program Learning Outcomes (ILOs and PLOs). ILOs were aligned with WSCUC core competencies as well as the mission and core values of the university. PLOs were then aligned with ILOs. In these revisions, deans and faculty also consulted recommendations from programmatic accreditation organizations: IACBE for business programs; BRN and CCNE for nursing programs; and the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing for Health Science Programs. Curriculum maps were developed for each program, and Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) aligned with PLOs were developed. The university also developed PLOs for its general education curriculum and CLOs for required general education courses. [Appendix 2.3](#) includes core competency and ILO alignment, PLO-ILO alignment and program curriculum maps. As a result of the self-study submitted to CCNE for accreditation of the MSN program and the proposed CCNE review of the BSN program, these programs are currently undergoing curriculum revision. Program Learning Outcomes for these programs are included in the appendix, and revised curriculum maps will be available to the April site visitors.

Curriculum maps show the level at which each learning outcome is to be achieved in the relevant course and the year in which courses should be taken by the student. These maps guided the development of program course schedules, to assure that students complete introductory-level achievement courses before progressing to courses in which higher levels of achievement are anticipated. Course syllabi include the Course Learning Outcomes, and faculty are made aware that evaluation of outcome achievement is required in assessing student performance and assigning grades.

2.4 The institution's student learning outcomes and standards of performance are developed by faculty and widely shared among faculty, students, staff, and (where appropriate) external stakeholders. The institution's faculty take collective responsibility for establishing appropriate standards of performance and demonstrating through assessment the achievement of these standards.

The Academic Committee of the Faculty Senate took responsibility for reviewing learning outcomes; and working with the college deans.⁵ All ILOs and PLOs are available in the 2014 catalog

⁵ At the time the 2013 review was undertaken, the university had few core faculty. Faculty Senate had only recently been organized and the Academic Committee newly formed. Throughout the process college deans worked in close

and in program descriptions on the university website. Course learning outcomes are included in course syllabi. Through the work of the Academic Committee of the Faculty Senate, faculty review and approve both standards of performance and assessment methodology. As formal assessment has only begun, results will be reviewed to determine current performance and standards for improvement set for each program, with an ultimate goal of a minimum of 80% positive outcome at the desired level of performance. Faculty assess achievement both in their course assessments and in the more comprehensive PLO outcome assessment.

2.5 The institution's academic programs actively involve students in learning, take into account students' prior knowledge of the subject matter, challenge students to meet high standards of performance, offer opportunities for them to practice, generalize, and apply what they have learned, and provide them with appropriate and ongoing feedback about their performance and how it can be improved.

Program coursework provides students with opportunities to both acquire and apply knowledge and skills, and to utilize students' prior knowledge. The following are examples from online business program course discussion boards, in which the instructor contextualizes the topic to the student's work experience:

Example 1:

Phase One of Business Process Engineering (BPE)⁶ creates an as-is model using the current business processes. Phase Two consists of creating the components. In this phase, depending on the level of automation, some or all of the five components (hardware, software, data, procedures, and people) are created. Phase Two identifies areas of improvement and notes them in the process model that is the basis for the new information system. Implementing the new process is Phase Three. In Phase Four results are assessed and subsequently used to monitor the effectiveness of the new process.

Have you ever been part of a similar process flow at a past or present workplace? If so, please describe it. If not, please describe a business process that could have benefitted from this process flow.

Example 2:

Business process transformations are, in essence, improvements to the current software or hardware. As Information Systems change and upgrade, certain processes are no longer relevant. The removal or upgrade of these processes constitutes the transformations. This is necessary to streamline the system and make it easier to navigate and to train new employees.

Have you been part of a business process transformation that has led to positive results? If so, please describe it. If not, please describe a business process that could have benefited from a transformation.

2.6 The institution demonstrates that its graduates consistently achieve its stated learning outcomes and established standards of performance. The institution ensures that its expectations for student learning are embedded in the standards that faculty use to evaluate student work.

As noted previously, Course Learning Outcomes are included in all course syllabi, and CLO evaluation is a requirement for faculty in assessing student performance. The majority of courses offered include a signature assignment, which is evaluated in terms of student achievement of learning objectives. As a result of evaluation of PLO assessment in 2014 (see response to CFR 2.7),

collaboration with faculty in this and other academic efforts; this collegiality continues to characterize the academic activity of the university.

⁶ Business Process Engineering

USU is currently developing a system⁷ in which course assignments specifically focused on Course Learning Outcomes will be included in all courses, and evaluation of student achievement in these areas will be one of the criteria used in grade assignment.

College deans will continue to work with core faculty to audit all courses and assure that learning outcomes are properly assessed with assignments in each course. Results of these efforts will be available for review at the April 2015 site visit.

As described earlier, each program at the university concludes with a capstone course, in which students demonstrate their synthesis and integration of program learning. As the majority of programs offered at USU began in 2011 or 2012, there is presently a very small cohort of graduates. Those who have graduated completed most (in some cases, all) of their education prior to the major academic revisions which were made in 2013⁸. Learning outcome data are not available for these graduates; therefore the university cannot at this time effectively document the learning outcome achievement of these graduates. The new processes developed and put in place in 2013 and 2014 have resulted in more rigorous coursework, more course-specific learning outcome assessment, and more review and use of assessment results (see CFR 2.7). By the time of the scheduled April 2015 visit, additional results will be available to demonstrate compliance in this area.

2.7 All programs offered by the institution are subject to systematic program review. The program review process includes, but is not limited to, analyses of student achievement of the program's learning outcomes; retention and graduation rates; and, where appropriate, results of licensing examination and placement, and evidence from external constituencies such as employers and professional organizations.

In summer 2013 the university developed a schedule for review of all programs within a five-year cycle ([appendix 1.2-B](#)). All elements noted above are included in the program review process ([appendix 2.7-A](#)). In 2014 graduate programs in the College of Nursing (MSN Administration/Education and MSN-Family Nurse Practitioner) were reviewed in conjunction with application for accreditation from the Collegiate Commission on Nursing Education (CCNE). The university has agreed to accept the CCNE self-study as program review for these programs. The self-study is available here as [appendix 2.7-B](#). A CCNE accreditation visit is scheduled to take place in September 2014, and team recommendations are anticipated to be available at the time of the November offsite review.

Two of the university's longest-standing continuing programs (ELM/ABSN and MSN-Family Nurse Practitioner, approved in 2008 and 2009) are approved by the California Board of Nursing (BSN) and undergo periodic BSN review for continuation of approval. In October 2013, the Education and Licensing Committee of the BRN recommended continuing approval of the MSN-Family Nurse Practitioner Program, and the full board accepted the recommendation at its November 2013 meeting. The full board deferred action for continuing approval of the ELM/ABSN program and approved enrollment of a 20-student cohort in January 2014. Information on the Education and Licensing Committee reviews and recommendations and BRN actions are available in [appendix 2.7-C](#).

In accordance with the revised accreditation process, the university chose to focus 2014 Learning Outcome Assessment on PLOs associated with the core competency of critical thinking. Faculty and deans met several times to review proposed assessment rubrics and selected a

⁷ Information about this method of PLO assessment was obtained at the 2014 ARC conference and provided to USU faculty and deans by the chair of the Faculty Senate Academic Committee.

⁸ The current provost was hired in January 2013, Faculty Senate and its Committees were created less than one year ago, revision of learning outcomes and program review processes were accomplished in summer 2013, PLO assessment and program review activity began in fall 2013.

recognized rubric. Interrater reliability in the rubrics' use was assessed. As the results indicated an interrater reliability of somewhat less than 80%, two raters were assigned to assess signature assignments from courses in which critical thinking was a course-related objective. Raters reviewed each assignment and consulted with each other to arrive at consensus rating.

Analysis of results of critical thinking assessment were disappointing, with few students in any program achieving a level of 3 or 4 (scale 1 - 4). Deans and core faculty met to discuss the results and improve the assessment process. Discussions indicated some difficulty on the part of raters in interpreting rubrics. It was also noted that some assignments chosen to be assessed did not directly include opportunity for students to demonstrate their capacity for critical thinking.

The rubric was reviewed and reworded to provide greater clarity. It was also determined that specific assignments related to critical thinking should be provided to all students taking courses in which this element is included as a Course Learning Outcome. This system will be extended to other CLOs to provide more direct and focused assessment. The rubric to be used in assessment will be included in syllabi for courses in which the element is covered

A goal of reassessment of critical thinking (2.2a) in fall I 2014 courses has been set. Faculty training will assist them in focusing some course assignments on assessment of course learning outcomes (CLOs). This will require that all faculty be familiar with the curriculum maps for the programs in which they teach, and include CLOs and rubrics used to assess learning in all syllabi. Training will be provided to assist faculty in creating assessment scenarios and questions, the responses to which will enable evaluation of the student's mastery of the learning objective.

Indirect evidence of critical thinking achievement is available from student course evaluations, in which students are asked to rate the degree to which the course has improved their ability to think critically about the topic. In the most recent (summer I 2014) evaluations, 92% of 97 responses were: "always" (78%) or "most of the time" (14%).

The process of reviewing results and developing improvement plans was accomplished by college deans and core faculty, with participation from adjuncts. In addition, Dr. Marlene Lowe, Assessment Advisor at the University of California San Diego and recently elected member of the university's Board of Trustees, has reviewed the proposed plan, met with the provost and Director of Outcomes Assessment (Dr. Elizabeth Archer), and will provide additional expertise in training and implementation.

[Appendix 2.7-D](#) documents the review and reassessment process to date. At the time of the April 2015 site visit results of the critical thinking re-assessment will be available. PLOs associated with quantitative reasoning and information literacy are being assessed in 2015 as well and results of these assessments will be available at that time. These results will include information on the assignments used in the assessment, the process undertaken, program-level results, and use of the results to improve performance as indicated by the outcomes.

Scholarship and Creative Activity

2.8 The institution clearly defines expectations for research, scholarship, and creative activity for its students and all categories of faculty. The institution actively values and promotes scholarship, creative activity, and curricular and instructional innovation, and their dissemination appropriate to the institution's purposes and character.

The recently approved Faculty Handbook ([appendix 1.3](#)) provides information regarding expectations for scholarship and creative activity. Shortly after its development, the committee of the Faculty Senate established a Fund for Innovation. The purpose of this fund and the application process are described in item eight of [appendix 3.10-C](#) (Senate Committee Minutes). Both core and adjunct faculty may apply. The initial recipient of funds was Dr. Maria Ramira (College of Nursing)

to support her presentation at the Philippine Nurses Association Global Summit International Conference in Manila (January 2014).

The first annual faculty retreat will take place September 11 2014, and will include a celebration and recognition of faculty scholarship. This event will include a presentation by Dr. Luis G. Cueva, adjunct faculty at USU, of material from his recently (March 2014) published book, *Forsaken harvest: Haciendas and agrarian reform in Jalisco, Mexico: 1915-1940*. [Appendix 2.8.](#) lists over 60 recent publications and presentations by core and adjunct faculty, representing activity from 2005 to 2014.

At the second meeting of the Student Senate, ideas were presented regarding possible awards for student research/scholarship. As the majority of the university's students are engaged in distance learning, electronic presentation of award-winning student material is being considered.

2.9 The institution recognizes and promotes appropriate linkages among scholarship, teaching, assessment, student learning, and service.

The Faculty Handbook ([appendix 1.3](#)) details the relationship among faculty activities in the hiring and evaluation processes. Appointment of core faculty requires appropriate degree to the content area, experience in higher education teaching, professional expertise in the area of specialization, as well as involvement in scholarly activities and professional/community service. Faculty evaluation is based on a faculty portfolio which includes information on teaching performance, professional activities, publications/presentations, and public/professional service. While faculty evaluations are ongoing with review of course evaluations in each term, this formal evaluation process will begin in fall 2014, with results available to the visiting team in April 2015.

Student Learning and Success

2.10 The institution demonstrates that students make timely progress toward the completion of their degrees and that an acceptable proportion of students complete their degrees in a timely fashion, given the institution's mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs it offers. The institution collects and analyzes student data, disaggregated by appropriate demographic categories and areas of study. It tracks achievement, satisfaction, and the extent to which the campus climate supports student success. The institution regularly identifies the characteristics of its students; assesses their preparation, needs, and experiences; and uses these data to improve student achievement.

Student progress toward degree is monitored at the conclusion of each semester⁹. Undergraduate students with a cumulative GPA below 2.0 (4.0 scale) and graduate students with a cumulative GPA below 3.0 are notified in writing of their failure to maintain satisfactory progress and informed that they are subject to dismissal. Students may appeal dismissal and, if the appeal is granted, are placed on academic probation and, after consultation with the program dean, develop a remedial program which is generally assessed after the following semester.

Before 2012, when the new administrative team was put in place, program-level data were not regularly assessed, and demographic information was available for Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) reporting categories only. Currently enrollment, graduation, and retention are tracked at the program level. The university is in the process of changing its enterprise system from its original system (NGL) to CampusVue. CampusVue will be operational in fall 2014. Reports from CampusVue will provide all demographic information required to disaggregate data in appropriate demographic categories. At the time of the April 2015 site visit, demographically disaggregated program enrollment, graduation, and retention data will be available.

⁹ The university operates on six eight-week terms, with two terms per semester and three semesters per year. The GPA analysis is conducted three times per year.

Student satisfaction is assessed via course evaluations and a student satisfaction survey. Course evaluation information is provided to college deans and reviewed for course improvement. In fall 2013, a revised student satisfaction survey was administered. Approximately 75% of the 60 respondents reported satisfaction with most areas of university functioning¹⁰. Lowest satisfaction ratings were received in the areas of academic advising, online course delivery, online technological support, and accessing information on the enterprise system (NGL). In response, the university has increased the academic advising staff, moved its online courses to a different platform with greater technological support, and is moving its enterprise system from the original NGL to CampusVue. The satisfaction survey was re-administered in June 2014, responses increased to 131, and improvement in student satisfaction is evident in three of these four areas: Advising increased from 63% to 76%, online course delivery from 43% to 76%, online technical support from 44% to 62%. Access to information satisfaction was unchanged; the new enterprise system will be operational in fall 2014, and satisfaction in this area is anticipated to increase in the next survey administration, which will also attempt to increase response rate.

2.11 Consistent with its purposes, the institution offers co-curricular programs that are aligned with its academic goals, integrated with academic programs, and designed to support all students' personal and professional development. The institution assesses the effectiveness of its co-curricular programs and uses the results for improvement.

United States University has always served a nontraditional student population, many of whom are working adults and most of whom are distance learners. The common types of co-curricular activities developed by four-year institutions serving recent high school graduates in onsite, often residential, settings have not been implemented at the university. A Student Senate held its second meeting in June 2014, and will assist in the development of co-curricular activities appropriate to the student population of the university. As online students comprise a large percentage of the student body, electronic communication, social media, and other web-based activities will figure prominently in these developments. At the time of the April site visit additional information will be available about student senate activities.

2.12 The institution ensures that all students understand the requirements of their academic programs and receive timely, useful, and complete information and advising about relevant academic requirements.

Each prospective student is assigned to an admissions advisor based on several factors including program of interest, modality, and geography to ensure the student is matched with someone with the proper expertise and experience. For example, the university has assigned two advisors to work with its military student population to ensure that service men and women get the most knowledgeable personnel to assist them with their unique areas of concern. Admissions and financial aid work in teams to ensure students have access to all financial aid resources early in the process.

Immediate and regular contact is made with prospective students following a specific communication protocol. Advisors initially meet with each prospective student for a minimum of one hour to assess the level of interest and academic preparedness of each student, to ensure that there is an appropriate program for them and to assist them in preparing an application for admission. During this meeting, prospective students are provided with a detailed Program of Study describing the program objectives, requirements, and coursework.

¹⁰ Between 5% and 12% of the 131 respondents expressed no opinion about the rated elements; excluding these respondents would increase the percent of satisfaction ratings. Throughout this document, the more conservative total response figures have been used. A full analysis of the 2014 Student Satisfaction Survey, including 2013 comparisons, is available as appendix 2.10.

Once a student applies and is accepted into the university, the admissions advisors follow another communication protocol to ensure the student is properly prepared to begin classes successfully. The advisor assists the student with ordering books and helps them with their USU email and login. The advisor conducts an online classroom walk-through with each student, and continues with follow-up communication through the first two weeks of class, ensuring the students are logging into (attending) class, assisting in overcoming obstacles they might be experiencing, and ensuring that the students have the support system they may need during these first two weeks of class. After the initial two weeks of class, student advocates (student services staff) assume responsibility for providing guidance and assistance. Student advocates are members of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) with full access to all resources available through this organization.

Information concerning all academic policies and activities is accessible on the university's website. The site contains an academic calendar and links to departments, programs, and colleges. The site also contains the university catalog, which includes information about recruiting, admission practices, and descriptions of courses, faculty, and departments. Admissions advisors provide all potential students with general program information and requirements, including admission requirements and program completion requirements. In the student satisfaction survey administered in fall 2013, 75% of 60 respondents expressed satisfaction with the Office of Admissions; in June 2014 this percentage increased to 85% of 131 responses.

The Student Services Department maintains a webpage of tools for students to utilize (<http://www.usuniversity.edu/student-services>), including information on how to contact their student advocates or faculty. Students can also request private sessions with student advocates who can assist them with specific concerns and questions through their educational experience. Students receive regular updates on academically pertinent matters through their private university email accounts. The CampusVue Portal, scheduled for operation in fall 2014, will provide students with controlled access to their transcripts and transfer credits to enable them to continuously monitor their own progress.

2.13 The institution provides academic and other student support services such as tutoring, services for students with disabilities, financial aid counseling, career counseling and placement, residential life, athletics, and other services and programs as appropriate, which meet the needs of the specific types of students that the institution serves and the programs it offers.

All new online students are required to enroll in Fundamentals of University Success (FUN101), which addresses a variety of academic and technical skills. Student evaluations of this course are reviewed to determine how the course is meeting its goals and how it may be improved. [Appendix 2.13-A](#) provides information about this course, including a summary of recent student comments from course evaluations.

An analysis of student attrition revealed that attrition is greatest in the first several terms following matriculation. A Retention Task Force was formed and is presently exploring a number of methods of addressing student readiness for college-level work and online learning. Detail on this activity is provided in CFR 4.1, and additional information is available in [appendix 2.13-B](#). At the time of the April 2015 site visit additional information regarding this process and its results will be available.

For its continuing students, the university provides both onsite and online academic support. Onsite tutoring services are available to onsite students. With the migration of online courses to the Pearson platform, Smarthinking is now available to both onsite and online students. This service provides writing assistance and tutoring in a variety of areas (e.g., reading, writing, business, science,

nursing, mathematics, ESL, and computers). In the summer I course evaluation survey, approximately 49% of the 97 respondents used one or more of these services. Of the 47 students who reported using Smarthinking, 83% rated this service as “very” (25, 5%) or “extremely” (57.4%) useful.

In undergraduate programs, general education faculty have reported student difficulty in completing writing assignments. Course scheduling was altered to emphasize basic writing skills in the first year and more intensive writing requirements in the later years. Beginning in the summer II term, all general education courses offered online require students to submit a writing assignment to Smarthinking for review and improvement recommendations.

The university library is located on the Chula Vista campus and offers print and media support to students. As the university offers many programs in a distance education format, a wide range of electronic databases are available 24/7 to all students. The library also provides information literacy training to students. Database utilization is reviewed regularly and provision of database is adjusted as needed. In the June 2014 Student Satisfaction Survey, 69%¹¹ of 131 respondents who rated library services indicated satisfaction with this area of student support. [Appendix 2.13-C](#) contains information about database usage and changes made as a result of the analyses.

The university policy on disability accommodation is provided on pages 23-24 of the university catalog. The university is committed to providing reasonable accommodations as noted in the catalog. The Director of Administration and Human Resources has completed training in ADA compliance. Staff and faculty have recently participated in an on ground training session on ADA compliance ([appendix 2.13-D](#)). As the majority of the university’s students take courses online, requests for accommodations are infrequent. A few requests were made in 2013 and 2014, and the requested accommodation was provided¹². Recent requests to the time of this report have been granted. Documentation of accommodation requests and disposition is available in the office of Human Resources.

The majority of USU’s students are enrolled in online programs. To conveniently serve these students, the university has developed an online Career Center, to provide career information and services (<http://www.usuniversity.edu/career-resources/>) including:

- Creating Your Career Path - *Managing your career takes time and careful planning. It requires more than simply preparing a resume and cover letter. In order to get to where you want to be, you need to know where you are heading. Here, you will learn how to create a plan to guide you.*
- Writing a Resume that Sells. . . You - *Your resume is a marketing tool written to tell potential employers what you can do for them. In this section you will learn how to retool your resume so it attracts recruiters and hiring managers.*
- Personal Branding - *In today's competitive marketplace, you need to find a way to stand out. A personal brand enables you to communicate your:*
 - *Value and values*
 - *Skills and experiences*
 - *Personality and character*
- Leveraging Social Media and Networking Your Way to a New Job - *The job search has moved to the Internet, and you need to know how to use resources like LinkedIn to attract potential employers and*

¹¹ 21% of 131 respondents expressed no opinion; if these responses are not included in the analysis, satisfaction ratings increased to 88%. See appendix 2.10 for a complete report on this survey.

¹² To preserve confidentiality, specific information has not been provided in this document, but is available to reviewers from the Director of Administration and Human resources.

network with those people that may be able to help you find your next position. In these 2 sections, you will learn how to do both.

- Negotiating the Offer - *Many of us leave money on the table when we receive a job offer. At this point in our job search we are happy to have an offer, and typically don't evaluate it prior to accepting it. In this section you will learn why you shouldn't do this, and ways to negotiate with hiring managers and/or HR.*
- Going Solo: Is Entrepreneurship for You? *There are many things you need to know about starting a small business, and the learning starts with an assessment of whether or not you have the personality and resources it takes to be successful. This is a place where you can learn more about what you need to do to "go solo."*
- A listing of Career Sites to Explore is regularly updated.
- A twice-monthly “Career Blog” written by the Career Consultant is planned and will include timely information about selected career topics, as well as links to relevant articles and resources.
- A page of “Commonly Asked Questions” contains information about managing careers and finding work that “works for you.”

This service is being monitored by Dr. Gibson Scheid, who has 15 years of experience providing career counseling services in a university setting. Future student satisfaction surveys will include evaluation of the various elements of the Career Center. Survey results will be used to increase the utility of this service.

The counseling website was opened on July 2, 2014, and received nearly 900 unique opens in its first several days. Several students immediately responded with email requests for resume review. As a result, the university is anticipating creating webinars and/or onsite resume workshops.

2.14 Institutions that serve transfer students provide clear, accurate, and timely information, ensure equitable treatment under academic policies, provide such students access to student services, and ensure that they are not unduly disadvantaged by the transfer process.

University Admissions Advisors inform each student of the number of ways in which they may receive course credit. Prospective students are provided a Program of Study at their initial meeting with a USU Advisor. During the program overview portion of the interview with the student, they receive advice and information regarding how to earn as much credit for work already completed as possible. Students may earn credit as transfer units from other institutions, from prior learning experience, or by exam.

Any student interested in transferring credit from a previous college or university must provide a transcript to receive an evaluation. Students may provide an unofficial transcript and will receive an unofficial pre-evaluation within twenty-four hours. For an official evaluation, prospective students must provide an official transcript.

Comprehensive information about the university’s transfer policies is available on page 19 of the current university catalog. A degree plan is created for each student and all transfer credit is noted in this plan

Standard 2 Summary

Degree programs at the university were designed to align with recognized professional Standards (2.1), have clearly defined admissions requirements, and reflect the mission and values of the institution (2.2). Baccalaureate programs provide both breadth (general education requirements) and depth (core program requirements), and address core competencies in their learning outcomes (2.2, 2.2a). Graduate programs require a baccalaureate degree for admission, are distinguished from undergraduate programs in their objectives and learning outcomes, are designed for professional

practice, and promote scholarship and research (2.2b). Each program has a core faculty member and both core and adjunct faculty are committed to program evaluation and student success (2.2b).

All programs have published learning outcomes at the program level which are aligned with Institutional Learning Outcomes. Course Learning Outcomes are aligned with program outcomes and are available on all course syllabi (2.3). The outcomes were revised by the Academic Committee of the Faculty Senate with the assistance of college deans. The Academic Committee also oversees learning outcome assessment (2.4) with participation from both core and adjunct faculty.

Coursework seeks to involve students in the learning experience and apply their prior knowledge and experience in course assignments and discussions (2.5). Course-level assessment of learning objectives is aggregated to the program level to ensure demonstration of student achievement and evaluation of student achievement of learning objectives is integrated in faculty evaluations of students (2.6)

In 2014, the university began a five-year cycle of program review. Reporting achievement of learning outcomes is included as a major element of the academic quality section of each program's self-study. Retention and graduation information is also required in the review (2.7).

The university is committed to promoting scholarship and creative activity in its students and faculty. All programs provide research opportunities for students, and plans are being developed to provide online recognition of student research achievements. Currently, student research does not involve human subjects. A fund for innovation has been established to assist faculty (both core and adjunct) in professional activities, and a celebration of faculty scholarship is planned for the September 2014 Inaugural Faculty Retreat. Scholarship and community service are elements of the faculty evaluation process described in the Faculty Handbook, which will be implemented beginning in fall 2014 (2.8, 2.9).

Course evaluations and student satisfaction surveys are regularly administered and results reviewed. Data are used to improve program offerings as well as student services. When changes are made, results are reviewed to evaluate improvement. Graduation and retention data are now available at the program level, and demographic disaggregation of data will be accomplished prior to the April 2015 site visit (2.10).

In order to develop co-curricular activities appropriate to a nontraditional student population participating broadly in distance education, the recently developed Student Senate will assist administration in designing co-curricular activities aligned with the personal and professional needs of the student body (2.11).

Admissions advisors inform potential students with regard to all program requirements (2.12) (which are also available online and in the university catalog) and assist beginning students in their initial weeks of enrollment (2.12). Advisement includes transfer information (2.14), and the transfer credit assignment process is described in the university catalog. Student advocates assist continuing students one-on-one, and also maintain a website with information, which is updated as required. Emails are used to provide information to students in a timely manner.

Student services (2.13) include a computer lab for onsite students, onsite and online library resources with 24/7 access to online databases, and information literacy training from the university library. Other student support services include access for all students to the support services of Smarthinking, the availability of onsite tutoring, and a process for requesting accommodation for disabilities. All students have access to financial aid counselors and the service of student advocates. A web-based career counseling service is also available. Satisfaction with these support services are reviewed periodically through the student satisfaction survey, and results are used to develop improvement plans.

The university has developed processes for program review, learning outcome assessment, and faculty evaluation. Implementation has begun, and the university is committed to continuing activity in these areas. In 2013 and 2014, the university designed processes by which academic and institutional activities could be directly (assessment) and indirectly (survey) evaluated and improved. The university further commits to continuing and expanding these activities. Data collection was significantly enhanced in 2013 and 2014 to include program-level enrollment, retention, and graduation data. In late 2014 and 2015, these data will be disaggregated to provide demographic information in all relevant categories.

Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structure to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

When the current administration began its work in mid-2012, faculty resources, information resources, fiscal stability, and governance were determined to be major issues under this Standard. The provost's leadership in increasing faculty activity has been described in the CFR responses to Standard 2 and the first CFRs below.

Without accurate, easily accessible information, data-driven decisions are difficult. The inherited combined enterprise and learning management system (NGL) proved both cumbersome and ineffective. The system was slow to respond, and difficult to navigate. Inquiry and application data were often incomplete, reports were time-consuming to create, program-level data were not easily available, and minimal safeguards were available to prevent inappropriate alteration of data. Students, faculty, and staff all expressed frustration with both the learning platform and the information system. A review of available alternatives indicated that changes would not only provide better technological resources, but would be cost-effective as well. The initial change was a migration to the Pearson Open Class platform, beginning in fall, 2013. Salesforce admission software became operational in early 2014. CampusVue was chosen as an enterprise system, and will be operational in late 2014, completing the improvement of technological resources. Each of these decisions was made following a review of available alternatives and the need for appropriate as well as cost-effective products. The combined annual cost of these three systems is projected to be \$208K, less than 50% of the current annual expenses (\$435K). This reduces technology expenses by \$227K per year.

When President Cole took office in July, 2012, the USU Board of Trustees was comprised of local community members and some members associated with the previous administration. There was no meaningful representation of higher education, especially members familiar with the importance of regional accreditation. The leadership void resulted in minutes inadequate to explain board deliberations and actions. Board committee meeting information was, at best, sketchy. No board development had been undertaken. No training in the roles and responsibilities of board members had taken place. Bylaws were extremely weak and were not aligned with either the spirit or the intent of the WSCUC policy. In 2012 and 2013 board awareness was enhanced with the development of presentations informing the board of institutional activities. Bylaw revision was undertaken. It was critical that board leadership have experience in higher education administration and accreditation, and board membership be altered to provide new trustees with experience in senior leadership, education technology innovation, finance, and governance. President Cole, trustees, and board of managers' leadership, sought candidates for the position of board chair. With the resignation of the previous board chair in January 2014, Ms. Patricia Potter was nominated and accepted the position of board chair. The results of the revitalization of the Board of Trustees are described in the section related to CFR 3.9.

The following sections provide additional detail on these and other changes which have taken place in the past year.

Faculty and Staff

3.1 The institution employs faculty and staff with substantial and continuing commitment to the institution. The faculty and staff are sufficient in number, professional qualification, and diversity and to achieve the institution's educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic and co-curricular programs wherever and however delivered.

Each program offered at the university is staffed with a core faculty member. A core faculty member also bears responsibility for general education courses, and works closely with core faculty in undergraduate programs, thus increasing core faculty availability in the undergraduate programs. The majority of core faculty are employed full-time; the exceptions are those programs with low overall enrollments. As enrollments in these program increase, core faculty time will increase correspondingly. All core faculty are qualified in education and experience for their areas of responsibility. Many core faculty began their involvement with the university as adjunct instructors, and have had several years of experience with the programs for which they are responsible.

Core faculty are supplemented by a pool of over 70 active adjunct instructors, the majority of whom have had two or more years of experience teaching at the university. Adjunct faculty are primarily associated with a specific college, although there is some cross-over between programs within colleges and across colleges, the latter occurring primarily in the areas of nursing and health science. Early in 2014 college deans conducted a review of the adjunct faculty pool to assure that all instructors were educationally and experientially qualified. Both core and adjunct faculty (as well as college deans) represent a wide range of ethnic demographics. [Appendix 2.1](#) provides information on both core and adjunct faculty education in terms of degrees achieved. [Appendix 1.4](#) includes faculty demographic information. [Appendix 2.8](#) contains information on recent faculty publications and presentations.

In addition to teaching responsibilities, adjunct faculty are involved in governance and assessment. The Faculty Senate President is an adjunct faculty member. Additionally adjuncts staff senate committees. Adjuncts participate in program review and assessment activities, including developing assessment methodologies and conducting assessments. As many of the university's adjuncts teach online and may not reside in the university's geographic area, most college and community meetings include conference calling to assure that all adjuncts can participate.

The university supports the professional development of both its core and adjunct faculty. Several of the participants in the ARC Conference and other WSCUC-sponsored educational activities have been drawn from our adjunct pool. Pedagogical trainings conducted at the university are attended by adjuncts, who also participate in developing trainings. Each college dean keeps close contact with the adjunct instructors in her programs and regularly solicits participation in college activities from their adjuncts.

The continued commitment of the USU faculty is shown in the length of time many of its adjuncts have been associated with the university as well as the willingness of adjunct faculty to assume core positions. As shown in [appendix 2.1](#), 75% (8/12) of current core faculty were drawn from adjunct ranks¹³. This commitment can continue beyond employment. Pilar De La Cruz-Reyes retired from the position of Dean of the College of Nursing in early 2013. In 2014, Mrs. De La Cruz-Reyes accepted a nomination to the university's Board of Trustees and continues to assist the university in its academic activities.

3.2 Faculty and staff recruitment, hiring, orientation, workload, incentives, and evaluation practices are aligned with institutional purposes and educational objectives. Evaluation is consistent with best practices in performance appraisal,

¹³ The fact that most core faculty appointments were made after the probation status was received is further evidence of faculty commitment.

including multisource feedback and appropriate peer review. Faculty evaluation processes are systematic and are used to improve teaching and learning.

All policies related to faculty are available in the Faculty Handbook ([appendix 1.3](#)). Faculty hiring and recruitment policies (pages 8-9) describe the process of new position approval and include commitment to nondiscrimination in the hiring process. Hiring recommendations are made by the college dean and forwarded to the provost for approval. The handbook also contains qualifications for assignment of core faculty rank (pages 10-11). Appointment at the rank of Assistant, Associate, or Professor requires an earned doctorate or other terminal degree; appointment to the rank of Assistant Professor may be made if the proposed faculty member is actively engaged in completing the appropriate terminal degree.

Core faculty responsibilities are described on page 13 of the handbook and include leadership in program review and learning outcome assessment, as well as participation in faculty recruitment and setting faculty performance expectations. Faculty's role in governance is described on page 12. Core faculty workload responsibilities are shown on pages 18-19 and, in addition to teaching and advising, include governance, scholarly and creative contributions, professional service, and community service.

Faculty evaluation criteria and procedures comprise chapters six and seven (respectively) of the handbook (pages 20-26). The faculty evaluation process will begin in fall 2014 with the creation of individual portfolios in which faculty will articulate their goals and objectives for the upcoming year. Core faculty will receive training and assistance in the process of creating portfolios ([appendix 3.2-A](#)). These portfolios will form the basis for formal evaluations at the conclusion of the year. A process for systematic evaluation of adjunct faculty has also been developed ([appendix 3.2-B](#)) and will be implemented in the coming year.

An Adjunct Faculty Orientation document ([appendix 3.2-C](#)) has recently been created and is currently being piloted in the College of Business and Management. This electronic information will be provided to new core and adjunct faculty, adapted for use in other colleges, and will be periodically updated with new information. It is also being used as a model for an orientation document to be provided to all incoming student

3.3 The institution maintains appropriate and sufficiently supported faculty and staff development activities designed to improve teaching, learning, and assessment of learning outcomes.

With the move from the NGL learning management system to the Pearson management system, all faculty were invited to participate in trainings and were provided with a course development template ([appendix 3.3-A](#)) with which to transition NGL online courses to Pearson, or to use in the development of new courses. When Smarthinking was made available, webinars describing its use were provided to both faculty and students. The Fundamentals of Success course, taken by all new online undergraduate students, includes a tutorial on the use of Smarthinking. Similar trainings are planned for use of the new enterprise system (CampusVue) when it begins operations, and online tutorials will also be available.

Pedagogical development is part of the university's program review and learning outcome processes. Faculty and college deans have participated in 2013 and 2014 ARC conferences, as well as in additional workshops and webinars provided by WSCUC. Both core and adjunct faculty are sponsored by the university for participation in these activities. As noted in CFR 2.7, a re-assessment of critical thinking outcomes has been developed and a process of direct assessment of all course learning outcomes is being developed. Faculty will receive training on developing and evaluating such assessments. In July 2014 the dean of the College of Education facilitated the first in a monthly series of collaborative learning workshops, designed to engage the university academic

community in a forum focused on teaching, learning, and pedagogical theories ([appendix 3.3-B](#)). A second workshop is scheduled for August 2014. Adjunct faculty are closely involved in these activities. For example, a recently-developed review of teaching efficacy designed to determine which types of activities and coursework most encourage student engagement and participation in online courses is being chaired by an adjunct faculty member associated with the BS Health Science program.

Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources

3.4 The institution is financially stable and has unqualified independent financial audits and resources sufficient to ensure long-term viability. Resource planning and development include realistic budgeting, enrollment management, and diversification of revenue sources. Resource planning is integrated with all other institutional planning. Resources are aligned with educational purposes and objectives.

The current fiscal position of the university should be viewed in the context of institutional history. As noted in virtually all accreditation correspondence prior to 2013, the university's 2013 self-study, the April 2013 visiting team report, and the recent May 2014 substantive change visiting team report, fiscal stability has been a continuing concern, and one which resulted in the recommendation to move to for-profit status. Following the change of ownership, initial efforts at attaining fiscal sustainability proved unsuccessful. In the 2010 Strategic Plan and Master Plan inherited by the current administration, enrollment projections and tuition revenue calculations upon which budgets were based can be charitably described as unrealistic. Enrollments by program by site and modality were, in most cases, identical for all programs. Future-year projections summed prior year enrollments with no adjustments for graduation or attrition. Enrollments were projected for new programs prior to program and/or modality approval, and no adjustments seem to have been made when approvals were received later than the terms for which projections had been made. No projection to actual data seems to have been developed or tracked, and no adjustments seem to have been made on the basis of actual vs projected revenue. Average credit units per student (critical in projecting tuition from enrollment) were overestimated. In addition, the six-year lease of a second site in Cypress, California added over \$1 million to annual expenses and produced minimal (virtually no) revenue to offset this major expense. Further, the development and ongoing costs of the in-house enterprise and learning management system (NGL) added over \$400K to ongoing annual expenses. The failure to maintain appropriate fiscal accounting and issues regarding financial aid surfaced and resulted in a total administrative turnover in 2012.

The new CFO, hired in September, 2012, faced the daunting task of reviewing the fiscal data that had been developed earlier in 2012 by the financial consultant while simultaneously developing a 2013 budget with little concrete data regarding prior enrollment and retention activity. The 2013 budget was developed with the limited data available, together with expectations stemming from the revitalized marketing and admissions departments. These projections were, to some degree, aspirational. Although projections were not always met, enrollment increases were substantial, with fall-II 2013 enrollment exceeding fall-II 2012 by 34% (299 vs 196). New enrollment across all terms of 2013 was 100% greater than 2012 (413 vs 203). With the development of tracking data at the program level as well as regular reporting and adjustments made on the basis of actual activity, the current administration has continued to address the unfortunate fiscal legacy. The steps taken to restore the university to financial stability include:

- a budgeting process that relies on data-based enrollment projections;
- closer attention to projection-to-actual enrollment and revenue tracking by term;
- program-level tracking of term-to-term retention and first-year persistence;
- by-term analysis of program-level revenue and expense (forming the basis for assessment of program fiscal viability);

- program-level calculation of average credits per student per term;
- a review of marketing strategies;
- expansion of recruitment to additional underserved groups, including military and international students and the employment of staff dedicated to these areas;
- the development of a Division of Extended Education offering a wide range of vocational credentials/certificates;
- replacing the cumbersome in-house enterprise/learning management system with more cost-effective alternatives;
- revenue-enhancing use of available space at the Chula Vista campus by a local charter high school;
- continued efforts to address the negative fiscal impact of the Cypress campus lease;
- regular monthly fiscal reports;
- increased oversight activity by the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees.

Enrollment, attrition, and graduation data were compiled at the program level for all 2012 and 2013 terms. The 2013 term-to-term activity analysis was used by college deans to project 2014 new and total enrollment by term. These data were used by the CFO to develop enrollment projections for 2014 terms. Revenue projections were made on the basis of this evidence, supplemented by actual student average credit unit information also developed at the program level. Projected to actual enrollment comparisons are made by 2014 term, and these data, supplemented by graduation and retention data, will be used in developing 2015 enrollment projections.

Financial reports are reviewed monthly by the Leadership Team and these reports are reviewed quarterly by the Board Finance Committee, who provides a detailed report to the full Board of Trustees at each of its quarterly meetings. Projected to actual revenue and expense activity is reviewed and adjustments made as appropriate.

Marketing activity is reviewed by term, and cost per student calculated for enrollments from each inquiry source. Adjustments are made in resource allocations as needed based on the evidence provided. Recently a major shift in resource allocation was made to eliminate a costly nonproducing source of inquiries, with resources transferred to a second source. This new activity will be similarly tracked for efficacy. A review of marketing data also shows a significant increase in inquiries obtained by referral: referral inquiries for the first three terms of 2014 (335) were 93% of referral inquiries received in all of 2013 (361). As inquiries from referrals tend to have significantly higher conversion rates¹⁴ than inquiries from other sources, this is an encouraging sign.

Marketing efforts have been expanded to include target-specific recruitment efforts, specifically in the areas of military and international students, with dedicated staff assigned to these efforts. Some enrollment has been achieved from these efforts; however 2014 activity is primarily focused on developing awareness within the target groups, with increased enrollment activity anticipated in 2015. Similarly, 2014 activity in the Division of Extended Education has focused on obtaining the permissions necessary to provide service to the university's target populations.

Expansion of service to military students began with a series of activities provided to members of military families designed to acquaint them with the health-related and education-related programs available at the university. A four-session course in preparation for the LVN Challenge Exam was offered at the Chula Vista campus at no charge to qualified members of the military, with approximate attendance of 100. This course was repeated at Camp Pendleton to another cohort of

¹⁴ In summer I, 2014, 24% of inquiries from referrals resulted in enrollments; average conversion to enrollment for all inquiries was 4.4%.

students, again at no charge. Additionally the university offered a CBEST exam preparation course at Chula Vista to members of the military and their spouses, also without fee. Program interest information is obtained from attendees, and two admissions counselors with experience working with members of the military have been assigned to work with potential students from this population. Specific inquiry and enrollment goals have been set for military recruitment efforts for late 2014, which are monitored in twice-monthly meetings.

Efforts to reduce expenses related to the six-year lease (2010-2016) of the Cypress site continue. All possibilities are being explored. The university is working with a rental agent to sublease all or a portion of the Cypress property. Businesses local to the Cypress site have also been contacted for possible use of the site. Some temporary utilization of the site has been accomplished, with some revenue received. These expenses will be somewhat offset by revenue from a new charter high school, which opened in July 2014 at the Chula Vista campus.

Marketing and data-based budgeting have shown results in 2014. A 2014 January-May revenue/expense analysis ([appendix 3.4-A](#)) indicates that although actual revenue is somewhat below projections, actual expenses are within one percent of projections. The revenue variance from projections is anticipated to increase somewhat in the remainder of 2014. The university has, however, has made major improvements in its fiscal position in 2014, as evident from the following comparisons with prior year activity.

Comparison of 2013 and 2014 activity for the first six months (January-June) of the university's fiscal year indicates 2014 year-to-date (YTD) revenue 79% above 2013 YTD (\$2,573K versus \$1,440K) and expenses 5% below 2013 YTD (\$5,038K versus \$5,278K). The year-to-date operating deficit has been reduced 36% from 2013 (\$2,464K versus \$3,838K).

Revenue through July 2014 (comprising the first four terms of the six-term year) is projected to be approximately \$3,100K. This figure is equal to the *total revenue* achieved in 2013 (\$3,021K) and is 25% greater than the *total revenue* achieved in 2012 (\$2,489K).

Additionally, the university has maintained a composite ratio of 1.5 or greater in 2012 and 2013, as a result of both effective financial management and ongoing support from financial sponsors. Both these factors are anticipated to continue in the future, assuming reasonable fiscal progress. The information in the following paragraph indicates the strong likelihood of such progress.

If year-end revenue and expenses are conservatively projected by assuming double the amounts incurred in the first six months of the year, this projection does not meet 2014 budget projections. It does, however, indicate a probable 70% increase in revenue over 2013 (\$5,147K versus \$3,021K), and a probable 10% decrease in expenses (\$10,076K versus \$11,147K). This would result in a decrease in operating deficit in 2014 of 39% over the 2013 operating (\$4,929K versus \$8,126K). This is less than the projected operating deficit reduction, but demonstrates significant improvement in a single year. Additionally, 2014 projected expenses and operating deficit include \$1.2 million in legacy expenses (e.g., Cypress facility) which will not continue beyond the third quarter of 2016. [Appendix 3.4-B](#) illustrates the positive impact of expense adjustments for these legacy expenses.

The 2014 budget was developed using a single year of program-level data, as these data had not been compiled prior to 2013. Actual new enrollment varied from projections at the program level, with lower tuition programs achieving higher than projected enrollments and the reverse for higher tuition programs which negatively impacted tuition revenue. The 2015 and future budgets will be developed with projections more closely matching 2014 activity.

Projection of 2014 revenue from new markets underestimated the time required to develop these sources of revenue. As a result, anticipated revenue from extended education and international students fell below projections in 2014. As the work required to develop these sources of revenue has taken place in 2014, revenue from these sources can be reasonably expected to increase in 2015 and beyond.

The university continues its efforts to reduce the expenses related to the Cypress campus, although these efforts have not yet proved successful. The 2016 year will be the final year of obligations under the current Cypress lease, which will reduce expenses significantly.

A three-year budget (2015-2017) has been developed using conservative enrollment projections based on 2013 activity and available 2014 budget and enrollment activity. The budgets for 2015-2017 allocate resources for additional faculty, student support services, and outcome assessment. The percent of expenses allocated to academics and student services in these years is the highest of the four major expense categories. Anticipated savings from the expiration of the Cypress lease in 2016 have been primarily allocated to the academic area. [Appendix 3.4-C](#) provides the current summary three-year budget projections, including assumptions upon which the budget was developed. These projections are subject to review and revision as additional 2014 information is available. When the 2015 budget is created, the 2016 and 2017 projections will be revisited.

Any discussion of the university's current fiscal condition would not be complete without reference to the impact of the probationary status of its regional accreditation. Although new enrollments have increased, current and potential students have expressed concerns regarding the continuation of the university's accreditation. Several major contracts in Europe and Asia were lost as a result of this status, severely impacting efforts to increase international enrollment in 2014. Potential domestic partners expressed interest, but indicated they would resume meaningful discussions once probation was lifted.

3.5 The institution provides access to information and technology resources sufficient in scope, quality, currency, and kind at physical sites and online, as appropriate, to support its academic offerings and the research and scholarship of its faculty, staff, and students. These information resources, services, and facilities are consistent with the institution's educational objectives and are aligned with student learning outcomes.

Until this year, information and technology resources at the university were provided by a combined enterprise/information management system designed in-house (NGL). A major goal of the new administration was to assure that resources were adequate to the informational needs of the university and that its distance education system provided the best possible learning experience. Three major changes have occurred.

First, a review of the utility of the learning management system element of NGL revealed that the current system did not provide the variety of online learning experiences deemed appropriate for effective distance education. The provost initiated a system search and the Pearson Open Class platform was chosen as the university's learning management system. Course migration began in fall 2013, and is scheduled for completion in fall 2014. This system provides a greater variety of educational experiences for distance learning students, and also provides a number of academic support services for both online and onsite students (see CFR 2.13 for additional information about Smarthinking). Distance learning provision is evaluated by students in their course evaluations each term, and data is used to improve service. As students gain familiarity with this new system, evaluations have become increasingly positive. In summer I, course evaluations, 91% of the 97 respondents rated online access "somewhat" (20%) or "very" (71%) easy, and 92% rated access to online technological support "somewhat" (29%) or "very" (63%) easy.

Fulfilling the needs of the university for institutional data has been enhanced by two additional changes: the use of Salesforce for marketing and admissions data, and the substitution of CampusVue for the NGL enterprise system. Salesforce was implemented in early 2014 and provides easier access to the reports required for consistent and accurate tracking of marketing and admissions data. The Vice President of Marketing utilizes data to create reports showing inquiry and application information by source and to calculate cost per inquiry and cost per application. The reports are reviewed in regular meetings of the Vice President of Marketing with the President and are discussed at Leadership Team meetings. The Vice President of Admissions updates application and admission report information for the forthcoming term approximately twice a week, and distributes these reports to all admissions advisors, registration staff, student advocates, college deans, and members of the Leadership Team. Other admissions reports are used by the VP of Admissions to monitor activity of admissions advisors in the department. The use of Salesforce has provided greater accuracy in tracking leads by source by program. This additional information available permits more efficient distribution of leads to the appropriate admissions counselors. An additional software package (Sparkroom) links Salesforce data with data from a new lead generator and provides the VP of Marketing with real-time analysis of student recruitment activity, permitting more efficient use of marketing budget allocation. The CampusVue system will be implemented in fall 2014 and information about report creation, distribution, and utilization will be available at the time of the April 2015 site visit. It should be noted again that the costs of these technological changes will result in a savings of over \$200K per year over the costs of maintaining the in-house system.

Staff and faculty training in the use of these new technological resources has been implemented. Online training modules are available for both Pearson Open Class and CampusVue to acquaint new staff and faculty with the systems.

The university library's onsite holdings and online databases, available to all students and faculty, provide the access necessary to promote scholarship and research activities. The onsite computer lab assists in this endeavor. The university librarian regularly conducts information literacy training for students, and the onsite and online holdings are regularly reviewed to ensure maximal coverage is aligned with program content.

Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes

3.6 The institution's leadership, at all levels, is characterized by integrity, high performance, appropriate responsibility, and accountability.

Appendix 3.6-A provides a leadership organizational chart which describes the responsibilities of each major administrator, and vitae of all members of the President's Leadership Team. All members of administrative leadership are qualified for their roles by both education and prior experience. Their performance level is evident from a brief review of their activities in their no more than two years (sometimes less) of employment.

The president was responsible for the employment of all administrative leaders whose performance is described below. He initiated regular group meetings of all his direct reports (the President's Leadership Team), as well as meeting individually with each member on a regular basis. Leadership Team meeting minutes are provided in appendix 3.6-B.

Upon assuming the presidency, President Cole realized that the board was not being fully informed on issues of marketing, finance or educational effectiveness. The president created a series of metrics which are updated and reported to the board at each of its meetings.

Early in his tenure, it became clear to President Cole that the board would need to be informed of institutional activities and progress more often than at regularly scheduled board

meetings. Consequently, he began writing Midterm Board Reports and provided them to all trustees between meetings. These reports are provided as [appendix 3.6-C](#). These midterm reports were not submitted between January and June, due to President Cole's illness. Midterm reports will resume in September, 2014.

President Cole continues to work closely with the current board chair and standing committees to assure that the board is kept fully informed of university activities and has the information it requires to fulfill its governance responsibilities. He inaugurated and supervised the community-wide mission re-articulation and strategic planning processes. The president conducts annual performance evaluations of his direct reports to assure that the responsibilities of each are appropriately carried out.

The Vice President of Marketing has developed a coherent and consistent marketing process, including outreach to populations aligned with the mission and values of the university and regularly provides the Leadership Team with efficacy reports. A recent review of inquiry costs resulted in the elimination of a relatively low-performing but relatively high-expense source of inquiries, resulting in a lower cost per enrollment.

The Vice President of Admissions has developed an extensive training manual for admissions counselors, closely monitors performance, resulting in significant enrollment increases. In the first three terms of 2014, new and total enrollment has met or exceeded projections. Spring II 2014 new enrollment (108) was 208% of spring II 2013 new enrollment (52); spring II 2014 total enrollment (375) was 192% of 2013 enrollment for that term (195).

The Vice President of Compliance and Regulatory Affairs began by successfully addressing serious issues involving previous financial aid irregularities, and has reorganized financial aid processes to assure both ongoing compliance and student-centered processes. Additional financial aid staff has been employed to ensure quality service. The processes of registration and student services have been streamlined. The position of Student Advocate was created (and staffing recently increased) to enhance student services. As noted previously, student satisfaction with academic advising has increased from 63% of 60 in late 2013 to 76 % of 131 in the June 2014 survey.

The CFO has developed a budget process with evidence-based projections of both enrollment and revenue, meets regularly with the President to review fiscal status, provide monthly fiscal updates to the Leadership Team and quarterly updates to the Board Finance Committee and the full board. All fiscal activities are closely monitored.

The Director of Administration and Human Resources has undertaken a series of projects in the last year to increase effective management, including:

- Creating and implementing consistent hiring processes and documentation for all adjunct, part-time, contract and full-time employees;
- Updating job descriptions for all positions;
- Creating job competencies for use in each department for accurate and consistence performance evaluations;
- Implementing a 90-day review process for new employees;
- Designing and implementing consistent, equitable performance improvement plans and disciplinary procedures;
- Assisting with recruitment and hiring of core faculty members
- Revising, updating, and maintaining the Employee Handbook
- Updating complaint and whistleblower policies to assures compliance with best practices and accreditor requirements;

- Updating policies/procedures regarding harassment and implementing harassment training for management.

The Director of Administration and Human Resources (HR) was trained as the ADA Compliance Officer. She is currently enrolled in a certificate in HR Management at San Diego State University, and engages in continuous training for HR compliance (Fred Pryor Seminars) and HR legal compliance (Teague).

In January 2013, the final member of the Leadership Team, the provost and Chief Academic Officer, was hired. In addition to serving as the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) and conducting the regular duties and responsibilities of overseeing the academic activities of the university, he has:

- authorized and assisted faculty in the creation of a Faculty Senate;
- assisted students in the development of a Student Senate;
- assisted staff in the development of a Staff Senate;
- assisted deans and faculty in developing and implementing program review and student learning outcome assessment processes;
- implemented a review of distance learning activity and the migration of online courses to the Pearson Open Class platform;
- instituted regular meetings with deans and core faculty.

The provost has filled core faculty positions in each program as well as a core faculty in general education (who also oversees learning outcome assessment in all programs). He works with the CFO to assure inclusion of core faculty and assessment resources in budgets. He also works closely with the VP of International Development in his recruitment efforts. Minutes from meetings of academic administration (provost and deans) from July 2013 to date are included as [appendix 3.6-D](#).

In the winter of 2014, a Vice President of International Development was employed. He has initiated a series of conversations with international educational institutions and other sources of international students. Activities in 2014 have focused on developing relationships and obtaining the required approvals needed to recruit international students. A part-time international student advisor is available to develop the resources necessary to accommodate students from other countries (e.g., living accommodations, orientation processes). Currently, a few applications have been received and are being processed. As noted earlier, the university's probationary status has, to some extent, hampered recruitment efforts. The university anticipates international recruitment efforts to result in enrollment in 2015 and beyond. All activity in this area is being accomplished in accordance with WSCUC's International Student Policy.

3.7 The institution's organizational structures and decision-making processes are clear and consistent with its purposes, support effective decision making, and place priority on sustaining institutional capacity and educational effectiveness.

The organizational chart referenced in the previous section ([appendix 3.6-A](#)) outlines the responsibilities of each administrative leader. In the academic area, the Faculty Senate Handbook ([appendix 1.3](#)) outlines the roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes of this body. The 2014-15 strategic plan objectives ([appendix 4.6-B](#)) clearly delineate the priorities of academic quality and the fiscal stability needed to sustain institutional capacity, including attention to educational effectiveness. As noted in section 3.4, the proposed 2015-17 budgets ([appendix 3.4-C](#)) include resources dedicated to program review and learning outcome assessment.

3.8 The institution has a full-time chief executive officer and a chief financial officer whose primary or full-time responsibilities are to the institution. In addition, the institution has a sufficient number of other administrators to provide effective educational leadership and management.

The university's Chief Executive Officer (president) and Chief Financial Officer, as well as all members of the Leadership Team (see CFR 3.6) are all employed full-time. Each of the four colleges (Arts & Science, Business, Education, and Nursing) are administered by a full-time dean. Faculty Senate activities are coordinated with college administrative activities to assure effective educational leadership. The university employs a full-time Librarian responsible for hard copy documents and online databases. The offices of registration and student services are supervised by the VP Compliance and Regulatory Affairs and are staffed with full-time employees. The CFO supervises a staff responsible for all accounting issues.

3.9 The institution has an independent governing board or similar authority that, consistent with its legal and fiduciary authority, exercises appropriate oversight over institutional integrity, policies, and ongoing operations, including hiring and evaluating the chief executive officer.

The composition of the university's Board of Trustees has undergone significant changes since the April 2013 self-study and site visit. The status of the board at the time President Cole took office and the bases upon which changes were made are detailed on page 26 of this document. A new board president, Patricia Potter, took office in early 2014. Ms. Potter has broad administrative experience, having served as Interim President of National University from 2009 until her retirement in 2013, and prior to that having served as a Vice Chancellor of the National University System. Ms. Potter is a member of the WSCUC Eligibility Review Committee and has chaired two visiting teams and served on two additional teams. Ms. Potter immediately engaged the board in completing the process of bylaw revision and actively recruiting additional independent trustees with deep experience in higher education. New board members were fully informed of the difficult situation at USU; however, they agreed to serve based on their belief in the institution's mission, their confidence in the new Leadership Team to achieve a turn-around, and their conviction that the owner/investor would continue to support USU until such time as that occurred.

Changes in board membership were designed to provide additional expertise in higher education, accreditation, and the assessment of educational effectiveness. Eight of the current 15 members (53%) began their tenure after the April 2013 site visit:

- Marlene Lowe, PhD., assessment advisor at the University of California San Diego;
- Maryann Jones, Esquire, who has served on six WSCUC visiting teams and serves as a higher education consultant;
- Patrick Debold, who has experience with program and credential offerings in content areas (e.g., nursing and health science) and student populations (e.g., military) consistent with the university's mission;
- Pilar De La Cruz-Reyes, head of the Central California Center for Excellence in Nursing Education and former Dean of the College of Nursing at United States University;
- Patricia E. Potter, retired Interim President of National University, with 25 years' experience in higher education administration and significant board experience
- Troy Roland, PhD, CEO of Vantage Investments, with 12 years in higher education administration in California;
- Dr. Victoria Dorman, managing director of the Keller Center for Innovation in Engineering Education at Princeton University; and
- Dr. Garry D. Hays, former president of United States International University (USIU) and current chair of the WSCUC Eligibility Review Committee.

Of the 15 current members of the board, 12 (80%) qualify as independent members under the definition provided in WSCUC's Policy on Independent Governing Boards. Independent members are the majority on all board committees. The majority owner of the university is an interested member of the Board of Trustees. In the May 2014 report following the Substantive Change of Ownership site visit evaluators noted that “[t]he university Board of Trustees is responsible for the overall governance of the institution, and the Board of Managers retains certain fiscal responsibilities.” The specific roles and responsibilities of each board member is delineated in the Board Bylaws ([appendix 1.5](#)) and are described in more detail in the response to CFR 1.5.

The Bylaws were revised in fall 2013 in accordance with best practices at other institutions and in addition to other changes, also created four committees of the board: Academic Affairs, Finance, Audit, and Nominating. The final draft of the revised Bylaws was submitted to WSCUC with a request that the document be reviewed by legal counsel to ensure its compliance with the WSCUC policy on Independent Governing Boards. USU was informed that the Bylaws were in compliance. In January 2014, the USU Board of Trustees adopted the revised Bylaws. Following adoption, new officers and committee chairs were elected.

Current board and standing committee composition, showing terms of service, and information about the experience each member brings to the board are shown in [appendix 3.9-A](#). [Appendix 3.9-B](#) provides brief vitae for all board members. Information on board minutes are provided in [appendix 3.9-C](#) and recent board presentations in [appendix 3.9-D](#). [Appendix 3.9-E](#) includes board committee minutes.

In early spring 2014, President Cole, new board chair Ms. Potter, and the principal member of the Board of Managers (and current majority owner) Dr. Oksana Malysheva attended the WSCUC Workshop for Presidents and Trustees, further enhancing their understanding of their governance roles.

A statement on Governance and Trustee Responsibility ([appendix 3.9-F](#)) was developed and adopted by the board at its July 2014 meeting, and amended in August 2014 to emphasize the board's commitment to USU's compliance with WSCUC Standards, policies, and procedures. The statement is posted on the USU website. A Board Handbook is being developed and a revised and strengthened best practice conflict of interest statement was created and signed by all board members ([appendix 3.9-G](#)).

Additional evidence of the board's commitment to and engagement in the institution is the level of participation of USU board members in the May 1, 2014 Special Visit related to the Substantive Change submission for a Change of Control. Most board members were present for the meeting with the evaluation team; the others joined the meeting by telephone resulting in 100% participation by the USU Board of Trustees.

Evaluation of the president is specifically noted in the Bylaws as a responsibility of the Board of Trustees. Section 1.15.2 states that: “The evaluation of the President’s performance shall be conducted based on an assessment of performance against written goals and objectives, specific and general and metrics, developed by the President and presented and approved by the board at beginning of each fiscal year.” Though the board had been engaged in an ongoing evaluation of President Cole since his arrival in 2013, a formal policy for evaluation was not adopted until the July 2014 board meeting ([Appendix 3.9-E](#)). The policy was based on a lengthy review of best practices in the area of presidential evaluation. The delay in adoption was due to the serious illness of the president (who was away from the university from February until early June). Metrics tied to the USU Strategic Plan will be used to evaluate specific aspects of presidential performance and are currently being developed by the board.

In 2013, the Board of Trustees engaged the services Dr. Jill Derby, a consultant from the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) to review Board activity and make recommendations for improvement. This initial workshop was designed to acquaint current board members with best practices in governance of educational institutions, and resulted in the revision of Bylaws and commitment to full compliance with WSCUC policies regarding board governance. In May 2014, ten of the twelve Board members responded to the Board's first self-evaluation. The results of the evaluation were circulated to all members and have provided the Chair and officers with a roadmap for future development. In addition, the self-evaluation was shared with Dr. Derby and provided the basis for the agenda for her second workshop which was conducted on July 22, 2014. This second workshop reviewed material presented in 2013 (as 8 of the 15 members were new) and included detailed description of best practices in board-administration relations as well as information regarding presidential evaluation. (Additional information on the most recent AGB workshop is available in [appendix 3.9-I](#).) The self-evaluation survey which began the current developmental process will be re-administered in early 2015 and results will be available to the April 2015 site visitors.

The members of the USU Board of Trustees are kept well apprised of USU's financial situation. The institution's major owner/investor, Dr. Malysheva, is present at every board meeting and has publicly reiterated her commitment to continue to provide financial support to the institution until such time as USU "turns the fiscal corner." The Board of Trustees felt strongly that seeking WSCUC approval of a Change of Ownership was an important step in strengthening the reputation of the institution. The action required significant personal time and expense on the part of Dr. Malysheva. Despite its current probationary status and fiscal position, USU's ability to attract highly qualified board members is evidence of its progress over the past 16 months and the board's confidence in the continued financial support of the primary owner/investor.

3.10 The institution's faculty exercises effective academic leadership and acts consistently to ensure that both academic quality and the institution's educational purposes and character are sustained.

The development of a functional Faculty Senate at the university is a recent addition to the process of academic governance. Since its development in fall 2013, faculty has taken an active role in the development and assessment of program learning outcomes (via the work of the Senate's Academic Committee). The recently developed Faculty Handbook ([appendix 1.3](#)) outlines the process by which faculty provide academic leadership. The Faculty Constitution and Bylaws are included as [appendix 3.10-A](#). [Appendix 3.10-B](#) contains minutes of Faculty Senate and [appendix 3.10-C](#) provides Senate Committee minutes, both documenting senate activities in academic decision-making

Standard 3 Summary

The university has in place a core faculty member in each of its programs, and an additional core faculty responsible for general education coursework (2.1, 3.1). This core is supplemented by over 70 active continuing adjunct faculty. Faculty are qualified by education and experience for their teaching and other responsibilities. Both core and adjuncts are actively involved in program review and learning outcome assessment. Course evaluation data are used as part of the faculty evaluation process, and a formal evaluation process (available in the Faculty Handbook) will commence in fall 2014 (3.2). Faculty development activities (professional and pedagogical) are supported by in-house trainings as well as the newly-established Fund for Innovation. Both core and adjunct faculty have been sponsored in attendance at ARC conferences and WSCUC workshops (3.3).

Financial Sustainability is the second of three strategic directions guiding the 2014-15 Strategic Plan (the first is Academic Quality). By creating a data-based budgeting process, developing plans to increase enrollment by marketing to specific target populations, creating a Division of

Extended Education to expand its non-degree educational opportunities, and actively seeking to reduce Cypress expenses, the university has focused efforts in this area and has improved its financial position (3.4).

The university has updated and expanded its technology resources (3.5) with a new learning management system (Pearson Open Class), new marketing and admissions software (Salesforce), and a new enterprise system (CampusVue), while simultaneously decreasing technology resource expenses. Ongoing training in the use of these new resources is available to staff and faculty.

Members of the university's administrative team are qualified by education and experience for their positions and have demonstrated their abilities in the major improvements made in their departments (3.6). All administrators, including the president and the CFO, are employed full-time (3.7). Organizational charts delineate clear responsibilities. Regular meetings of the Leadership Team are focused on effective decision-making and monitoring of both institutional and educational effectiveness (3.7). Similarly, core and adjunct faculty actively participate in academic leadership through the Faculty Senate and in assessment of educational effectiveness through the Academic Committee of Faculty Senate (3.10).

Major changes have been made in the composition and structure of the Board of Trustees, including a new board chair and seven additional new board members. All current and anticipated changes have the goal of strengthening the board's oversight of university activities by including members with academic, fiscal, or community-related experience. The revised Bylaws clarify the relationship between the Board of Trustees and the Board of Managers, and include a transparent and formal process for evaluating the president. Policies and procedures regarding conflict of interest and presidential evaluation procedures have been approved. A Board Handbook, based on best practices, will be developed in late 2014. The board has engaged in self-evaluation and consultation to improve its functioning and is committed to ongoing review of its effectiveness (3.9).

Of the elements included in this Standard and accompanying CFRs, the university's greatest challenge remains its need to demonstrate fiscal sustainability. Major improvements in budget development, enrollment projections, utilization of available resources, expansion of revenue-generating activities, and monitoring of activity at all levels have been accomplished. The university is committed to achieving its goal in this area, and is encouraged by the commitment of the new primary investor to ongoing financial support of the university in the presence of continuing demonstrable improvement.

Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

Quality Assurance Processes

4.1 The institution employs a deliberate set of quality-assurance processes in both academic and non-academic areas, including new curriculum and program approval processes, periodic program review, assessment of student learning, and other forms of ongoing evaluation. These processes include: collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data; tracking learning results over time; using comparative data from external sources; and improving structures, services, processes, curricula, pedagogy, and learning results.

The Faculty Handbook ([appendix 1.3](#)) contains information on the processes of curriculum and program approval. The university's program review and assessment of student learning processes are shown in [appendix 2.7-A](#). Additional information regarding the university's program review and student learning assessment is provided in CFR 2.7 and accompanying appendices. Student course evaluations are administered in each of the university's six sessions and results reviewed by college deans to determine areas in which improvement may be required. A student

satisfaction inventory was revised and administered in late fall 2013 and again in June 2014 ([appendix 2.10](#)). Responses to the fall 2013 survey were reviewed and used to improve student services, resulting in improved student ratings in the June 2014 study, as noted in several sections of this document.

Course evaluations are reviewed by the deans at regular group meetings. Each college dean then reviews the information for courses taught in their programs. For example, the deans use course evaluations to assess quality and clarity of course outcomes and assignments, as well as faculty effectiveness. The data provides a starting point to provide faculty with both positive and negative feedback and take any necessary remedial action.

The recent hiring process for a dean of the College of Nursing included a process by which the finalist engaged in a group interview with faculty and staff, who were then provided the opportunity to anonymously review the interview process. No decision was made until comments from the group were received and reviewed. The feedback obtained from this anonymous survey will be used to improve the transparency and inclusivity of future hiring processes.

New and total enrollment, as well as attrition and graduation information was developed by program by term for all programs and terms in 2013. These data were made available to college deans and were used by them to develop enrollment projections by term for their programs in 2014. The developed projections, together with average credit unit information for 2013, were used in the creation of the 2014 budget. As a result of this evidence-based enrollment and budgeting procedure, projections are proving to be more accurate, with aggregate (duplicated headcount sum) of overall enrollment in the first three terms of 2014 (1,151) slightly exceeding projected overall enrollment (1,127). The addition of actual 2014 data to the 2015 projection process will focus on achieving greater accuracy at the program level.

A program-level review of application and enrollment activity for 2013 and early 2014 terms revealed that graduate programs received fewer applications than did undergraduate programs. Most graduate programs were converting applications to enrollments at a rate comparable to that of other programs. The difference in graduate and undergraduate applications has resulted in graduate program enrollment growth appreciably slower than growth in undergraduate programs. Marketing efforts directed at graduate programs have been developed and will be implemented in the coming months, including building community relationships to increase awareness of the university's graduate programs, and specific recruitment and business partnerships. The June 2014 Student Satisfaction Survey indicated some level of interest among students in linked BAM/MBA and BSHS/MSHS programs; these possibilities are also being explored.

A review of term-to-term retention and first year persistence for 2013 and early terms of 2014 revealed two important patterns: 1) both term-to-term retention and first-year persistence were lower in undergraduate programs than in graduate programs; and 2) new matriculates comprised a majority of term-to-term attrition. On the basis of these data a retention task force was formed to address these issues. Activities designed to increase retention are focused on new undergraduate students, and include:

- Assessment of new student readiness to complete college-level work;
- Closer monitoring of and assistance to new students in their initial term;
- Mandated use of Smarthinking in early general education courses for assistance in writing assignments;
- Professional development activities for faculty.

Minutes of Retention Task Force meetings are provided as [appendix 4.1-A](#).

Close monitoring of new students in the first two weeks of classes began in summer I, 2014. Retention of new students in the first two weeks of this term (from start to census) increased from 71% in spring II to 83% in summer I. The task force began its work in spring 2014, and results of their efforts will be available at the time of the April 2015 site visit.

A set of benchmark institutions has been selected and retention/graduation data are compared with available information from these institutions. Benchmark selection was made on the bases of admissions characteristics, program offerings, and the nature of the institution. Institutions with similar programs, similar admissions policies, and similar geographic and/or institutional type (private for-profit) were chosen as benchmarks. [Appendix 4.1-B](#) provides information on retention comparisons with benchmarks. Benchmark data was drawn from the most recent available IPEDS reports.¹⁵ Although data show the university within the range of benchmark institutions in first year undergraduate persistence, efforts to increase retention will continue. As the majority of university programs (including all undergraduate programs) began in 2011 or 2012, insufficient data are currently available to meaningfully benchmark graduation data.

4.2 The institution has institutional research capacity consistent with its purposes and characteristics. Data are disseminated internally and externally in a timely manner, and analyzed, interpreted, and incorporated in institutional review, planning, and decision-making. Periodic reviews are conducted to ensure the effectiveness of the institutional research function and the suitability and usefulness of the data generated.

Prior to the administrative changes of 2012-2013, institutional research consisted primarily of survey administration and required reporting and little program-level data were easily obtained, and distribution of survey results was minimal. In early 2013, the university engaged the services of a consultant with experience in both accreditation and institutional research. Institutional data are now tracked in reports. Reports created by other departments are used in monitoring institutional effectiveness in specific areas and are aggregated by Institutional Research to update tracking files. Major current reports include:

- By term and program inquiry/application/enrollment reports (prepared by Admissions);
- By term application and enrollment by source of inquiry (prepared by Marketing);
- By term cost per new enrollment¹⁶ by source of inquiry and overall (prepared by Marketing);
- Current term Persistence Report (prepared by Student Services);
- By term by program new enrollment projection to actual activity;
- By term by program total enrollment projection to actual activity;
- By term by program term-to-term retention;
- First-year persistence by program of 2011, 2012, and 2013 matriculates¹⁷;
- Three-year (2012-2013-2014) by term by program new and total enrollment comparisons;
- By term by program average credit unit data;
- By term by program course enrollment data by range and average;
- Tuition revenue by program by term;
- Revenue-expense by program by term;

¹⁵ IPEDS retention data is drawn from fall matriculates, while the university tracks first-year persistence for all matriculates in a given year.

¹⁶ The university's prior enterprise system (NGL) had not contained the reports needed to disaggregate data by student demographics. One of the advantages of the new enterprise system (CampusVue) is the ability to easily obtain the required data. CampusVue will be operational in fall 2014, and therefore has not been able to provide these data in this report. At the time of the April 2015 site visit reports will include demographic disaggregation.

¹⁷ As the majority of the university's programs were not approved until 2011, the decision was made to track persistence in continuing programs only, and 2011 represents the earliest year of matriculation in these programs.

- Monthly revenue projection to actual and YTD activity (prepared by the CFO); and
- By term adjunct faculty workload information.

These reports are regularly distributed to members of the Leadership Team and academic administrations ([appendix 4.2-A](#) for detail regarding distribution and utilization), form the basis for metrics reported at each meeting of the Board of Trustees, and are regularly reviewed and decisions made on the basis of available evidence. Several examples of the use of these reports were described in the previous section.

In addition to developing required tracking reports, the university has revised its course evaluation and student satisfaction surveys and developed a process of regular collection and distribution of data. Course evaluations are conducted at the end of each term and aggregate data distributed to the Provost and deans for use in instructor and course review. Two administrations of the student satisfaction survey (fall 2013 and June 2014) were compared to determine areas of improvement and areas in which additional attention is required ([appendix 2.10](#)).

An alumni survey is under construction and will be administered in fall 2014, with results available at the April 2015 site visit. This alumni survey is designed to determine the degree to which alumni believe their education has prepared them for personal and professional success and includes ratings of learning outcomes aligned with core competencies. It also seeks information on alumni interest in participating in mentoring and advising current students. In conjunction with its proposal for CCNE accreditation, the College of Nursing is currently conducting program-specific stakeholder and alumni surveys.

Evaluations of specific activities undertaken at the university have also been conducted. Community response to mission re-articulation drafts were analyzed and used in developing the final mission statement. Board self-evaluation survey results were used to inform the recent AGB workshop. As the university has only recently implemented its new enterprise system (CampusVue), an evaluation of reporting effectiveness will be completed after the transition to this new system is complete and sufficient data for adequate evaluation can be obtained.

Moving responsibility for institutional research from an external consultant to internal activity began with the student course evaluations, which are currently an entirely internal operation. Academic quality assessment is under the direction of the Director of Outcomes Assessment. The core faculty member holding this position has, in preparation, attended the Assessment 101 workshop offered in early 2014 and a number of assessment-related presentations at the 2014 ARC conference. A description of this position is provided in [appendix 4.2-B](#).

Institutional Learning and Improvement

4.3 Leadership at all levels, including faculty, staff, and administration, is committed to improvement based on the results of inquiry, evidence, and evaluation. Assessment of teaching, learning, and the campus environment in support of academic and co-curricular objectives is undertaken, used for improvement, and incorporated into institutional planning processes.

Sections 2.10 and 4.1 of this document provide information on some of the improvements recently made as the result of inquiry, evidence, and evaluation. Assessment of teaching and learning are evidenced in the development and implementation of program review and learning outcome assessment processes, to which not only faculty staff and administration, but also the university's Board of Trustees are committed.

The university's strategic planning process begun with a self-review under the Standards, which utilized available data in determining what was needed to document compliance in all areas.

Short-term goals and objectives were developed and goals set as a result of this self-review and additional available data. The university's Strategic Planning activities are detailed in section 4.6.

4.4 The institution, with significant faculty involvement, engages in ongoing inquiry into the processes of teaching and learning, and the conditions and practices that ensure that the standards of performance established by the institution are being achieved. The faculty and other educators take responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes and uses the results for improvement of student learning and success. The findings from such inquiries are applied to the design and improvement of curricula, pedagogy, and assessment methodology.

The university has sponsored attendance at both the 2013 and 2014 ARC conferences. Five of seven members of the President's Leadership Team attended the 2013 conference, as well as three college deans and two faculty members. The 2014 conference was attended by the Chair of the Faculty Senate Academic Committee (who has been designated Director of Outcomes Assessment) and three additional faculty members (one core and two adjunct). Information received at the 2014 conference has been used in revising program-level learning outcome assessment.

Following the revision of program and course learning outcomes and the development of curriculum maps showing anticipated levels of outcome achievement, course sequencing for new students was adjusted to assure completion of introductory level course prior to enrolling in courses in which higher achievement levels are expected.

4.5 Appropriate stakeholders, including alumni, employers, practitioners, students, and others designated by the institution, are regularly involved in the assessment and alignment of educational programs.

The university's ELM/ABSN and MSN-FNP programs undergo periodic review and assessment by the California Board of Nursing and program improvements have been made as a result of these reviews. Evaluation of clinical placements in nursing and teaching internships are also used to improve programs. In the teaching credential programs offered in the College of Education, student teachers are evaluated (appendix 4.5-A) by the "Cooperating Teacher," a faculty member at the site of the student teaching, and results are used to review program efficacy. In the MS Nursing Family Nurse Practitioner specialization, clinical placements are monitored by "preceptors," professionals in the health care field who are members of the local community. Student activity is observed and evaluated by preceptors. The manual describing preceptor appointment and responsibilities is provided as [appendix 4.5-B](#). The manual includes evaluation forms used in this process.

Results of course evaluations and the regularly administered student satisfaction survey also provide information used to improve both academic and institutional services. Surveys have provided information from students on educational interests (e.g., new program specializations, linked undergraduate/graduate programs). An alumni survey is presently under development, which will request information from alumni regarding how programs improved and obtain information on employment of alumni.

4.6 The institution periodically engages its multiple constituencies, including the governing board, faculty, staff, and others, in institutional reflection and planning processes that are based on the examination of data and evidence. These processes assess the institution's strategic position, articulate priorities, examine the alignment of its purposes, core functions, and resources, and define the future direction of the institution.

Given the probationary accreditation status resulting from the April 2013 WSCUC visit and team report, the university determined that the capacity to demonstrate compliance with all accreditation Standards and Criteria for Review should be the focus of a short-term planning process, to be extended to a longer-term planning process as results of short-term activity are made available. To this end, the strategic planning process began with a self-review under the Standards

([appendix 4.6-A](#)). This self-review was completed in late summer 2013 and was followed by a day-long administrative retreat based on information obtained from the review and additional data from recently established reports. As a result of this retreat, three task forces were formed and a short-term strategic plan was developed ([appendix 4.6-B](#)). The plan was made available to all constituents on the university website and a comment was solicited via an online survey accessible through the website. Plan goals and objectives were specifically designed to assure compliance with all accreditation standards and criteria for review. The plan includes financial, academic, and operational short-term goals. Objective timelines and milestones were developed and progress assessed monthly. The plan was circulated to the board electronically and approved via digital vote in early 2014. The July 2014 progress report indicates that all plan goals have either been met or are on track to be met by the propose deadline ([appendix 4.6-C](#)).

Based on progress documented in the first five months of 2014, the process of expanding planning to a 2015-2018 Strategic Plan was begun. The president and the chair of the Board of Trustees convened a university-wide meeting in early June 2014 to update the community on short-term achievements and solicit ideas regarding appropriate content of a 2015-18 plan as well as processes for development and implementation. For those unable to attend the onsite meeting or participate by conference call, an online survey was created to expand community involvement. Staff, core and adjunct faculty, and students attended this meeting. Data from the meeting and survey were compiled and are currently being reviewed.

Board members with extensive academic experience reviewed this report. The university's current position was evaluated to determine where additional improvement was most required. In addition to providing guidelines for short-term activities, this evaluation will also inform the strategic planning process. The university's strategic planning group will review these evaluations and include among the goals and objectives of the 2015-18 plan activities designed to address the areas in which the greatest level of improvement is required.

A steering committee is currently being created to implement the strategic planning process. President Cole, Provost Stargardter, and CFO Jenson have been named to this committee to oversee planning in the areas of accessibility, academic quality, and fiscal sustainability, respectively. The Faculty, Staff, and Student Senate have each been asked to name a representative to serve on the steering committee. The Board Chair will identify a board member to serve as liaison to this group.

The initial steering committee meeting has been set for Tuesday, September 16. The group will meet monthly thereafter, or as needed to maintain the proposed timeline to completion. A draft strategic plan will be made available online for community review and comment in late November. Community comments will be reviewed by the committee and used in plan revision. A revised draft will be created by mid-January for review by the full board at its January 2015 meeting.

The 2014-15 plan focused on tactical efforts required to bring the university into compliance with all accreditation Standards and Criteria for Review. The 2015-18 plan will develop strategies designed to enhance the university's overall academic, fiscal, and accessibility positions in fulfillment of the university mission. The plan will include specific, measurable goals and timelines, and scheduled progress reports. The 2015-18 plan and information on the process of its development will be available to the April 2015 site visitors.

4.7 Within the context of its mission and structural and financial realities, the institution considers changes that are currently taking place and are anticipated to take place within the institution and higher education environment as part of its planning, new program development, and resource allocation.

From the perspective of its original (and continuing) mission, the university has remained committed to provision of educational opportunities for underserved populations. The recent

(2013) re-articulation of the mission statement was accomplished with an understanding of the shifting definitions of the underserved in the light of societal changes. The university is actively expanding its outreach to additional groups, such as military and international students.

Due to the restriction against proposing new programs resulting from the probationary status of accreditation, the creation of a new program adoption process has not been a priority in the past year. A process will be in place at the time of the April site visit. The process used in the recent development of a Global Health Certificate will provide a template for this. That process included: the undertaking of a feasibility study; the formation of a curriculum; initiation of the process at the dean level; a discussion at the faculty level; the formation of a global partnership; the creation of an advisory board, and the creation of an academic and administrative plan. Using this process as a model, the Office of the Provost, working in collaboration with the deans, will provide a “New Program Development Manual” for use when probationary status is lifted.

With regard to specific institutional realities, the financial stability of the university is a major goal, is noted as one of three strategic directions in its 2014-15 Strategic Plan, and will be included as a major goal in the 2015-18 Strategic Plan. Section 3.4 of this document details current progress in this area. As noted in that section, seeking alternative revenue-producing uses for the Cypress facility is actively being pursued. Additionally, the underutilized space at the Chula Vista campus has been made available to a new charter high school¹⁸. While the fiscal stability of the university is not completely assured, revenue and expense trends are more positive than at any time in its history.

Standard 4 Summary

University faculty and administration have developed and implemented program review and learning outcome assessment processes. Course evaluations and student satisfaction surveys are regularly administered. Information from all sources is regularly reviewed, with results used to improve academic and administrative functioning (4.1, 4.3, 4.4). Institutional effectiveness is tracked through a series of marketing, admissions, enrollment, retention, and revenue/expense reports, with results regularly reviewed by administrative leadership, board committees, and the Board of Trustees. Data have been used and will continue to be used to improve the effectiveness of university processes (4.2, 4.3).

In 2013, based on an internal self-review, the university engaged in a strategic planning process, which resulted in the short-term 2014-15 Strategic Plan designed to bring the university into compliance with all accreditation standards and criteria for review. Community comment on the plan draft was solicited. In 2014, capstone

the process to extend the plan through 2018 began with a community-wide meeting to develop a communal perspective on the future of the Institution (4.6). The process of developing the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan will continue considerations of the changing educational and societal environments (4.7), which have informed activities of the past two years. Internal and external environmental scans and participation of all constituents (4.5) will continue to inform the university’s decision-making processes throughout its 2015-18 planning and beyond

Self-Study Summary

The focus of university activities since the April 2013 visit and the July 2013 Commission action letter has been to implement activities which will bring the university into compliance with all

¹⁸ Noteworthy with regard to administration’s commitment to inclusivity, prior to finalizing this activity, comment was solicited from the university community (staff and faculty) by email; comments received were positive.

Accreditation Standards and Criteria for Review. The recommendations of the April 2013 report and the information provided in the July 2013 Commission action letter have guided its planning processes. Beginning with a self-review under the Standards (including a review of requirements of the compliance checklist) a workgroup was put in place and a short-term 2014-15 Strategic Plan was developed with measurable objectives and timelines to completion. Progress was assessed at regular intervals, and in June 2014, a university-wide meeting began the development of a 2015-2018 Strategic Plan. With wide community involvement, the mission statement of the university was rearticulated.

Technological resources have been improved with the cost-effective move to a new learning management system, new marketing/admissions software, and a new enterprise system. Enrollment and retention data have been compiled and are continuously tracked. Program-level tracking is now available. Enrollment and revenue projections used in budget development are now made with reference to available data. Additional efforts have been made to reduce expenditures and explore new sources of revenue.

Governance has been considerably strengthened with major changes in the Board of Trustees (as detailed in the introduction to Standard 3 and in sections 1.5 and 3.9 of this report). Processes for assessment of educational effectiveness via learning outcome assessment and program review have been established and are being implemented. Policies and procedures have been reviewed, aligned with best practices, and disseminated via the revised catalog and Employee Handbook and Faculty Handbook.

The initial faculty staffing plan has been implemented, with a core faculty member available for each program. A Faculty Constitution and Bylaws and a Faculty Handbook have been approved by Faculty Senate. The Faculty Handbook describes policies relevant to faculty, roles and responsibilities of core and adjunct faculty, and includes a comprehensive faculty evaluation process for both assignment to rank and promotion from rank. Faculty participation in program review and learning outcome assessment has increased, assisted by the development of professional and pedagogical training opportunities available to both core and adjunct faculty.

The May 1 Special Visit team concluded that “The institution has been responsive to the recommendations made by the Special Visit Team that visited the institution in April 2013” ([appendix I-A](#): May 1 Visit Team Report, page 11), and the evaluating team’s recommendations focused on continuation of activities. United States University is committed to continuing its current efforts, expanding with new activities as required, and evaluating its activities to assure both academic and institutional effectiveness.

Demonstration of compliance with accreditation standards is clearly the desired outcome of these efforts and has guided the short-term planning process. However, the primary purpose of the changes the university has implemented and will implement is the fulfillment of its mission to provide accessible, quality education to its target populations. The 2015-2018 Strategic Plan development is guided by this primary purpose.

Conclusion

In conversations regarding this self-study, the term “triage” was used to depict the activities of new leadership as they reviewed the status of the departments for which they were responsible. Given the educational focus of the university in nursing and health science programs, the term provides a useful metaphor for 2012, 2013, and 2014.

The first year (mid-2012 to mid-2013) was devoted to gathering information about the current state of affairs in institutional functioning and determining how best to prioritize addressing

the often all-too-apparent deficiencies. Some areas required immediate attention, such as the legacy of financial aid irregularities, creating a 2013 budget, and enhancing marketing and admissions activities. Others, such as enhancing technology resources, required additional reflection and investigation. With the arrival of the new provost, a similar triage of academic functioning began. Shortly after his arrival, the need to create a self-study prior to a newly scheduled site visit became a short-term priority; in retrospect this activity provided a means of organizing data, determining what needed immediate attention, and how best to address the deficiencies.

If 2012-13 was a year of triage, 2013-14 has been a year of “diagnosis” and development of “treatment plans,” *i.e.*, establishing new policies and practices, increasing academic rigor, developing a strong board of trustees, developing processes for academic assessment and increasing faculty participation in these activities, developing and implementing institutional research capacity, and all other activities described in this document. The 2014-15 year (and future years) will see continuous monitoring and evaluation, adjusting “prescriptions” and “treatment” to assure successful outcomes.

Sometimes important information cannot be easily covered in a specific Standard or CFR. It has been said that “not everything that counts can be counted.”¹⁹ What cannot be quantified, but is a major factor contributing to the university’s progress in the past several years is the change in perspective and attitude of its faculty and staff. President Cole has remarked upon the dispirited, almost despairing, attitude expressed by so many in his initial conversations, a sentiment echoed by Provost Stargardter regarding his initial encounters with academic administration and faculty. With the activities undertaken to complete the 2013 self-study, a not-so-gradual shift became apparent. Employees were re-energized as they became aware that their contributions were actively sought, and their opinions valued. As communication increased, so did the renewed commitment of faculty and staff. Although morale declined somewhat upon receipt of the July 2013 action letter, administration’s communicated resolve to address all issues which had resulted in probation overcame initial concerns, and faculty and staff commitment was restored. Whatever positive changes have resulted in this past year can be attributed in large part to that commitment.

¹⁹ A phrase often attributed to Albert Einstein, but more likely drawn from a 1963 introductory textbook by sociologist William Bruce Cameron!

Glossary of Acronyms Used In Self-Study and Appendices

ABSN	Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing
AGB	Association of Governing Boards
ALO	Accreditation Liaison Officer
ARC	Academic Resource Conference
BAM	Bachelor of Arts in Management
BoM	Board of Managers
BoT	Board of Trustees
BPE	Business Process Engineering
BRN	Board of Registered Nurses
BSHS	Bachelor of Science in Health Science
BSN	Bachelor of Science in Nursing
CBEST	California Basic Educational Skills Test
CCTC	California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
CFRs	Criteria for Review
CIO	Chief Information Officer
CLOs	Course Learning Outcomes
CPR	Capacity and Preparatory
DBA	Doctor of Business Administration
DFEH	Department of Fair Employment and Housing
DHS	Doctor of Health Science
DNP	Doctor of Nursing Practice
ED	Department of Education
EE	Educational Effectiveness
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
ELM	Entry Level Masters
FNP	Family Nurse Practitioner
FUN101	Fundamentals of University Success (course name)
HR	Human Resources
IAC	InterAmerican College
IACBE	International Assembly for College Business Education
ILOs	Institutional Learning Outcomes
IPEDS	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
LVN	Licensed Vocational Nurse
MAED	Master of Arts in Education
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MSHS	Master of Science in Health Science
MSN	Master of Science in Nursing
NACADA	National Academic Advising Association
NCATE	National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

NGL	Next Generation Learning
PLOs	Program Learning Outcomes
SV	Significant Ventures
USIU	United States International University
USU	United States University
VP	Vice President
WSCUC	Western Association of Schools and Colleges