

**REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM
CAPACITY AND PREPARATORY REVIEW**

To Pepperdine University

September 21-24, 2010

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Reaffirmation of Accreditation**

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The evaluation team in conducting its review was able to evaluate the institution under the WASC Commission Standards and the Core Commitments for Institutional Capacity and therefore submits this Report to the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for action and to the institution for consideration.

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I. Overview and Context

A. Description of the Institution and Visit

Pepperdine University) was founded in 1937 by George Pepperdine, a businessman who established the Western Auto Supply Company and was a lifelong member of the Churches of Christ. For its first 30 years, Pepperdine was a small, mostly undergraduate Christian college located in downtown Los Angeles. Graduate and professional schools were added in 1970, allowing university status to be achieved. In 1972, the University opened its newly constructed Malibu campus.

Pepperdine is an independent, medium-sized university enrolling approximately 7600 students in five colleges and schools. The University awards degrees at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. Seaver College, the School of Law, and the School of Public Policy (SPP) are located on the university's main campus in Malibu. The Graduate School of Education and Psychology (GSEP) and the Graziadio School of Business and Management are headquartered off-campus at Pepperdine's West Los Angeles regional center, as well as having a presence on the Malibu campus. The graduate programs of these two schools are offered also at a second regional center in Irvine, four off-campus sites located within 25 miles of the main campus or regional center, and four off-campus sites located beyond the 25-mile radius. Pepperdine owns five facilities and rents one overseas, and also owns a building in Washington, D.C. where Seaver College undergraduates take courses.

Regional accreditation was first received in 1949. Since accreditation was last reaffirmed in 2001, substantive change approval was granted in 2008 for the Fully Employed MBA to be offered at Pepperdine's Antelope Valley location. Later in 2008, the Irvine Graduate Campus and West Los Angeles Graduate Campus were recognized as regional centers. Pepperdine has received specialized accreditation through the following organizations: American Bar Association, American

Dietetic Association, American Psychological Association, Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, and the National Association of Schools of Music.

Pepperdine hosted the visiting team for its Capacity & Preparedness Review (CPR) in September 2010. In advance of the team's arrival at the Malibu campus, an individual team member visited the regional centers at Irvine and West Los Angeles. The team commends Pepperdine for the excellent planning and gracious hospitality at all locations supplied by President Andrew Benton and his staff, especially Darryl Tippens, Provost; Timothy Chester, Vice Provost; JoAnn McNayr, Team Leader, Information Technology Administration; Chris Collins, Assistant Provost for Assessment & Institutional Effectiveness; and Dana Hoover, Program Manager, Communication Administration, Information Technology. Thanks are also due to Barbara Wright, WASC vice president, who serves as the accrediting agency's staff liaison with Pepperdine and who accompanied the team for the first part of its visit.

Over the course of the visit, the team met with administrators, faculty, staff, and students; additionally, more than 70 confidential emails were received from members of the university community. The team appreciated the willingness of these people to provide information and to share their candid opinions about the University's many strengths as well as the issues and challenges that it faces.

B.1. Alignment with the Proposal

Having received a number of criticisms and recommendations from WASC's Proposal Review Committee regarding an earlier version, Pepperdine successfully resubmitted its Institutional Proposal in fall 2008. The approved version stated the following outcomes for the CPR:

1. The development of and more effective use of indicators of institutional performance and educational effectiveness to support institutional planning and decision making;
2. Greater clarity about the institution's educational objectives and criteria and standards of judgment for defining and evaluating those objectives;
3. Improvement of the institution's capacity for self review and of its systems of quality assurance.

Subsequently, after concluding that “the Institutional Proposal did not adequately attend to important issues raised in the 2001 WASC Commission Action Letter,” the institution “elected to focus on issues raised in past and present WASC reviews” (CPR Report, p.1). Dated June 2010, the CPR report consists of six “reflective essays,” covering the following topics:

- a) mission and institutional educational objectives;
- b) program review;
- c) high-impact educational activities;
- d) faculty engagement;
- e) evidence-based decision-making; and
- f) demographics, diversity, and effectiveness indicators.

While essays on these particular topics were not listed as “deliverables” in the 2008 proposal, the team believes that they fulfill their purpose of documenting Pepperdine's progress toward achieving the CPR outcomes listed above. Certainly, they provided the basis for follow-up questions and discussion during the team's visit, and permitted the team to draw conclusions about the University's meeting expectations for the CPR.

B.2. Quality and Rigor of the Review and Report

The team commends the University for the quality of the review and report. It was readily apparent that a great deal of time and energy had been invested in conducting the underlying

research, writing the essays, and compiling a substantial amount of supporting documentation. Data had been collected by such means as document reviews, surveys (local and national), inventories, and discussions with the various constituencies. Although a relatively small number of individuals on the University's WASC Steering Committee actually wrote the essays, the team was led to understand that input was solicited from faculty, staff, and students throughout the institution, primarily via wikis, before the drafts were finalized.

C. Response to Previous Commission Issues

The foreword to the CPR report suggests that the entire review (in its final form) was designed to address past and present WASC concerns, and the team's analysis and judgment regarding the adequacy of this response constitutes much of the remainder of the present report.

A brief review follows of the major recommendations contained in the Commission's 2001 action letter and Pepperdine's response to each.

University Planning and Direction: "...The Commission urges the University to develop an institutional plan that would serve to inform and guide school-level decisions and resource allocation in the context of mission and strategic priorities. While the team found a strong sense of purpose and direction among each of the schools and their faculties, a clear and focused understanding of institutional direction was not evident in the current culture of Pepperdine. The Commission congratulates the University for its efforts in organizing for more effective planning; however, it notes that the self study did not assess action plans defined in school-level strategic plans. A leadership role by the senior administration in the strategic assessment of institutional performance and effectiveness is also encouraged."

Initiated in 2005, a University-wide process led to the production of an institutional strategic plan in 2008 which is now being revised in light of the changed financial circumstances. Further discussion of planning and assessment appears in the team's responses to Essays 2, 4, and 5.

Integrating Values into Decision Making and Program Development: "...The Commission urges the University to articulate the values espoused in the mission statement in meaningful ways so that they can effectively inform decision making, particularly at the school level. For example, the values of service learning and the global experience appear to inform planning at the program level, however, how the institution plans to assess student performance in these two areas is not evident. To the degree that the University invests in the development of faculty expertise, curriculum design, and learning

resources to support these and other mission-based values, the team observed that a system to measure whether those investments contributed in positive ways to student learning needs further work and refinement.”

Progress has been made in response to this recommendation, although there is more to be done. The issue is discussed primarily in the team’s response to Essay 1, with additional attention in responses to Essays 2, 3, and 5.

Review of University Bylaws and Academic Freedom: “... *The Commission urges the institution to consider language in the Bylaws that reflects appropriate distinctions between policy and administration, and that the Articles of Incorporation be examined with regard to institutional mission and purpose.*”

Although the University revised its Bylaws in 2006, it is not clear that the language yet fully reflects “appropriate distinctions between policy and administration.” While the team found no evidence to suggest that the Board of Regents, through its Religious Standards Committee, has inappropriately interfered, for example, in the design of the curriculum or the hiring of faculty, nevertheless it seems that the current Bylaws might still permit this to happen.

Assessment: “... *The institution is encouraged to identify more clearly its goals in conducting assessments of educational effectiveness to establish baseline data and, as appropriate, performance indicators, and to utilize its assessment results more systematically. The Commission notes with concern the team's observation that the University has had as a focus its standing in national rankings, and the use of other institutions' performance indicators. The University is urged to develop its own benchmarks and comparisons, and goals for institutional improvement. It will be important for the highest levels of administration to demonstrate that assessment data and analysis is used for effective planning and decision-making.*

Pepperdine has made progress in this area through, for example, the incorporation of learning outcomes assessment into program review and the creation and staffing of an Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE). However, such questions remain as the degree to which faculty and administrators throughout the institution fully grasp critical distinctions between assessments made at the course, program, and institutional levels, and the extent of faculty ownership of student learning assessments at all levels. See, especially, the team’s responses to Essays 2, 4 and 5.

***Faculty Strength, Role and Influence on the Institution's Culture:**"... With the Commission's emphasis on educational effectiveness and student learning, it wishes to stress the importance of continued improvement of structures for faculty engagement on issues regarding the development and review of academic programs and policies...The institution is encouraged to seek better ways to involve faculty in the evaluation and assessment processes of student performance, learning goals, and educational technology. Pepperdine's educational environment across several physical and virtual learning sites calls for a unified faculty upon whom the institution can rely for analysis and perspective. ...The team noted... that there remains a need to examine the integration of technology across campus units, and the need to identify educational goals for the use of technology."*

The formation of the University Faculty Council (UFC) was a significant step forward, and the team was pleased to learn during the visit that a more open process will be used for selecting faculty representatives to serve on the University Planning Committee (UPC). Discussion of where Pepperdine stands in relation to this recommendation appears primarily in the team's response to Essay 4.

***Off-Campus and Distance Learning Programs:**"... The University is requested to work with Commission staff to develop a system for classifying site-based and distance learning programs so that the substantive change review process, where appropriate, can be more clearly aligned with institutional planning."*

The team was led to understand that this issue has been resolved. The off-campus sites at West Los Angeles and Irvine, for example, have now been classified as regional centers (and were visited as part of the CPR).

II. Evaluation of Institutional Capacity Under the Standards (CFRs in parentheses)

A. The six themes

1. Mission and Institutional Educational Objectives

Accreditation takes place in the context of the specific mission and purposes of an institution. In Pepperdine's case, the 2000-2001 accreditation reports recommended clarifying the relationship between academic excellence and the religious mission of the University. Essay 1 notes the progress on this issue, supported by many documents outlining activities aimed at

strengthening both the development of Christian values and achievement of high expectations for learning (1.1).

Although the essay suggests continuing tension between the spiritual goals and academic purposes, the program descriptions, syllabi, assessment plans and other materials provided to the team show integration. Equally important, both faculty and students report congruence between the elements of the mission and their experiences in and out of the classroom. It may be that if there is “mission confusion,” as suggested in the branding study, it is more a reflection of the decentralized organization of the University that gives autonomy to the schools to interpret the mission as it is most appropriate for each program. As noted in the essay, it is not realistic to expect that the experiences of undergraduates over the course of four years in a residential community will be the same as those of graduate students. Further, the fact that faculty are members of both the larger Pepperdine community as well as their own college and disciplinary communities inevitably results in a variety of experiences and perceptions about mission.

The section of the essay describing Initiatives in Faith and Learning, as well as other supporting documents, demonstrates extensive involvement of both students and faculty in a variety of activities over a period of years aimed at underscoring ways to integrate faith and learning (1.1). Orientation of new faculty, faculty development workshops, and student-led convocations on topics of interest are just a few of the many types of initiatives designed to support coherence of the mission (3.4). The relatively new document—Institutional Educational Objectives—provides a strong framework for a sustained conversation about values and learning outcomes (2.4) The alignment rubric is also a useful way to focus faculty attention on mission, yet again revealed differences among the colleges. Faculty from different schools describe numerous ways in which their teaching and scholarship are enriched and not restricted by attention to faith and values.

Since the last review, Pepperdine has made progress on building a framework of evidence that the mission is being accomplished. Faculty involved in assessment indicate that work on developing outcomes and gathering data for all programs is underway in all schools. A review of catalogs, syllabi, and program documents shows that the stated outcomes related to Knowledge and Scholarship are more developed than those related to Faith and Heritage and Community and Global Understanding, confirming the conclusions in the essay. By the time of the EER it will be important to show not only progress in developing and aligning outcomes but also evidence of broad faculty and student engagement with the issue of mission-informed learning and how the assessment information confirms levels of achievement and supports continuous improvement (1.2). Given the commitment to engaging students fully in their education and promoting life-long learning, additional attention might be given to how students can take more responsibility both for designing their course of study informed by the overarching Institutional Objectives and selecting ways to demonstrate their personal and intellectual development (2.5). Student participation in assessment of their learning would be a strong complement to the other assessment initiatives underway.

The essay acknowledges that many initiatives are not fully integrated into all parts of the University. Thus the challenge is to ensure that this conversation about mission and purpose goes beyond the period of accreditation and is sustained in everyday work. One avenue for accomplishing this is program review, which is discussed later in this report. Key to program review is outcomes assessment, and much of what is relevant to assessing academic performance can also be applied to assessing spiritual development, an aspect of the mission that is currently underdeveloped (2.7, 4.4).

The branding study and the climate studies provide important background for reflection on the degree to which the mission is understood and vibrant in all aspects of University life.

Understanding the implications of this information along with a careful analysis of the variety of other sources of data available should lead to the identification of a limited number of actions that hold promise for advancing the quality of the “Pepperdine experience” for all colleges and all members of the community (4.4). The recommendations at the end of the essay and the Action Plan for the Advancement of Student Learning Council are appropriate and should make it possible to make more public the achievement of institutional effectiveness.

2. Program Review

Since the 2001 WASC review, Pepperdine has continued to strengthen its program review process (2.7, 4.4). For various lengths of time across the past 10 years, four of the five schools have conducted their own five-year review processes. The co-curricular programs are reviewed regularly and include external reviews and benchmarks (Standards of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education - CAS). By definition, academic programs with external disciplinary accreditation have external reviews, but the remaining programs have not included this dimension.

In 2010 Pepperdine introduced a unified program review process for academic and co-curricular programs and a single set of guidelines for use university-wide. Included in these guidelines are expectations that meet the 2008 revised WASC standards for program review practices (2.7, 2.10, 2.11): use of evidence-based claims and decision-making (including disaggregation of retention and graduation rates), analysis of a program’s assessment of student learning outcomes, inclusion of external reviews, and use of program review results in planning and budgeting. The program review process has a well-supported infrastructure, including designated administrative leadership and both institutional research and financial resources to support programs conducting self-studies. Since the common guide is new, it remains to be seen if all schools use it

and whether they integrate the new requirements into their reviews, especially the inclusion of learning results.

Pepperdine also has an explicitly articulated process for integrating program review findings into budgeting and planning (2.6, 4.4). The CPR report rightly indicates that this process still needs to be more systematic (pp. 12-13). Discussions with the University Academic Council (UAC), faculty, deans, co-curricular staff, and the University Planning Committee (UPC) all reflected a common expectation that the reviews are presented to the UPC for consideration in budgeting decisions. The team observed that discussions focused on using the reviews for strategic planning or, more commonly, for acquisition of program resources. While these are critical elements in “closing the loop,” no mention was made, even when the team asked, of reviewing learning results to inform academic decisions or of using the planning and budgeting process explicitly to target improvements in student learning.

The focus on inputs and resources was replicated in the CPR documents and in multiple conversations about the use of program reviews at the program, division and school levels. The team did not find evidence of Pepperdine having made the shift from teaching to learning, from resources and other inputs to student learning outcomes (2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.7, 4.3). In a representative example, the UPC—the sole university-wide committee that reviews program reviews (all other reviews occur at the school level)—mentioned “the high aspirations we have for schools,” but no indicators other than resources and input measures were mentioned. Similarly, leadership repeatedly mentioned that Pepperdine values academic excellence but identified neither the indicators of such excellence nor how measurements would be made. It was not clear whether academic targets for improvement exist along with financial targets or improvements in rankings.

In the absence of a unified system of quality assurance processes and a clear method for organizing relevant evidence (these varied by school—a common refrain throughout the visit), the

team had difficulty locating evidence relevant to each line of inquiry. With concerted probing, the team uncovered good practices where faculty were actively assessing student learning in their annual and five-year reviews and using the results explicitly to improve student learning. Overall, however, the discussions and documentation provided indicate that the emphasis is still on assessment at the course level, as opposed to determining how well the entire program's students are achieving the program's learning outcomes. It is unclear if Pepperdine yet fully understands this important distinction. The CPR report describes the institution as *emerging* in its capacity for program-level assessment of student learning. The team's observations corroborate this evaluation.

Notable good practice, from which the rest of the university could learn, is taking place in student affairs and the library (2.11). The team discovered that both divisions have robust practices for assessing student needs and student learning. They routinely used results for improving student experiences in co-curricular programs and improving the library's support of student learning.

To the University's credit, a well-developed analysis of the "current state of student learning assessment at Pepperdine" is found in the recent charter of a new group charged with promoting a culture of outcome-based assessment to enhance student learning" (Advancement of Student Learning Council, August 2010, p. 1). This group's charter document identifies the key strengths and significant deficiencies that the team found in the assessment processes. It notes "the uneven nature of the assessment of student learning at Pepperdine," including uneven capacity for writing assessable outcomes; the absence of coordinated efforts to evaluate assessment processes and, therefore, "no real ability to indicate the quality of these [assessment] components across the University" (p. 2). The charter of this new group is an encouraging sign of an emerging cross-school faculty leadership taking collective responsibility for developing good assessment practices throughout all five schools. However, it relegates the quality assurance function (as opposed to the dissemination of culture of evidence function) to the existing University Academic Council despite

the latter currently having no such charge nor any training in the oversight of academic quality assurance processes. So faculty “collective responsibility” still needs to be determined (2.4, 4.4)

Overall, to be prepared for the EER, Pepperdine will need to shift its focus from inputs and resources as indicators of quality to a focus on outcomes and student learning results. By the time of the EER, Pepperdine must demonstrate not only *processes* for assessing student learning outcomes at the program-level, but also effective use of results to improve student learning. To do this, programs will need consistently to define “levels of student achievement necessary for graduation that represent more than simply an accumulation of courses or credits” (2.2). As is evident in the school catalogs, the Pepperdine website, and documentation included with the CPR report, programs and degrees are still largely framed in terms of fulfillment of curricular requirements and adherence to academic policies, not in terms of learning outcomes or standards of achievement necessary for attaining degrees and pursuing careers (1.2, 2.2, 2.3). (Although this finding is corroborated by documentation supplied under Standard 2-2 in the Appendix to the CPR report, evidence is provided elsewhere suggesting that CFR 2.2 is met by a few programs, which could serve as models for others to follow. For example, according to an “Educational Quality Indicators” document supplied under Standard 2-7, the Educational Leadership Academy (ELA) and Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy (ELAP) programs in GSEP have defined expected levels of student achievement, specifying required ratings on an analytic rubric.)

By the time of the EER, Pepperdine needs to clearly articulate and publicize (catalog, website, program materials) all student learning outcomes, performance indicators and standards of achievement for each degree (1.2, 2.2, 2.3) and make this information readily accessible in at least one single location. It should demonstrate effective program-level assessment practices throughout the institution, including systematic use of results for improving student learning (2.7, 2.10, 4.4); this includes demonstrating whether graduates achieve the desired levels of performance, systematic

use of the results for program improvement, and benchmarking with comparable institutions, if possible (2.6, 4.4, 4.6). It should fully implement its 2010 program review process and use the results, including results of student learning, to inform budgeting and academic planning/decision-making at all levels of the University. Finally, Pepperdine should be able to demonstrate faculty collective responsibility for assessment processes and student achievement of learning expectations (2.4)

3. High Impact Practices

For its study of high-impact practices (HIPs) in undergraduate programs (2.5), Pepperdine's CPR examined data from the 2009 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) that the University deemed relevant to high-impact practices, an audit of student participation in ten HIPs identified by the Association of American Colleges & Universities, discussions with faculty in each school, and an audit of student participation in HIPs in three co-curricular areas. Based on these data, the CPR report draws attention to the prevalence of such practices—e.g., 100% of Seaver students engage in at least 6 out of 10 HIPs—and faculty satisfaction “with the quantity and quality of high-impact experiences available to students” (17). Pepperdine performed especially well on two of the three NSSE measures examined: active and collaborative learning (“comparable to Far West counterparts and high performing NSSE peers”) and enriching educational experiences (EEE) (comparable to top 10% of NSSE peers). On the student-faculty interaction (SFI) measure, Pepperdine was “outpaced by its Far West peers” (p. 15).

The research brief by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) on the 2009 NSSE findings (Taningco Kaldor, 2010) also points out that EEE for seniors has been in decline since 2007 and that students of color have lower participation rates in both SFI and EEE (particularly unfortunate since Kuh's research, cited in the CPR report, suggests that students of color typically benefit more than their white counterparts from participation in HIPs). These lower participation

rates by “non-whites” in both SFI and EEE stand in contrast to the HIPs audit data which indicate proportionate participation rates by demographic groups. As well, the decline in enriching educational experiences is curious in light of the widespread prevalence of HIPs. This difference merits further inquiry and analysis, as noted in the CPR report, since pedagogy is central to achievement of learning outcomes.

For graduate and professional programs, Pepperdine conducted a similar program audit. While graduate programs were not the focus of this essay, the analysis of high impact practices in graduate programs remained undeveloped overall.

Based on data provided in the HIPs essay and student/faculty discussions, the prevalence of high-impact practices appears to be a distinguishing feature of a Pepperdine education. For example, 60% of Seaver undergraduates participate in study abroad. In discussions with Seaver students, both study abroad and participation in different forms of service (e.g., service learning, Social Action and Justice) were identified as being among their most valuable learning experiences. However, no mention is made in the CPR report of assessing the impact of HIPs on student learning; instead, prevalence appears to be equated with excellence (2.6, 4.4). Even the follow-up recommendations listed in the report focus on gaining a deeper understanding of participation rates rather than on developing an institutional understanding of how these practices contribute to student learning for undergraduate and graduate students (2.4, 2.6, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7).

Despite this omission from the CPR report, faculty and student affairs staff who use high-impact practices spoke at a meeting of many vibrant examples of the impact such practices have had on students. They provided examples of ways they have assessed specific high-impact courses and used the results to strengthen course design. Faculty also discussed how they have shared their good practices with their colleagues, in journal articles and at conferences.

The institution would benefit from a coherent system for evaluating, tracking, and disseminating the impact of HIPs so that all may learn—students, staff, faculty, and the public—from the good practices that abound. Which enhance achievement of institutional educational objectives and program learning outcomes? Do study abroad experiences, for instance, advance the institutional objective of “community and global understanding” or do they primarily yield other kinds of unanticipated learning? Do these high-impact practices work better in some areas (majors, schools, co-curricular divisions, etc.) than others? Are some of these practices more impactful than others? Do they impact students equally or differentially? An aggregate analysis of program review reports and learning outcomes trend data will be essential in such an inquiry. Only at the point that such data are available and collectively analyzed by faculty and other stakeholders will the institution be able to make evidence-based decisions about curriculum and pedagogy, as well as how the data should inform budgetary matters (4.3, 4.4, 4.7).

4. Faculty Engagement

Essay 4 is focused on the role and level of faculty involvement in academic decision-making and assessment of student learning processes (2.3, 2.6, 2.7, 3.11, 4.1, 4.7). Three hundred sixty-five full-time and 271 part-time faculty are dispersed unevenly among Seaver College, the Graduate School of Education and Psychology (GSEP), the Graziadio School of Business and Management, the School of Law, and the School of Public Policy (SPP). Each school varies in size and has its own purpose, culture, policies, and practices. The physical location of the GSEP and the Graziadio School in West Los Angeles, with other sites located away from the Malibu campus, presents further challenges in strengthening faculty engagement at the school and University levels.

As a result, the level of faculty engagement varies significantly among the five schools. On the one hand, this decentralized structure, recognized and supported by Pepperdine’s culture and leadership, allows for greater flexibility and a distinct focus on teaching and student needs within

each school. On the other hand, such decentralization results in the lack of a consistent and systematic data-driven approach to assessing student learning across all schools, as well as true faculty involvement in academic decision-making at the institutional level (2.3, 2.6, 2.7, 3.11, 4.1, 4.7).

The University survey conducted in fall 2009 suggests that 76% of faculty respondents have sufficient authority over academic decisions regarding programs and policies that influence student learning. Furthermore, 90% of faculty respondents believe that faculty direct the development and examination of student learning and academic standards in their programs. During the team visit, faculty also indicated that, in general, they have adequate and appropriate involvement and oversight of curricular and programmatic issues at school levels. A list of school, divisional, and program committees shows a substantial number of school-based committees dealing with such issues as faculty affairs, research, admissions, academic standards, teaching and learning, and related matters (3.3, 4.7). While inconsistent and disparate, this structure offers sufficient venues for deliberations, reviews, and approvals within each school.

It appears that faculty participation at the University level may have evolved into a more engaged process as a result of practices put in place since the last WASC review. For example, in 2002 the University Faculty Council (UFC) was created “to establish a formal relationship between and among the faculties of the five schools and with the University’s senior administration on issues of University-wide concern” and to offer faculty a more active voice in the decision-making process (3.8, 4.1, 4.2). In recent years, over 126 new faculty members have had an opportunity to participate in 10-day orientation retreats held at the University’s international campuses. Such retreats offer an opportunity for new faculty to better understand the institutional mission and may serve as a sound first step in engaging faculty at the University-wide level (3.2, 3.4).

An expansion of the function of the University Academic Council (UAC) is currently under consideration. The UAC's charter states that it is authorized "to review and to recommend academic policies, procedures, and standards for the University" but an examination of its minutes suggests that its role to date has been limited mostly to serving as an academic "gate-keeper," reviewing proposals for new programs, courses, and other curricular changes. While the aforementioned examples serve as good indicators of the University's efforts to increase faculty participation, much remains to be done by both the University leadership and the faculty in general to accomplish effective faculty engagement in academic policy development, assessment of student learning, and resource allocation at the University-wide level (2.4, 3.11, 4.1, 4.7).

The CPR report refers to two additional bodies, the University Planning Committee (UPC) and the University Management Committee (UMC), as "other opportunities for faculty to influence the direction and operation of the University" (p.19). The UPC's membership, as noted in essay 5, is largely administrative, with only three faculty representatives, all appointed, which can potentially diminish its primary charge and effectiveness (3.8, 3.11, 4.1, 4.2). The UMC is an action body which serves at the pleasure of the Executive Vice President and is charged with providing input and making decisions on a variety of management issues impacting the University. These issues include University policies, student services, employment matters, general operations, fees and recharges, and other University management functions. This 15-member committee includes two faculty representatives from two out of five schools.

As previously mentioned, the 2001 WASC Commission action letter stated that "a clear and focused understanding of institutional direction" (as opposed to direction within each school) was not evident in the Pepperdine culture at that time, and urged "the University to develop an institutional plan." Such a plan has now been prepared. However, strategic planning at the institutional level appears to be mostly administration driven (4.1). According to the CPR report,

historically decision-making at the University has followed “a consultative model: major institutional planning decisions regarding policy and practices are made by senior administration although faculty are notified and offered an opportunity to provide comment and counsel” (p. 19). Fall 2009 survey results and further discussions with faculty during the WASC visit also indicate that while they are involved in and aware of the strategic plans for their respective schools, they feel uninformed or have only cursory knowledge of the University-wide strategic planning efforts. This is consistent with the statement in the CPR report that faculty view their role as instrumental in the academic decision-making process while not so in University strategic planning. Thus, the plan does not appear to have been clearly communicated to or well understood by the rank and file. To remedy this situation, the report proposes a number of recommendations “in an effort to understand better both the role that faculty play and the attitudes that faculty have about themselves and Pepperdine University” (p. 21).

The team encourages the University to take note of CFR 4.1 which requires that multiple constituencies, including faculty, should be periodically involved in institutional reflection and planning processes to define strategic position, its priorities, core function and resources, as well as future direction. In preparation for the EER, the team encourages the University to develop and implement a strategy to more fully engage faculty in University-wide initiatives and strategic planning. Regarding the existing structure of a variety of school-based and University-based committees and their multiple functions, the team also expects that the institution will clearly define the governance roles, rights, and responsibilities of the faculty. This clarification will assist faculty in exercising more effective academic leadership at the University level.

At meetings and by means of confidential emails, some faculty and staff cited fears about speaking openly on a variety of issues related to academic and administrative matters. The team’s receipt of an unusually large number of emails (over seventy, mostly describing concerns, albeit

some praising the institution) suggests that some faculty and staff did not feel safe communicating in open forums, especially when administrators were present. Some even expressed fears that their email addresses might be traced. The team notes that Pepperdine’s non-retaliation policy is “designed to allow employees to address complaints in a fair, consistent, and objective manner. Any act of reprisal by a University employee or by one acting on behalf of the University, including the intimidation of a grievant, respondent, or witness, will result in prompt disciplinary action” (*Employee Grievance Procedure 30.1, Human Resources Policies and Procedures*). While this statement is appropriate and consistent with good business practices, it is apparent that some individuals did not believe that they are afforded adequate protection in practice. Direct reprisal did not appear to be their only fear; they also expressed concern about the possibility of losing out in a system which they viewed as giving deans and other administrators excessive opportunities for “patronage.” The team strongly encourages the University to continue to explore methods of improving the overall culture to create a climate of open communication and active participation among members of the entire campus community (1.3, 1.8, 3.11).

5. Evidence-Based Decision-Making

In 2006 the University Planning Committee (UPC) began a process to create a strategic plan. The extensive self evaluation included a SWOT analysis, environmental scan, and a vision gap analysis that were conducted by teams that involved a number of faculty and staff. Also studied were short “assessment reports” prepared by major units of the University; however it appears that student learning data were not included in this analysis (4.3). Pepperdine is to be commended for its careful review of information and its willingness to recognize institutional challenges. The core issues identified were in the areas of: location, mission, faculty and staff, students, nimbleness, and fundraising (4.1).

A few key issues that connect directly with planning are highlighted by the SWOT. It states that “While the mission provides an overarching purpose, there is concern that the University operates more as a multi-versity as opposed to a uni-versity.” Interviews with administrators and faculty indicate that the financial realities of the last three years have increased their understanding of the “interdependence” of the five schools. To support that interdependence, it is important for deans and faculty to “own responsibility” for the whole University and for faculty to be further involved in institution-wide governance and decision-making (3.8, 3.11).

The SWOT analysis also identifies the “nimbleness” of Pepperdine as both a strength and a weakness. The operational definition of “nimbleness” appears to be the ability to reallocate resources relatively quickly. The analysis states that limited bureaucracy makes it easy to get things done, but also expresses a concern that innovations need to be prioritized and resourced (4.1, 4.2). Pepperdine is commended for its desire to improve the institution in a number of different ways, but it might be helpful for the University to prioritize its initiatives and focus on mission-critical strategic objectives.

A draft strategic plan was created in November 2007. In response to invitations to comment, the UPC heard from 4.8% of the faculty and staff, most frequently (both positive and negative) regarding the mission-related uniquely Christian language in the document and next most frequently about academic excellence (programs, faculty scholarship and financial aid). The draft was clearly modified to respond to specific input from faculty and staff (4.1).

The most recent version of this document is the Strategic Plan 2012 (October 20, 2009), which includes five broad goals and 38 substantial initiatives. The list of initiatives does not appear to be prioritized (4.2). The team’s review of the documents and discussion with the school deans led to the conclusion that most of the school-level strategic plans were created before the Strategic Plan 2012 and thus they are linked to this plan in only a general way (4.1, 4.2).

In several different interviews, the WASC team heard that the University values the diversity of its school structure yet desires to move somewhat closer to being a “uni-versity.” This is an area in which Pepperdine has taken some intentional steps to create a greater sense of institutional unity. These include the development of a multiple-day all school new faculty orientation (as previously mentioned) and a one-day orientation in Malibu for all new staff from all locations. There are some joint faculty appointments between schools including a new faculty member shared by the School of Law and the School of Public Policy. A five-year BS/MBA program is offered cooperatively by Seaver College and the Graziadio School. The institution is also seeking to align processes through University committees including the University Tenure Committee, the University Academic Council, and the University Faculty Council.

Pepperdine has purchased PeopleSoft to unify a number of institutional management and data storage processes. In order to deploy PeopleSoft, many businesses processes and standards for the five schools were collaboratively aligned. Any customization of the software is handled through the central IT staff and not at the school level. PeopleSoft is part of the infrastructure developed to respond to the call for a “leadership role by the senior administration in the strategic assessment of institutional performance and effectiveness” in the 2001 WASC Action Letter (3.6, 4.4, 4.5).

The financial crisis that began in the fall of 2008 has slowed implementation of the Strategic Plan 2012. However the plan served the University well as it was making difficult reallocation decisions in the 2008-10 period. The University Planning Committee (UPC) has recently begun working on a modified planning document that better reflects the revised strategic priorities under which the institution has been operating since 2008: Deliver an Exceptional Academic Experience; Build a Reputation for Quality and Value; Build Pepperdine’s Mission-based Reputation; Build Community; and Build Resources (4.1, 4.2).

The draft goals for the updated plan are: Promote Our Students; Promote Global Understanding and Advance Knowledge; Build Community; and Develop Resources. Pepperdine has just begun this revision process and the details have yet to be fleshed out and vetted with the community. In many ways this is an update of the Strategic Plan 2012 with the notable exception that the diversity initiative is missing. As mentioned in the team's response to Essay 6, Pepperdine has worked hard to diversify its student body and has participated in some significant programs related to diversity (Irvine Foundation, POSSE, etc). It also recognizes that it has work to do, particularly in the area of faculty diversity. So it is unclear why this historically important issue for Pepperdine is not more clearly stated in the institution's current list of priorities and goals (1.5, 3.2).

The deans recognize that their school strategic plans need to be aligned with the University's strategic plan. Currently the schools are in a five year rotation for developing strategic plans. The team considers that greater cohesion would be achieved if all school strategic plans were to be aligned simultaneously with the institution's revised strategic plan shortly after the latter is completed and adopted (4.1-4.3).

A review of University Planning Committee (UPC) records indicates that the committee is exposed to a wide variety of information from different areas of the institution that is used in planning and budgeting (CFR 4.3). As part of its responsibilities, the UPC looks at annual reports from deans and the president, and under the leadership of the relevant dean, discusses the findings and actions taken as the result of curricular and co-curricular program reviews (CFR 4.1, 4.2). The team suggests that, at the institutional level, consideration of a few standard reports that allow comparisons between the schools might be more helpful than attempting to review a multitude of school-specific reports.

The University Planning Committee is comprised of the president, vice presidents, provost (who serves as chair), vice provost, deans, a few key staff members, and three faculty members who

are appointed by the administration. In response to the desire for greater involvement of faculty in governance issues, beginning in 2010 the administration and the University Faculty Council will collaborate in appointing the faculty representatives to the UPC (3.8). The team believes this is a step in the right direction.

The University Steering Committee (president and vice presidents) has ultimate responsibility for the creation of the budget (CFR 3.5 and 3.8). However, in addition to participation in the UPC, the school deans have an opportunity one at a time to meet with the Steering Committee to discuss the particular budgetary needs of their schools (3.8, 3.11, 4.3 and 4.8).

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) appears to be well resourced. Through this office there is a wide variety of support available for University assessment activities and the beginnings of a good assessment website (4.5). The OIE has begun to produce a series of high-quality research briefs that analyze specific institutional data. The OIE has also begun the process of addressing an acknowledged need to create a more centralized infrastructure for the collection, management, analysis, and dissemination and use of institutional data at all levels (1.2, 2.7, 2.10, 3.7, 4.4, 4.5). Again, these are thought by the team to be positive developments.

To be ready for the EER, the team suggests that Pepperdine take the next steps on its journey towards becoming a “uni-versity,” possibly by identifying some essential projects and processes that are best engaged in collectively as a university rather than individually as schools. Furthermore, Pepperdine should complete the updated strategic plan and at the same time make sure that all college-level strategic plans are aligned with it; and it should consider setting priorities among the strategic initiatives to increase the plan’s focus.

6. Demographics, Climate, and Effectiveness Indicators

The sixth essay in the CPR report reflects on elements of the Institutional Data Portfolio that the University believes important to deepening its understanding of the student learning experience. Pepperdine identifies diversity as a key component of its education objectives (1.2, 1.5).

The self-study: provides demographic profiles of various campus groups, such as ethnic, gender, and religious faith categories for students, staff, and faculty; tracks and explores how these groups experience the campus climate for diversity, and success rates for retention and graduation(4.4); looks at how Pepperdine students compare to students in peer and aspirational institutions on degree completion and other effectiveness indicators; and concludes with a discussion of the institution's goals regarding diversity, campus climate , and effectiveness indicators (2.10). Related to these issues is the larger question of participation and representation in campus life and student affairs. How do these dynamics play out at PU and what are the implications for student learning and success?

Pepperdine's mission provides a strong rationale for a diverse and supportive educational environment. In his 2000 inaugural address, the President affirmed his commitment to diversity. The provost's office is actively engaged in several diversity initiatives on campus. Two of the five schools have diversity councils and there is a joint University Diversity Council (UDC) composed of members from all five schools and the provost (1.5). These councils are advisory in nature and lack budget authority but periodically receive soft money support from the deans' offices. Inexplicably absent from the CPR report is mention of Pepperdine's receiving a share of the \$29 million that the Irvine Foundation invested through the Campus Diversity Initiative (CDI) to strengthen campus diversity efforts at 28 independent colleges and universities in California. Since 2006, this money has no longer been available, and access to financial support for campus activities

and programs has become tougher in the current economic climate. Staff members also report an adverse impact on diversity as a result of budget cut-backs and hiring freezes.

Nevertheless, in meetings with the diversity councils, the team uncovered descriptions of an array of programs, including leadership development and scholarship programs for students, which also are not discussed in the written report. This lack of clarity in the essay, coupled with the observation that diversity is no longer one of the strategic priorities (see Essay 5), left the team unsure of where diversity stands in relation to other important goals for the future. The CPR report reviews the demographic characteristics of the people at Pepperdine and concludes that ...”in terms of recruiting a more diverse student, faculty, and staff population, while Pepperdine may be doing a job comparable to its peer and aspirational institutions, the institution is not doing enough to fulfill its own institutional vision” (p.34). The team concurs with this conclusion. Levels of student diversity have been growing, and Pepperdine is urged to make strong efforts to ensure that this growth is sustained (1.5). One important initiative, Pepperdine’s partnership with the POSSE Foundation, is not included in the CPR report but was mentioned during the team’s visit. However, given the long-standing lack of significant change in full-time faculty and staff composition by gender and race/ethnicity (about which the report is largely lacking in critical analysis or reflection on causes), increasing faculty and staff diversity would be a logical primary focus for a renewed institutional diversity plan. Faculty and staff should assume a unified leadership role in implementing and sustaining efforts to change not just the numbers but the climate (3.2, 4.6, 4.8).

Of course, recruitment and retention are inter-related, both determine composition, and both are affected by the ways in which the institution supports diversity among the faculty, students, and staff, as well as the campus climate overall. Among the documents examined by the team were program reviews for the Office of Intercultural Affairs, the Counseling Center, the Career Center, and the Volunteer Center. One of the most revealing of these program reviews was that for the

Office of Intercultural Affairs, which includes several commendations regarding diversity initiatives and student involvement. For example, student workers and volunteers were involved in the office since the director had no other staff support. (As a result of the 2008 review, 1.5 staff positions were subsequently added.) On the other hand, the external reviewer's report also contains verbatim responses from campus focus group participants about disturbing incidents on campus, such as incivility in a convocation where majority students laughed and made noise during a presentation on privilege, making it difficult for interested minority students and others to hear the speaker. This behavior occurred again in a convocation about Asian-American spirituality.

Pepperdine is to be commended for recently conducting three insightful studies that explore the campus climate with respect to diversity, relying largely on the results of faculty, student, and staff surveys. Response rates were strong and the data have been analyzed to yield useful, if only preliminary, findings. The team notes with special interest the results of the faculty survey, as faculty are the intellectual leaders and guardians of student learning. Notably, there is a statistical difference between climate scores of males and females for nine of the ten factors listed, specifically 1) overall climate, 2) Pepperdine community, 3) tenure standards, 4) academic freedom, 5) climate on gender issues, 6) climate on race issues, 7) climate on disability, 8) climate on SES, and 9) climate on age. The tenth factor is climate on faith issues.

All ten measures suggest that male faculty perceive the climate to be more favorable---not surprising since they constitute the majority of the population. Females were 37% of the sample and males were the remaining 63%, roughly proportional to the faculty census. The two climate measures that have the largest difference between males and females are *tenure standards* and the climate on *gender issues*. The team sought to explore these apparent differences further while on campus, and received confirmation of concern among many women faculty regarding diversity and gender issues, for example, inequities in handling maternity leave and over involvement in

committee work, both of which could be detrimental to achieving tenure. Some women expressed concern about being identified as attending the open forum, and others about survey participation.

Variations in climate perceptions exist among faculty, student, and staff ethnic subgroups. The proportion of non-white faculty, however, is much lower than the proportion of non-white students and staff, suggesting that faculty status as minorities may be even more tenuous. For example, black faculty respondents indicated a lower satisfaction than their white colleagues on 7 of the 10 climate measures, while Asian faculty respondents indicated a lower satisfaction on 6 of the 10 measures.

The team found these findings intriguing and inquired about follow-up research, reactions to the studies, campus discussions of the findings, etc. The results have been shared within the campus via research briefs published on the Office of Institutional Effectiveness secure website, to which deans, faculty and staff (but not students) have access, and by limited discussion at the University Diversity Council. Future plans include content analyses by the Office of Equal Opportunity of the responses to a couple of open-ended items.

Eliminated from the published briefs are survey findings regarding respect for diversity of opinions about sexual orientation. Furthermore, the team was told that a student request for a Gay-Straight Alliance on campus had been refused, presumably as being antithetical to the school's particular Christian mission. One open forum comment and seven confidential emails were received by the team expressing a deep fear about a climate of "don't ask, don't tell" regarding homosexuality on campus. Comments were received from a cross-section of individuals including students, faculty, and staff expressing a fear of backlash and retaliation if gays and lesbians revealed their sexual identities (irrespective of sexual behavior, which is governed by rules that apply to everyone).

This is not the only issue on which some individuals expressed fear about speaking out. To achieve excellence as an institution, Pepperdine must commit itself to *inclusive excellence*. The team strongly suggests that Pepperdine make increased efforts not only to dispel such fears, but also to provide an environment that all perceive as safe for open discourse, committed to the success of all students faculty, and staff, vigilant about promoting a positive campus climate, and consistent in addressing especially concerns expressed by women and others who are in the minority among those who hold leadership positions at the University (1.5, 1.8). Furthermore although the CPR report acknowledges the need for better communication at the institution, the team believes that *participation* may be more of an issue than communication, particularly if the communication is thought of as mostly one-way.

B. Additional Comments Regarding the Four Standards

Issues relating to Pepperdine's compliance with the four WASC standards have already been discussed in the team's responses to the six essays contained in the CPR report. This section contains some additional observations by the visiting team, not previously fully addressed.

1. Standard 1

In order to present a clearer overall picture for the University, given current variations among the major units, it may be appropriate for the provost, deans, and Institutional Effectiveness staff to agree on the core documents that should be prepared annually, and to standardize the data and formats. This would facilitate analysis at both the college and University levels in support of both WASC accreditation and the institution's commitment to data-driven decision making. In regard to making public data on student achievement, Pepperdine should consider going beyond notable alumni profiles to provide graduation rates at the institutional and disaggregated levels (as are already available on the Educational Trust website) (1.2).

Documents on Academic Freedom are clear. The statement from the School of Public Policy includes language that also demonstrates an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of students to ensure an atmosphere of mutual trust in support of learning and scholarship. Given the commitment to fostering personal responsibility, this might be a model for other units (1.4).

The Board of Regents' Bylaws need to be updated again to include new requirements for a Conflict of Interest statement to meet the IRS 990 requirements. Similarly, the University policies need to include a "whistleblower policy" to meet the new requirements (1.6).

2. Standard 2

Overall, evidence for demonstrating compliance with much of Standard 2 was difficult to find in the supporting documentation. It appears that Pepperdine may have serious deficiencies in meeting CFRs 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10, for reasons that are largely spelled out in the team's responses to the Essays.

Notably, there does not yet appear to be a widespread culture or system for demonstrating "that [Pepperdine's] graduates consistently achieve its stated levels of attainment and ensur[ing] that its expectations for student learning are embedded in the standards that faculty use to evaluate student work" (2.6, 4.6). It appears from data form 7.1 and other documentation from individual programs that program faculty within the Graduate School of Education and Psychology, the School of Public Policy, and Seaver College review student work, including capstone work such as portfolios or theses (no evidence for Business or Law was located). However, the team could not determine whether or not such reviews are collective or merely graded by individual course instructors, or whether faculty are employing collectively agreed-upon standards for evaluating summative student work (2.4). Nor could we locate data on student learning results (2.6, 4.4, 4.6), including results of licensing exams (2.7). By the time of the EER visit, the team will expect to see that such data have been produced, made readily accessible, and collectively analyzed.

3. Standard 3

Although the institution has overarching policies on tenure, promotion, and faculty evaluation, interviews and document review suggest that there is a need for clarifying and widely disseminating the standards by which the University Tenure Committee examines tenure applications (3.3). Based on interviews, it appears that it would be helpful to more intentionally develop future leaders among both the staff and the faculty (3.4). At the end of Essay 6, Pepperdine recommends that “more attention to staff advancement, particularly methods for mentoring female staff and staff of color for advancement, appears warranted.” The team affirms this recommendation.

Pepperdine presents as a financially stable institution with revenues projected to increase through 2010-11 (3.5). The University moved quickly in 2008-09 to increase reserves and reduce expenses when the US economy contracted. Not surprisingly, return on net assets and the endowment value significantly decreased in 2008 and 2009. However, the current endowment market value of over \$500 million generates an annual payout of \$31 million, contributing approximately 12% to the University operating budget which has a significant impact upon the institution’s ability to meet its goals and objectives.

The University Board of Regents provides an appropriate oversight of the University operations and its financial position through its Finance and Administration, Investment, and Audit Committees. An experienced and qualified management team is in place to ensure effective financial and administrative management (3.5, 3.9, 3.10).

The staff to FTE ratio in the library is low relative to comparative institutions, though the FTE data may not accurately reflect all library staffing because some of the librarians are supported by the individual school budgets. Based on interviews, the library has done a good job of maintaining collections, developing electronic resources, supporting multiple sites, and managing its budget in a time of institutional budget restrictions. However, it is clear that the staff is working

at near capacity and that, as Pepperdine advances academic excellence, more resources may be needed in this area. The library has also done a very good job of assessing student learning in the area of information literacy and has linked its plans to the University's strategic plan in concrete ways (2.3, 4.3 and 4.4). In informal interviews, both graduate and undergraduate students indicated that they are well served by the library and librarians, which the team finds commendable (3.6).

The University has a significant central IT staff as well as IT specialists in many of the schools. The IT staff has been reduced by roughly 25% while the institutional use of technology has been expanding. There are instructional technologists and IT support staff in most of the graduate schools as well as in the central IT staff. This staff appears to be working "smart" as well as hard but as Pepperdine expands its use of technology, more staffing may be necessary. The University is making use of reputable software for data management and e-learning, and mission critical data are stored in servers over which Pepperdine has physical custody (3.7).

Standard 4

Pepperdine needs to broadly define "constituent" reflection and planning in order to be as inclusive as possible of all the Pepperdine community. When strategic plans are being "monitored and revised" Pepperdine must ensure all constituencies remain actively involved and updated in the process (4.1). It is not readily apparent that strategic plans are aligned with personnel, fiscal, and technology initiatives. This information should be more readily available for review by various stakeholder groups (4.2).

Planning needs would be better informed by careful comparative analyses of tenure-track versus non-tenure track female faculty, as well as by student data disaggregated by socio-economic status. For example, knowing the true percentage of tenure or tenure-track women at the University might inform faculty professional development and hiring needs. Knowing who participates in high-impact programs such as volunteer opportunities and study abroad might affect financial support

needs (4.3, 4.4). These kinds of breakouts were not found by the visiting team. The institution must avoid any tendency to highlight the most favorable data and obscure or ignore less flattering data. WASC seeks balanced information and assessments appropriate to a *learning organization* model (4.6)

The amount and types of data generated by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness need to be expanded rapidly. Pepperdine needs a stable set of peer and aspirational schools, reflective of its region, for comparative purposes at the institutional level. Right now, it appears this is true only at the school level with the information provided by the deans being different for each school. Also, data from national studies such as the UCLA Higher Ed Research Institute Report comparing Pepperdine with other Four-Year Religious Colleges and with All Private Four-Year Colleges, were obtained by WASC team but not used by Pepperdine in the report (4.5).

Students need to be involved more deeply in the assessment process, particularly beyond the student affairs units. The student voice in the community should be valued and expanded; opportunities for student participation should be used as a means of leadership building. The team noted that there is no student representation on the WASC Steering Committee (or, apparently, on other University-level committees) and that the CPR report rarely gives the students' point-of-view (4.8).

Recruitment and Admissions

In its review of policies, procedures, and materials, the team found no evidence to suggest that there are any issues at Pepperdine stemming from the new WASC concerns about admissions, financial aid, etc. Standard information is on the website and in the catalog. The "Quick Facts," however, do not include the graduation rate or per cent of students receiving financial aid, whose inclusion has become quite standard on other college websites. Pepperdine may want to consider improving its public information; for example, some campuses have begun to add financial aid

calculators or give information on average financial aid award. On an individual basis, recruiters and admissions staff do try to help students and families understand whether Pepperdine is the right program for them. Students praised the support of the Office of Financial Aid.

The information for transfer students is also straightforward. These students meet the same requirements as first year students and the limit on credits accepted is clearly stated. The criteria for admissions, costs of the program, program benefits, career support and more are clearly outlined on the graduate school websites. A full complement of support services to promote student success can be found at the University including, for example, a writing center, disability services, and career services; however, access to these services is not uniform across the schools.

Student Success/ Graduation & Retention

Other than a brief discussion of retention rates in Essay 6 and a minimum of data in the exhibits, the CPR report conspicuously lacks any display and focused discussion of typical indicators (disaggregated by demographic groups) of student success, such as first year retention and 4, 5, and 6 year graduation rates for undergraduates, and degree completion rates for graduate/professional students. CFR 2.10 now requires institutions to collect *and analyze* student data disaggregated by demographic categories and areas of study. From what the team was able to find out, retention and 6 year graduation rates seem generally to be “respectable,” i.e., comparable to those found at other institutions with similar profiles of entering students, such as SAT scores. According to data reported on the Education Trust website, retention/graduation rates for minorities are generally comparable to or, in some cases, better than those for majority students.

Students at a forum suggested that study abroad and change of major might be factors affecting time to degree. However, evidence was not provided by the University and the team could not determine whether student performance in this regard is due to factors under Pepperdine’s control (e.g., the existence of a clear path to graduation, the timely availability of courses, the

number of credits offered on study abroad, and the quality of advising) or something else. The team will expect more data and analysis to be provided in the EER.

III. Summary, Major Findings, and Recommendations

The evaluation of institutional capacity in the preceding may be distilled into four major findings: student learning, governance, planning, and diversity.

A. Student Learning. In the teaching/learning paradigm perhaps nothing emerges so importantly, in our time, as the understanding of how students learn and what they learn. This is due to our increasing awareness of the criticality of assessing learning outcomes. Over the last ten years, the University's sophistication in this regard has grown and the language used to describe student learning, the methods used to measure student learning, and the governance structures involved in student learning have increased. Nevertheless, the University's work here remains today incomplete and diffuse: the cross-college involvement in student learning is happenstance and not systematic, not all faculty support or understand the importance of the assessment of learning, and the structures for assuring the measurement of student learning, the University Planning Committee, the University Faculty Council, the deans and the provost—all would seem to have strong intentions in this regard, but the results are scattered.

The president has indicated his strong support for developing not only the systems for measuring student learning outcomes, but for imbuing the University with the spirit necessary to make this happen. In this regard, the document entitled “Structures for Completing the Educational Effectiveness Review at Pepperdine University,” while not part of the CPR document originally tendered for this study, emerges as a critical University statement regarding the intentions of the institution to mature the assessment process and to make it a systematic part of university life. A portion of this document, the “Advancement of Student Learning Council,” would appear to be the

device for consolidating and completing the assessment work of the University. This effort, if successful, clearly speaks to standards 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Recommendation 1: For the benefit of students but also in the interests of timely preparation for the EER, the University should establish the Advancement of Student Learning Council as soon as possible, and charge the University Academic Council with acting on the results of learning outcomes assessment.

B. Governance. The University in the CPR document recognizes that it has work to do with regard to faculty engagement. Results of the study of faculty perceptions about University decision-making are mixed at best and in some cases negative. Faculty engagement in the organization is important not simply because it is right or traditional. It is important because the faculty's involvement in the outcomes of student learning is absolutely central. The faculty need to "own" the advancement of student learning and to do so they must be engaged. The president has said that among his goals for the next decade is the enhancement of educational quality at the university, and has acknowledged the importance of excellent, engaged faculty in achieving that goal.

Explanations for some faculty claiming not to know of the administration's desire for "collaborative, consensus-oriented governance" vary from ignorance to recalcitrance to poor-communication. The same is said to be true of the University Planning Committee, whose work appears to be little understood by the faculty in general. It is likely in the history of higher education that no administration has ever gotten 100% of its faculty understanding, let alone approving, what it does. Nevertheless, this reported gap at Pepperdine must be addressed if the goals that have been suggested are to be met. Probably no magic pill exists for assuring complete absorption of information or for achieving the full trust by faculty of administration. Deliberate and daily efforts, however, can go a long way in mitigating this distance between faculty and administration in decision-making.

Recommendation 2: The University should create the structures for collaboration and consensus and for assessing collaboration and consensus in University governance. By doing so, EER preparation will be enhanced.

C. Planning. Often institutional planning is hampered by the absence of data and expertise to carry out the plan. Weak fundamentals for guiding critical ratios, poor understanding of the financials, the absence of information collection, and the absence of persons trained in strategic planning and who have the capacity for strategic thinking have left institutions wandering, groping their futures. This is not the case at Pepperdine. Information and information gathering appear to be part of the culture; and the expertise is present in faculty and staff to do strategic planning. The issue is clearly depicted in the CPR and corroborated by the team's visit: "there is a gap between the administration's intent to leverage a collaborative, consensus-oriented governance approach based upon evidence and the impact of some decisions on our faculty." The CPR recognizes that, as in the case of governance, there is no simple solution for closing this gap. Instead, the CPR recommends a series of steps, and the team agrees, to be taken deliberately, systematically, and continually to deal with the hiatus: "Clearly articulate our collaborative governance approach," "Increase the lines of communication within the University community by clearly communicating UPC deliberations and outcomes," "Assess and remove obstacles that undermine a collaborative, consensus-oriented approach to shared governance," and "Revamping the role of program review in the budgeting process."

Recommendation 3: The University should create the means by which it can measure the success of the implementation of a strategic plan and assess University-wide understanding of it. Preparation for the EER depends on it.

D. Diversity. The team commends the University for its work aimed at achieving multi-dimensional diversity in the student body, in the faculty, in the staff, and in the other constituent

bodies of the institution. Historically underrepresented persons in higher education, as identified by culture, race, color, income, and other factors are evident at the university, and in some cases , in particular numbers. This is good and reflects on Pepperdine’s entry into a new century. The team is interested, however, in the University’s determination to maintain and sustain this commitment to diversity and how the institution makes this commitment systematic. The president’s desire to improve quality and to “right size” academic programs, to fulfill the Founder’s vision, are laudable goals and are to be applauded by the University’s several audiences. The team’s great hope, however, is that the struggle to achieve these goals does not lead to even a partial abandonment of the institution’s achievements in this critical area. In some worlds, improving quality has meant admitting only the best prepared students; and this has often meant admitting, sometimes exclusively, persons of some majority. The team does not believe that is what is meant here.

Furthermore, and on a more negative note, the team heard from some students, faculty, and others of their unease in speaking out on matters of campus climate, including matters of sexual orientation and minority status as women, for example. We note that a paucity of women and racial minorities are in leadership positions in the University and that participation in decision-making regarding campus climate may be at a minimum. If the University is concerned for the quality of the educational experience for all of its students, these matters of campus climate must be addressed.

Recommendation 4: The University should continue its good work in diversity, support it spiritually and financially, and recognize openly the importance of campus climate and the quality of the educational experience to all students. These are strong entry points to preparation of the EER.

IV. Preparation for Educational Effectiveness Review

Pepperdine describes its planning processes as having been disrupted by the economic downturn of 2008 and 09. Prior to the recession, endowments and enrollments were flourishing and planning around those parameters was underway. The financial crisis, however, reduced the University's endowment considerably and had a concomitant impact on enrollments in business and education. With the markets having settled somewhat and with some understanding that enrollments in business and education may not rebound for some time, the University has begun serious gathering of information and is measuring the effectiveness of its several programs. While it will take some time to revise the strategic plan and to develop the data bases to accompany it, that process seems to be well underway, and personnel have been hired to assist the process.

Much, however, needs to be done: clearly articulate and publicize student learning outcomes; create performance indicators and standards of achievement for each degree; establish faculty collective responsibility for assessment processes; assess faculty ownership of these processes; demonstrate attainment of expectations for student learning, including use of collective standards in evaluating student course work; demonstrate whether graduates achieve the desired levels of performance; use the results for program improvement; and benchmark with comparable institutions, where possible. In short, create a system for measuring and evaluating student learning outcomes and performance.