



PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

WSCUC Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation Proposal

April 1, 2019

**Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation
Proposed Areas of Study
Pepperdine University
April 1, 2019
Executive Summary**

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a Christian university committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and Christian values, Pepperdine University recognizes the importance of examination, reflection, and thoughtful change in fulfilling its mission. Pepperdine considered different areas to focus on for the Thematic Pathway and decided that strengthening our culture of educational effectiveness and academic excellence was important in order to be prepared for the future and its rapidly changing educational landscape.

Pepperdine is proposing three themes for its Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Our Degrees (MQID); Program Reviews and Assessment; and Knowledge Sharing. Our first theme considers how we define our degrees, while the second examines how our self-evaluation processes support the development and delivery of our degrees. Both of these themes are components of the Institutional Report. The third essay is both related to and supportive of the two themes and will evaluate the flow of knowledge and information and its role in strengthening both the Pepperdine learning community and its educational processes.

Pepperdine chooses to address two WSCUC components, Degree Programs: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of the Degrees (CFRs 1.2, 2.2-4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3), and Quality Assurance and Improvement: Program Review; Assessment; Use of Data and Evidence (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10, 4.1-4.7). Both themes will be examined within a framework of openness and reflection, grounded in Pepperdine's commitment to prepare students for lives of purpose, service, and leadership. Together the themes provide an opportunity to examine our community's dedication to quality assurance as a component of growth and educational excellence. The third theme, Knowledge Sharing, grew from our community's desire to improve data and information sharing and to forge more effective paths between the examination of student learning and change. We are excited to utilize this TPR process to enhance knowledge sharing that will lead to better-informed decision processes.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE INSTITUTION

Founded in 1937 as a small Christian college in downtown Los Angeles, Pepperdine achieved university status in 1971 and today enrolls almost 8,000 students in the School of Law, the Graziadio Business School, the Graduate School of Education and Psychology, the School of Public Policy, and Seaver College, the flagship undergraduate school. Pepperdine opened its Malibu campus overlooking the Pacific Ocean in 1972 and now offers courses at five graduate locations in California and at facilities in Washington DC, Germany, England, Italy, Argentina, Switzerland, and China.

Pepperdine is committed to maintaining the very highest academic standards within a context that both celebrates and extends the spiritual and ethical ideals of the Christian faith. By integrating service, worship, and social responsibility with rigorous academic study, we create a community that nurtures heart, soul, and mind and prepares our students to lead purposeful lives as servant-minded leaders throughout the world.

3. PROCESS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THEMES

We began our process for reaffirmation and theme development in spring 2018, shortly after Pepperdine President Andrew K. Benton announced that he would retire from his position in the summer of 2019. Our aim was to ensure that the undertaking would encompass both outgoing and incoming administrations. The initial inquiry began with the discussion of the CFRs and distribution and completion of the IEEI (Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators) with the President and his top-level administrators. This was followed by request for each dean of the five schools to meet with their cabinet and complete the full inventory. At the same time, the WSCUC Steering Committee began to meet and they completed the full IEEI.

Seeking community input, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness created a survey focusing on many of the identified “areas that needed to be addressed” from the completed inventories and sent it to 560 Pepperdine faculty and staff from all five schools. An examination by the WSCUC Steering Committee of the 367 responses to the WSCUC CFRs revealed that we should continue our focus on the areas of educational effectiveness, data dissemination, and the examination of student learning. The WSCUC Steering Committee selected the three proposed themes for this TPR, and we are confident this effort will help us develop an integrative approach to meet our desired outcomes as well as address the concerns identified in the community survey.

One goal in devoting time and resources to these areas is to cultivate deeper cultural acceptance and value for our educational effectiveness process. Although Pepperdine has made much progress in this area, the WSCUC Steering Committee believed there were benefits we had not yet realized when it came to using findings for improvement. In addition, the Committee and the community show great enthusiasm for creating new and innovative ways to communicate data and share knowledge. A process to help better define our degrees and improve our use of program review for strategic purposes will correspond with our community’s value of information, reflection, and communication.

In the spring of 2019, we brought in Dr. Carole Huston from the University of San Diego to examine our educational effectiveness and program review processes with a special focus on the themes we have chosen for this TPR. Her insight into how we can improve and support knowledge sharing to better effect change based on student learning data will be incorporated into our approach.

4. DESCRIPTION OF EACH THEME

a. What is going to be undertaken?

The three chosen themes reflect a commitment made after our last reaffirmation cycle to develop a quality assurance infrastructure built on the foundation of valid results and a thoughtful planning process. While data demonstrates that our educational effectiveness process has progressed and improved over the past six years, the WSCUC Steering Committee and the University Assessment Committee (Advancement of Student Learning Council) concluded that we have not reached our potential for effectively collecting and using data for planning and change.

Our committees concluded that educational effectiveness has primarily been a compliance-based model and agreed that a cultural shift is needed to alter the rationale and motivation for our educational effectiveness and quality assurance process. The Thematic Pathway to Reaffirmation has provided an opportunity to step back and analyze what it will take to make this next step. The committees have hypothesized that changing the language and communication around assessment, developing rewards that motivate faculty and staff to participate in assessment practices, and developing processes to better communicate results could change attitudes and perceptions.

Developing the theme of Knowledge Sharing will enhance our approach to quality assurance by improving transparency, vocabulary, and methods of communication. In addition, we plan to focus more on how our educational experiences are defined by Pepperdine's core values of purpose, service, and leadership. We believe that cultivating this focus can prompt a cultural shift so that program reviews routinely become a focal point for planning and change.

Theme One. Degree Programs: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of the Degrees

Pepperdine's commitment to the highest standards of academic excellence and Christian values and strengthening students for lives of purpose, service, and leadership defines our unique educational experience. Examining meaning, quality, and integrity of a Pepperdine degree allows us to engage in thoughtful reflection on a number of core questions: What does it mean for a graduate to hold a degree from Pepperdine? How do our graduates embody the distinct values and traditions of our institution? What processes are used to ensure the quality and rigor of the degrees offered by Pepperdine? Our examination may lead to further questions that require deeper reflection or prompt us to restructure particular processes.

Pepperdine's Institutional Learning Outcomes, Program Learning Outcomes, and Student Learning Outcomes all align with and flow from our commitment to preparing students for lives of purpose, service, and leadership. We believe that this commitment is an area of strength. Since our last review, we have continued to work on our infrastructure and data collection, forming assessment committees at both the University and school levels and investing resources in a new assessment management system. Our approach to require each department to engage in annual assessments results in focused program specific student learning data. We recognize assessment is time intensive for faculty and academic departments, so we would like to create more collaborative, interdisciplinary, and efficient approaches. In addition, faculty are wary of assessment because they fear its innate nature to uncover areas of weakness leaves them vulnerable. It is important for us to cultivate a faculty-led model of quality assurance that focuses on improvements, revisions, and "fine tuning" of curriculums.

We have chosen the MQID essay so we can focus time and effort on developing this model. We aim to improve our system of assessment, improve our ability to analyze our findings more holistically, and change our culture so that assessment is perceived as a low-risk practice with significant benefit. Because assessment systems need synergy, we would like to create a synergistic workflow to collect meaningful information, draw conclusions, and share the results in collaborative and supportive ways.

Our key outcomes are that:

1. Pepperdine's culture of assessment will reflect its culture of academic excellence infused with our unique mission and values.
2. Student learning data will define achievement of our learning outcomes and established standards of performance.
3. Student learning data will be used in decision-making and as evidence of improvement and the need for improvement.
4. Information on student learning will be shared with all stakeholders in our community, including students, faculty, staff, administration, and alumni.

Theme 2. Quality Assurance and Improvement: Program Review; Assessment; Use of Data and Evidence (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10, 4.1–4.7)

Today's diverse and dynamic digital world creates new challenges to Pepperdine's mission to transform lives for purpose, service, and leadership. Changes in higher education and civil society are driving change in our continuous improvement process. We believe that tying program review and assessment to planning will enable the University to create a more connected and deeper community — both internally and externally — that will help Pepperdine achieve its mission.

The criteria for the theme of Program Review describes key issues that we would like to accomplish by developing structures that cultivate program review as the nexus for change. During this thematic approach, we would like to answer the WSCUC prompts:

- What was identified in the process of examining the institution's program review process that may require deeper reflection, changes, restructuring? What will be done as a result? What resources will be required? (CFRs 2.7, 4.1, 4.4, 4.6)
- What has the program or institution learned as it carried out assessments of students' learning? How have assessment protocols, faculty development, choices of instruments, or other aspects of assessment changed as a result? (CFR 4.1)

Our program reviews occur on a seven-year cycle, and Pepperdine has completed one full cycle since our last WSCUC review in 2012. After our last reaffirmation visit, we revised the program review process as seen in our Program Review Guidelines. We restated many of the criteria to align with the themes of Meaning, Quality, and Integrity found in the 2013 WSCUC Handbook so that the concepts would become familiar to our community. For Pepperdine, "meaning" is defined as our ability to develop well-written, clear, appropriate, and measurable Program Learning Outcomes and sequenced curriculums and to demonstrate alignments between the University mission, ILOs and PLOs. We define "quality" by assessing our uniqueness, co-curricular experiences, and richness and depth of our degrees. We define "integrity" by examining and analyzing rigor and expectations of the degree.

Over the past seven years, we believe the quality of program reviews has improved. OIE oversees and guides the program review process through funding, data creation, and software support. The program reviews are then evaluated by the Advancement of Student Learning Council (ASLC), which includes a representative from each school, student affairs, and the library. The role of ASLC has developed and matured since the last WSCUC visit, evolving into a solid foundation for addressing the changes which continue to transform higher education. The ASLC provides a basis for addressing broader questions that must be addressed institutionally, such as: *How can we drive continuous improvement across all modalities and programs? How do we address the broader scope of community in our classroom? How do we connect a diverse population to desired learning outcomes? What new data, methodologies, and metrics enable higher education to better align with its mission, operate more effectively, and drive academic excellence?*

The program review process asks that a self-study be developed based on student learning assessment, retention, survey, and alumni data. Each program brings in an external reviewer who submits a formal report, and the program completes the review by developing a Quality Improvement Plan. ASLC then reviews all of the materials, provides feedback, and develops its own report for each program. All material is provided to the dean of the respective college or school who then works with the program to develop an MOU.

When we look to answer the question, “How have the results of program review been used to inform decision making and improve instruction and student learning outcomes? (CFRs 2.7, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4),” we can point to progress while also admitting that we are “not where we hoped to be.” Through a variety of administrative techniques, we have moved assessment to the center of our *conversations* about learning, but we should continue to cultivate a culture that will place evidence-based assessment at the center of our *planning* and *decisions*.

The program review process requires a significant amount of resources but has not produced the benefits we desire. Therefore, ASLC began an examination of the process three years ago, and initial findings revealed areas that can be improved by more transparent and intentional information sharing. Based on these findings, we hope to employ more and different types of analytics for decision-making, but we also need better processes that closely link budgetary decisions to educational excellence and student learning outcomes and that reinforce the idea that program reviews are integral to constant growth in educational excellence. In this theme (much like the one addressing MQI), we seek to deepen a cultural shift and prompt changes to our governance structure.

Our key outcomes are that:

1. Program review results will be used as a primary source for strategic planning and decision-making and to promote a culture of educational excellence at both the school and University levels.
2. Pepperdine will create an efficient mechanism to share data gathered in program reviews with administration, faculty, students, alumni, and external constituencies.
3. The program review will be used to evaluate how well we are fulfilling our commitments to educational excellence and to strengthening our students for purpose, service and leadership.

Moving the culture from one of reluctant compliance to one that readily engages in quality assurance activities is an ambitious goal, but our ultimate goal is to cultivate such a change in order to achieve academic excellence. We must address these questions as we strive to meet these goals:

- How can we achieve greater transparency and foster greater participation in the decision-making processes of the University?
- How can faculty and administration come together to prioritize the program review and assessment process in strategic planning?
- How can we clearly identify growth areas in program reviews that will enhance our mission to achieving student outcomes in service, purpose, and leadership?
- How do we engage students and alumni in the information-sharing process so that program reviews and program learning outcomes are better informed and connected to the demands of civil society?

Theme 3: Knowledge Sharing

Pepperdine is proposing to develop a model of Knowledge Sharing that will provide opportunities for informing the community, encouraging discussions, and promoting collaborative decision-making. Improving our knowledge sharing will help build trust and encourage inquiry, supporting the growth of an environment where using evidence-driven data to explore new ideas and approaches will become the norm.

As described above, Pepperdine has developed an assessment infrastructure that collects a significant amount of student learning data from academic programs, student life, and library services. It is required to be used as support for curriculum changes after comprehensive program reviews. However, because the information is specialized, it tends to be used only by the departments that developed it. We would like to improve our management and use of the data and believe examining this theme of Knowledge Sharing will help us to identify and develop better methods for effective communication. We believe if knowledge is more widely shared that educational effectiveness measures will be viewed as more meaningful, valuable, and beneficial.

Dee and Leisyte (2017) state that organizational learning in higher education depends on the ability of its members to maintain a flow of knowledge across the structural boundaries of the university. Knowledge sharing in higher education is especially challenging due to the large volume of highly specialized information. Pepperdine wants to improve the flow, availability, accuracy, and accessibility of information to help facilitate knowledge sharing and change.

Our key outcomes are that:

1. The knowledge-sharing process will encourage collaboration between faculty, staff, students, alumni, and upper administration.
2. The knowledge-sharing model will include effective face-to-face and digital communication processes that involve both internal and external stakeholders.
3. The model will include a defined purpose, process, and product.
4. Knowledge sharing will produce a cultural change in the way we share student learning and program review data that will benefit our community by providing greater transparency, trust, and collaboration.

Our hope is that this model will advance the way we use assessment and program review results so that they become valued processes in curriculum, teaching, and learning.

b. Which specific Standards and CFRs are tied to the theme?

Degree Programs: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees (CFRs 1.2, 2.2-4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3) and Quality Assurance and Improvement: Program Review; Assessment; Use of Data and Evidence (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10, 4.1-4.7)

	Standards			
Themes	One	Two	Three	Four
MQI	1.1, 1.2	2.1, 2.2, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7		4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6
Program Review		2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10		4.1-4.7
Knowledge Sharing		2.4	3.7	4.2, 4.3, 4.6, 4.7

c. Why is it important for the institution to conduct this work (the rationale)?

We have chosen themes that are central to Pepperdine’s mission and values of purpose, service, and leadership. This undertaking will make us a stronger institution by improving the transparency of data collection, information sharing, and planning, thus increasing overall trust in our decision-making. Improving our knowledge sharing can provide the foundation to improve many areas of the University, including shared governance, diversity, strategic planning, and educational effectiveness.

d. What work if any has already been done in this area?

Our WSCUC Steering Committee and subcommittees have begun to meet to examine the standards and the status of our proposed themes. They will soon begin to develop plans for how to accomplish the outcomes established for each theme.

e. What does the institution expect to accomplish in this area?

Pepperdine particularly hopes to improve the culture surrounding educational effectiveness. We would like our faculty and staff to perceive the benefits of the assessment and program review process. We would like to see program review data used more routinely for program-level improvements and in strategic decision-making. We would like to improve our information management, communication, and sharing of important knowledge. Ultimately, we would like to see assessment and program review become a valued part of our culture as we strive for continued excellence.

f. How will the project be assessed or evaluated?

We will perform an examination to determine whether we have met our expected outcomes in each theme. We will have achieved success when we collect accurate and useful data, use benchmarks to establish standards, incorporate students and external constituencies into the assessment process, and use program review results in all levels of strategic planning.

5. TIMELINE FOR EACH THEME

- a. When does the project begin?**
- b. When does the project expect to end?**
- c. Does it continue after reaffirmation review?**

The project has begun, and we anticipate developing structures and processes that will be in place long after this review. The themes of MQI and Program Review are interdependent. We will first identify areas for improvement then develop a model of Knowledge Sharing and then develop and implement processes prior to completion of our reaffirmation. If we are successful, these will be permanent changes.

6. RESOURCES: WHAT HUMAN AND FINANCIAL CAPITAL WILL BE NEEDED?

The University will commit resources needed to allow faculty and staff the time and tools needed to work in the identified areas.

7. INSTITUTIONAL STIPULATION

See next page.

Institutional Report Certification Form

To: WASC Senior College and University Commission

Re: Reaffirmation of Accreditation

From: Andrew K. Benton
President and Chief Executive Officer
Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Hwy.
Malibu, CA 90263

This report is submitted in support of our institution's accreditation review.

I affirm the accuracy of the information presented and the institution's intention to comply fully with WSCUC's standards and policies.

Signed:



President and Chief Executive Officer

Name: Andrew K. Benton

Title: President and Chief Executive Officer

Date: April 15, 2019