

REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM
EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

To Dominican University of California

April 28, 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 Core Commitments 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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SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of Institution and Visit

Dominican University of California is a small, co-educational, independent university with a Catholic heritage. It offers undergraduate programs in the liberal arts and sciences plus several professional programs, including professional master's degrees. Since its last WASC accreditation visit ten years ago, it has been transitioning from being a liberal arts college to becoming a comprehensive university.

Recent accreditation history. In June 1999, the Commission reaffirmed the accreditation of Dominican College of San Raphael and scheduled a fifth-year review. In June 2004, the Commission issued a Formal Notice of Concern to the University because of its poor financial situation. In June 2005, a Progress Report with actions the University had taken to balance its budget was accepted.

In the Capacity and Preparatory Review (March 5-7, 2008) the Visiting Team, chaired by Patrick Allen, but otherwise the same as the Educational Effectiveness Review Team, found many improvements since the previous review. Dominican University had achieved enrollment growth, better financial footing, and a culture encouraging faculty scholarship and undergraduate research. In addition, the team was especially impressed with the deep commitment of the faculty and staff to the University itself and to student learning. The concerns of the team were these:

- The institution's high dependence on tuition
- Lack of consensus about the identity of and plans for the institution
- Unclear processes for planning, budgeting, and decision making
- Uneven and incomplete assessment and program review endeavors

- The low number of full-time faculty.

The Commission continued the institution's accreditation and removed the formal Notice of Concern. It moved the Educational Effectiveness Review back one year, to April 2010.

Off-campus sites visit. The CPR team visited the Ukiah site, where Dominican University offered business, humanities, and education programs. Since the time of the CPR visit, the 2+2 programs in Strategic Management and Humanities, offered with Mendocino College, have been discontinued. What remains are the education credential and master's programs. The team did not visit the off-site location again in 2010 but did meet with faculty and administrators who are involved with the Ukiah site.

No special visits or compliance audits were conducted in connection with this EER visit.

B. The Institution's Educational Effectiveness Review Report: Alignment with the Proposal and Quality and Rigor of the Review and Report

In the proposal of October 2005, Dominican University selected three key themes: Establishment of Systems of Continuous Improvement and Quality Assurance; Enhancement of Faculty and Student Development and Scholarship; and, Identification and Alignment of Resource Needs with Strategic Priorities (a particular focus of the CPR) (p. 4).

It divided these into five key areas for the CPR and three key areas for the EER, the EER areas being scholarship, assessment, and student life (p.7). These themes and the concerns stemming from the CPR team visit were the focus of the EER self study.

Report quality. The EER is logical, easy to follow, and nicely presented. It addresses the three themes of the original proposal and carefully addresses each of the issues of the CPR. The report is well-balanced, presenting strengths of the campus and addressing areas the team identified as needing improvement. The team notes that much of the report is written in the future tense. Given that the CPR visit included the recognition of the need for more

strategic planning, it is not surprising that this is so; but the EER visit appropriately must focus on what is being accomplished rather than on what is intended.

Institutional involvement. The nature of the EER themes and the CPR issues required many campus constituents to be involved in preparing the EER. The Board of Trustees, administrators, and faculty assisted with the strategic plan. The Office of Institutional Research gathered data from Admissions, Academic Advising & Support Services, and the Registrar's Office provided useful information on student life. Administrators and faculty provided evidence of scholarship and undergraduate research and worked together on program assessment. The discussions were not only inclusive but also transparent and coordinated. Campus members knew what other groups were deciding and had an appropriate time to provide their own input. Administrators made sure consensus was achieved before declaring a document or process completed.

Dominican University appears to have come through this process of accreditation a more self-aware institution, wiser about how to proceed in the future and more secure about its strengths. The preponderance of evidence points to the fact that the institution implemented the review as a rigorous inquiry with searching questions, appropriate methodology, and effective use of evidence. The team is quite confident that the University has understood the value of collecting and analyzing data and that its administrators will continue to do so in the future. A culture of evidence has grown roots because of the useful information about student learning and other subjects (retention, student satisfaction with dorm life, cost of programs, etc.) that it has produced. One formerly skeptical faculty member, for example, said that the conversations about pedagogy were extremely valuable and that she has changed her opinion about the worth of program review. The push that the self study represents has

led Dominican to a greater understanding of its effectiveness and the strengths and weaknesses of its systems of quality improvement.

C. Response to Issues Raised in the Capacity and Preparatory Review

1. Planning, Communication and the Use of Information Technology

A. From the letter from the Commission to the institution after the CPR visit: “By the time of the EER, it is expected that a more comprehensive and inclusively-derived strategic planning process will result in a revised plan. This plan should clarify the institution’s identity and guide priority-setting, decision-making, and resource allocation in a meaningful and realistic fashion.”

In the past two years, the University community completed a five-year strategic plan that was built from the mission and vision of the University, yet was explicitly forward thinking to design a university that will serve the needs of tomorrow’s students. The Strategic Institutional Planning Group was chaired by the vice-chair of the Board of Trustees. Other members of the group consisted of additional trustees, senior executives of the University, along with faculty and staff representatives. The plan is both streamlined and ambitious: the estimated cost of implementation over the next 5 years is \$39,000,000. The three key initiatives are increasing faculty size, achieving AACSB accreditation and becoming a full member of NCAA Division II. Funding for the plan is expected to be derived in large part from increasing tuition revenue from both new students and improved retention and through fundraising by Deans, development staff assigned to the four schools, and Athletics.

Most constituents throughout the campus community feel that the planning process was both inclusive and transparent. When questioned about institutional priorities, most readily report knowing the top initiatives. Most also report an optimism about the direction the University will take with the strategic plan.

There is buy-in for the new organization of the University around four schools (instead of the previously structured three) and the new management model (RCM: Responsibility

Center Management). Community members seem to understand the need for metrics to measure progress, so that decision making can be data driven.

The University has a solid strategic plan and a very promising new administrative structure for its implementation. However, at the time of this visit, the success of the plan is as yet unproven. Two of the four deans hold interim positions and the tradition of decanal fundraising is very new. It will take two or more years for the efficacy of this plan to be accurately measured. In the meantime, it will be important for the Board and the executive leadership of the University to continue to reinforce the direction of the strategic plan, and when funding is possible, visibly acknowledge to the entire community the success of the plan.

B. From the letter from the Commission to the institution after the CPR visit: “Additionally, governance structures and processes need to be clarified and channels of communication widened and formalized, especially between the faculty and the senior institutional leadership and Board of Trustees.”

Dominican has taken seriously the Commission request to clarify and widen channels of communication between constituencies. Two structural changes represent this new commitment: the school deans now regularly attend and participate in the Faculty Forum and there is faculty representation on the President’s Executive Council.

Constituencies throughout the campus talked positively about open channels of communication. Transparency was the new watchword. This was heard in meetings with staff, faculty and students. For example, during the Student Forum that was held on April 7, 2010, the consensus of the students in attendance (approximately 60) was that the students’ input is valued and that their concerns and requests, while not always approved, are being heard.

Board participation in the strategic planning process brings trustees in close working relationship with the campus. Moreover, the trustee chair of the planning group was quick to point out that trustees are advisors to the University and not managers.

The next big challenge for the University in regard to open communication and transparency will concern the process and selection of the next president. This process is off to a good start with a Board retreat at which many campus representatives were present. At this retreat, the topic was the qualifications the University seeks in its next leader. The team encourages the campus to continue with this openness, both by the inclusion of campus constituencies on the search committee as well as in crafting a communication plan for the campus to keep community members informed on how the search is progressing.

Open communication and transparency is still new and applying these qualities to the presidential search will increase confidence throughout the campus that what is said and what is done are tightly aligned.

2. Financial Management

During the Capacity and Preparatory Review the team noted progress in resolving fiscal concerns identified in the previous WASC review, but also expressed a number of concerns. The team observed continued fragility and exposure to economic conditions, with "little margin for error in planning and budgeting." The team also noted significant issues in the accounting system as evidenced in communications from the University's auditors, and expressed concern about turnover in key financial personnel. The team perceived numerous weaknesses in the strategic plan that had been conducted prior to the visit, including a lack of rigorous financial analysis to support the plan and confirm its viability.

The team recommended the University develop more robust financial systems to improve reporting and support decision making, engage in substantive analyses necessary to fully understand and address the financial implications of enrollment growth, enhance the overall quality of financial forecasting and modeling, and implement an improved budget process to support timely course corrections and provide greater levels of transparency, buy-in and accountability throughout the campus.

The Commission made the following recommendations: "The Commission concurs with the visiting team that the University needs more effective and flexible financial information systems and an improved budget process, as well as a "new budgeting model that provides for greater levels of transparency, buy-in, and accountability throughout the campus." Additionally, recent audits noted important "material weaknesses" and "internal control deficiencies" that must be corrected. Furthermore, there is continued instability in key financial management positions and not much progress in aligning financial analysis and management with strategic planning processes and priorities. The institution's present level of dependence upon tuition revenue is potentially debilitating. The Commission urges the University to attempt to increase alternative sources of income in order to assure its long-term viability. All of these challenges in the financial arena must be addressed by DUC."

It seemed clear to the EER team that DUC has made significant progress in addressing financial management issues raised during the Capacity and Preparatory Review. However, much of the progress remains future-oriented, as many initiatives are still incomplete and in process. The team continually heard terms such as "embryonic" in reference to these areas. It has also been noted that staff is stretched thinly and many staff in financial management and administration are new. While the team was encouraged by the sense of excitement and positivity noted during the visit, it remains unclear whether current efforts will ultimately be successful in taking DUC to the next level in financial management. It is critical for these efforts to continue and reach conclusion. Furthermore, strategic questions remain which require additional attention, such as enrollment growth and its implications and diversification of revenue sources.

Fiscal Capacity. The University has continued to exhibit careful financial management which, combined with an agile response to the recent financial crisis, has left the University solvent and poised to continue forward movement. Leadership should be commended for maintaining positive financial results in these troubled times. However, fragility remains, and continued vigilance will be necessary to monitor economic and demographic conditions and respond promptly. Moreover, questions remain about the long term financial sustainability of the institution given current staffing patterns and lack of revenue diversity. The ongoing challenge remains of continuing forward momentum and overcoming strategic threats while maintaining financial stability (CFR 3.1, 3.2, 3.5).

Financial Systems. The University has largely completed the transition to the new PowerCampus/Great Plains information system, but work remains in implementing online features and developing reporting and analysis capabilities. Efforts are currently under way to develop a business intelligence system. This project is in early stages of design, and a number of elements remain to be designed. However, an effective system can contribute to establishment of a culture of data driven analysis, and is important to supporting the kind of rigorous modeling and analysis the team would like to see DUC develop. The team recommends continued development of the business intelligence system (CFR 3.6). The team also recommends continuing to develop financial forecasting models and enhancing capacity to conduct in-depth financial analyses of various scenarios and consequences associated with strategic decisions (CFR 3.5, 3.6, 4.2).

Budget Process. A new budget process has been developed, and the University has begun the transition from a “top-down” budget methodology to a more inclusive zero-based budgeting model. In addition, the University is adopting Responsibility Center Management

(RCM). While there is a great deal of excitement about RCM, the team found the transition is still in its earliest stages, and many details remain to be worked out. It is difficult at this point to discern what the impact of RCM will be once it is in place and its implications are realized. RCM can prompt greater ownership of operating results, and can be a tool to increase engagement of campus leaders in financial management. As design work continues, DUC should consider the dangers of the “silo” effect and conflicts over resources that can accompany RCM. Details are important, and deans and administrators should carefully consider implications and unintended consequences as they make decisions about methodology for allocation of revenue, assessments for central services, subvention and other details (CFR 3.5, 3.8, 4.2).

Audit Issues. In spite of assurances received during the Capacity and Preparatory Review, there have been continued audit issues during the past two years, including material weaknesses and numerous significant deficiencies. The continuation of these problems is troubling; and the inability of DUC to correct these issues on a timelier basis seems indicative of a thinly staffed institution and vulnerability to the departure of key personnel. The University’s auditors noted conditions had improved by the end of the last audit period, and the University engaged consultants at the audit firm BDO Seidman to confirm the implementation of reconciliations in response to recent material weakness reports. DUC is also performing a comprehensive review of internal controls throughout the institution, which will be reviewed by BDO Seidman. In addition, DUC leadership indicated staff transitions have provided the opportunity to raise the expertise and capacity of staff. Once again the team is assured that structural improvements have been made and are operating, but evidence will not be complete until the next audit cycle is completed.

The team commends the University for initiating a comprehensive review of internal controls. It is imperative for these basic internal control weaknesses to be resolved, and the team hopes the next audit cycle will confirm reconciliations are being performed and internal controls are significantly improved. Future visits should show evidence of a commitment to continuous improvement throughout financial and business functions (CFR 4.4).

Stability and Sustainability in Leadership. A high level of turnover in the financial management and business functions has continued since the Capacity and Preparatory Review, raising serious concerns about stability and sustainability in leadership over the long term. The team was encouraged by the quality and unity of the current team, and encountered signs that the current team is respected and is demonstrating competence and effectiveness in improving financial management at the institution. However, the team continues to be concerned by the level of turnover, and is not confident that progress can be maintained without greater continuity in leadership.

The team recommends DUC continue to focus on recruiting and retaining quality staff. Leadership should recognize the lack of margin in staff resources and attempt to compensate by recruiting quality staff and improving staff development efforts. In addition, administration should pursue cross-training and documentation of policies and procedures to ensure the endurance and quality of financial systems and procedures in the event of future turnover. As with all areas of the institution, a commitment to recruiting and retaining quality staff is a must, and will not come cheap. (CFR 3.1, 3.2)

A Culture of Evidence Applied to Financial Management. The team was encouraged by the quality of the recent strategic planning process. The new process was inclusive and

seemed to generate significant excitement in the campus community. The development of key performance indicators and identification of metrics was refreshing. However, the supporting analyses still seemed weak. The team was unable to find evidence that key elements of strategic decisions, such as growth in enrollment to 2,600 students, were supported by a desirable level of financial modeling. This lack of rigorous financial modeling and analysis was observed in other areas, such as the decision to pursue NCAA Division II membership and the inability of administrators to provide an undergraduate discount rate to the team. It seemed that resources are being assembled which will support quality financial modeling and analyses, but again the team observed more promise for the future than actual evidence of improvement.

The team recommends that the Board of Trustees and senior administrators at DUC promote financial and strategic decision-making that is data-driven and informed by a strong culture of evidence. Key decisions should be supported by rigorous financial modeling and analyses, with sufficient underlying detail to lend credibility to the decision. This process should begin as plans are developed to implement elements of the strategic plan and tie them into the budget model. In particular, a sophisticated model to analyze growth implications should be a high priority for the University. (CFR 3.5, 4.2, 4.5)

Tuition Dependence and Development of Alternate Sources of Revenue. During the Capacity and Preparatory Review, the team was informed the University was planning for a new capital campaign, and establishing priorities for funding in the campaign process. However, there has been no capital campaign, and plans seemed vague and uncertain. The team noted a continuing high level of dependency on tuition; and while there has been successful fundraising over the past two years, most has been focused on building projects.

The team continues to be concerned about the high level of tuition dependence at DUC, and the lack of progress in diversifying revenue sources. The team questioned the extent to which fundraising is integral to the institution's "DNA." The team continues to be concerned that growth in tuition revenue alone will not support the University's vision for its future, and that key initiatives such as growth in the percentage of full-time faculty may not be realistic without significant growth in fundraising. Fundraising requires investment over the long term, and results are rarely immediate. Investment in fundraising efforts is really an investment in the future of the institution.

The team recommends the University continue to prioritize the diversification of revenue sources, including, but not limited to, growth in endowments and contributions. In order to successfully accomplish this goal, fundraising and diversification of revenue sources must be a priority for the new president, and must be the focus of resources and support from the Board of Trustees. (CFR 3.5)

3. Assessment and Program Review

From the letter from the Commission to the institution after the CPR visit: "By the time of the EE visit, assessment efforts should be intensified so that "authentic assessment of student learning is underway in both general education [including core institutional values] and academic degree programs, including those on the Ukiah campus." In addition, the departments that have undergone program reviews will be able to show evidence of improvements to the programs on the basis of what was learned in the program review. "

See below, section II.

4. Faculty Recruitment, Roles, Scholarship, and Professional Development

From the letter from the Commission to the institution after the CPR visit: "The University needs to develop a fiscally realistic plan to increase the number of full-time faculty. Such a plan will be reviewed at the time of the EER, together with appropriate timelines for faculty hiring."

See below, section II.

5. Student Diversity, Life and Retention

From the letter from the Commission to the institution after the CPR visit: “More work needs to be done to insert retention priorities into campus decision-making processes. Further progress is needed to increase graduate students of color and the diversity of the faculty.”

See below, section II.

6. Off-Campus Program Offerings

From the letter from the Commission to the institution after the CPR visit: “There needs to be an accelerated internal review of these programs; a strengthened focus on evaluative processes and learning outcomes for all the Ukiah programs; and an overall strategic plan to guide the future growth and development of the Ukiah branch.”

Since the 2008 CPR visit, the 2 + 2 Program at the Ukiah Center has been eliminated.

The move represented a significant change in the focus and scope of that off-campus center.

Based on Team observations during the CPR visit and subsequent examination by the

University, this seemed to be the appropriate action given the reality of the Mendocino

College feeder programs and concerns about the quality of the 2 + 2 educational experience.

The process the University went through to terminate both the Strategic Management and the

Humanities offerings seemed reasonable and thorough, with both students and partners

adequately informed and involved.

After undergoing a relatively recent (Spring, 2008) California Commission on Teacher

Credentialing review, maintaining enrollments, and continuing to improve assessment

activities, the well-established credential program at the Ukiah Center appears to remain a

viable operation. The Team commends the purposeful efforts to insure that the Ukiah Center faculty feel connected with their San Rafael campus counterparts and that the courses taught

remain comparable in content and rigor. It was clear to the Team that there are high levels of

commitment to the continued success of the credential program from the program faculty and

both the San Rafael and Ukiah-based administrative support.

Driven by State Teacher Performance Assessment requirements, the assessment of student learning in the credential program taught through the Ukiah Center is subject to the same standards as the San Rafael campus. Additionally, data gathered by the Center for Teacher Quality (CTQ) from credential completers and their direct employment supervisors (Comprehensive Evaluation of Teacher Preparation) suggested graduates from both campuses performed better than the graduates from peer institutions. The relatively small numbers in the Ukiah Center credential program do hamper analysis. However, the Team was impressed with the commitment to utilize the combined data on Dominican credential completers (from both San Rafael and Ukiah) to improve teaching effectiveness in the credential program including the Ukiah Center program. This is exemplified by the efforts to improve the preparation of credential students in the area of use of technology in the classroom. In sum, the documentation of learning objectives and outcomes and the utilization of data to guide improvement are commendable, if not exemplary. (CFR 4.4, 4.5)

D. Major Changes in Dominican University Since the CPR

In addition to the changes implemented to address the issues raised in the CPR, Dominican University has taken the following steps:

- Started these new programs: a BFA in Dance, an MS in Biological Sciences, and an MS in Nursing with a specialization in Clinical Nurse Leadership.
- Received specialized reaccreditation in the Nursing and Education programs, and submitted an application for initial accreditation for the Business program.
- Continued to pursue international opportunities for students.

- Renovated or refurbished offices, conference rooms, dorms, food service space, and worship areas for staff, students, and alumni. These alterations improve accessibility to certain spaces that have not previously been accessible to people with disabilities.
- Continued its conditional membership in NCAA, Division II athletics (by invitation).
- Opened a new San Francisco campus at which 200 students are completing a non-degree certificate program in management of information technology.
- Converted to PowerCAMPUS technology software.
- Because of the difficult economic climate, Dominican also implemented a soft hiring freeze on faculty and staff positions and instituted a focused approach to retention of current students and enrollment of new freshmen. The result is that in fall 2009 enrollment was higher than it had ever been in the history of the institution.

Organizationally, there have also been significant changes:

- The role of Executive VP and Chief Academic Officer was created.
- After the VP for Finance and Enrollment Management resigned, a new VP position for Enrollment Management was created.
- The VP for Institutional Advancement position was changed to VP for External Relations, including advancement and marketing.
- The schools were reorganized to make each roughly equivalent in size by number of students. There are now four schools, Education and Counseling Psychology; Health and Natural Sciences; Arts, Humanities, & Social Sciences; and Business and Leadership.
- President Fink announced that he will retire in June 2011.

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS UNDER THE STANDARDS

A. Evaluation of the Institution’s Educational Effectiveness Inquiry

Theme 1: Scholarship and Creative Work

WASC Standard 3 requires that the institution sustain its operations through investment in faculty “sufficient in number, professional qualifications, and diversity”. The institution makes clear its recognition and intention to conform to this standard, stating in its *Faculty Handbook*: “It is important to have a cadre of full-time faculty adequate to carry out the tasks of faculty governance, including careful oversight of the curriculum.”

Faculty Numbers. Full-time faculty represented 49% of full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty across campus in 2008; the comparable figure for peer and competitor groups was 74% in 2008. The percentage increased from 46% the prior year. (31% of the faculty were tenured and tenure-track in 2008.)

In Fall 2009 semester, there were 1,972 FTE students, comprised of 645 graduate students, 1,261 undergraduate day students, and 188 undergraduate “Pathways” students. That semester there were 77 full-time instructional faculty, or 25.6 FTE students per full-time instructional faculty. Of these full-time instructional faculty, 63 (81.8%) have doctoral or terminal degrees, and 26 (33.8%) have tenure. While the substantial and stable pool of adjunct faculty constitutes a significant asset to the institution, and adds to the diversity of the overall faculty mix, the insufficient number of full-time instructional faculty to support program delivery threatens the sustainability of current learning effectiveness. Full-time instructional faculty are teaching and providing service at levels that risk “burn-out”.

There is a clear and significant shortage of tenured and tenure-track faculty relative to the student population being served, particularly given the caring and labor-intensive manner

in which they are served. This continuing concern may be exacerbated by anticipated growth in enrollments.

Faculty Recruitment. To its credit, the institution has been aware of its continuing shortage of tenured and tenure-track instructional faculty, and in 2009 developed an “Academic Five-Year Hiring Plan”. If fully implemented, the plan would add 32 tenure-track faculty positions, a substantial increase that exceeds the current number of tenured faculty. The number of full-time faculty would increase to 109, an increase of 41.6%, dropping coverage of the current student enrollment level from 25.6 to 18.1 students per full-time instructional faculty. This action should be sufficient to resolve any concerns for faculty investment level at the current student enrollment level.

However, the intention to recruit is not sufficient to assure successful recruitment to fill anticipated vacancies. The five faculty searches underway during the WASC visit amply demonstrate this point. A block advertisement for the five openings was placed in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, but there is little or no effort at targeted recruitment. Two searches (in education and in ethics) have large applicant pools, which may or may not reflect the diversity in faculty to which the institution purports to aspire, and the other three searches have had negligible responses of two or less indications of interest. A more aggressive and focused recruitment strategy seems necessary for successful faculty recruitment.

Additional obstacles to successful recruitment include comparatively low salaries, absence of affordable housing in proximity to campus, and lack of heterogeneity in surrounding neighborhoods. The institution is encouraged to consider creative supplements to conventional recruitment including a differential salary scale for premium academic areas, more intentional strategies for hiring faculty from underrepresentation populations, and

strategies to supplement housing costs for faculty coming from less costly real estate markets.

Faculty Retention. There has been very little hiring over the past several years, perhaps contributing to the current insufficient structural support for mentoring of tenure-track faculty. To the extent the institution fully implements its hiring plan over the next several years, it must take care to protect and nurture these precious faculty resources. It is recommended that consideration be given to more comprehensive new-faculty orientation programs, reduced teaching and service loads during the early stages of progress toward the tenure decision, peer-based mentoring throughout the pre-tenure period, and one or more pre-tenure systematic reviews and feedback to these faculty.

Faculty Workload. The CPR includes this statement: “Faculty members told the team that they feel forced by circumstances to make choices between quality administrative work, quality teaching, quality mentoring, and quality scholarship.” Since this sentiment was the result of insufficient capacity, it is presumed that faculty recruitment and hiring will ease this concern. Further, the institution has made initial strides toward developing differential workload tracks and point systems to identify, calibrate and weight faculty endeavors and tradeoffs among teaching, research and service. The institution is commended for these initiatives, and encouraged to see them through to successful implementation.

Faculty Scholarship. Historically, the perception among existing faculty has been that research receives less weight than teaching and service in the hiring and review processes. There are several indications that research is likely to receive proportionately greater weight in the foreseeable future. In anticipation of this shift in culture, which is driven by a mix of internally-generated preferences and externally-imposed specialized

accreditation standards and aspirations, it is essential that the institution make intelligent choices that increase opportunities and encouragement for faculty to conduct meaningful scholarship. In the aggregate, the current workload does not appear to allocate sufficient time for many or most faculty to conduct and report on scholarship at the level either they or the institution would prefer, and the current budgetary choices do not appear to provide an adequate level of funding for scholarship and creative activity. To their great credit, faculty members seem both willing and able to increase the role of scholarship in the composition of their professional portfolio. The institution is encouraged to avail itself of this somewhat hidden asset.

Faculty Review. Faculty is reviewed for tenure and promotion by the Professional Review and Ethics Committee (PREC), with the tenure decision scheduled for the sixth year. The committee is comprised of peers from across the campus, elected in a manner that assures broad discipline representation. Code-word categories and labels identify the consensus assessment of PREC with regard to each of the categories of teaching, research and service. Faculty generally seems aware of the need to rate in a top category in teaching and in research and/or service, but seem unclear as to how stated criteria are applied to arrive at the classification. It is recommended that the institution generate “sample faculty profiles” or some other means of conveying to faculty a sense of how particular profiles map into specific classifications. The point system currently being considered to calibrate and quantify levels of teaching assignment, research activity, and service commitment may prove helpful in reducing uncertainty and the attendant anxiety. The institution is commended for the comprehensive faculty portfolio requirements that initiate the review, including the personal reflection statement and the requirement of colleague visits and assessments of

classroom teaching effectiveness. The latter is particularly important, given the evident bias in student evaluation results due to response bias that accompanies low return rates. The institution is strongly encouraged to find a means to increase evaluation response rates. Also, as suggested in the WASC “Special Visit” in 2004, the institution is encouraged to “use external reviewers from comparable institutions to evaluate a tenure candidate’s scholarly and creative work.”

In sum, the team commends the institution for having a strong resident faculty, deeply committed to the institution and to student learning; creative approaches to differential workload tracks and to calibration of faculty activity; and the faculty portfolio requirement during review, especially the personal reflection statement. The team also expects to see progress in the following areas:

- Meaningful implementation of the “Academic Five-Year Hiring Plan” leading to significant improvements in the hiring of full-time faculty.
- Expand the orientation program for new faculty, and develop a quality peer mentoring program focused on assisting faculty to meet clear guidelines developed for tenure.
- Provide increased time, funds and rewards for meaningful faculty scholarship activities.
- Revise the student course evaluation process to assure a significantly greater response rate.

Theme 2: Assessment

Dominican University of California has made remarkable progress on assessment and program review in the last two years, especially among the programs without a history of specialized accreditation or state licensure regulations. As before, all courses and programs have student learning objectives, and they are taken seriously (CFR2.4). The faculty with whom the team spoke (certainly the majority of full-time faculty on the campus) believe, almost without exception, in the value of assessment to improve their courses and modify

programs. Almost everyone could easily provide at least one example of a program change that had resulted from discovering course material being presented in a less-than-ideal sequence or using a less-than-ideal method. Faculty who were reluctant participants in assessment in 2008 have by now been convinced that, if nothing more, the conversations among faculty about goals, pedagogy, and student learning are stimulating and useful in their teaching. The team heard a few complaints about the amount of reporting that is required, but came away convinced that assessment has taken root and will be continued. Dominican is to be highly commended for this change of culture and the hard work it has done since the CPR.

The poster session on assessment that was mounted for the team visit is indicative of the shift in culture. Twenty-three programs prepared electronic “posters” with videos showing students making presentations on their integrative learning, departmental data and how it was being used, and reports on faculty processes to conduct ever better assessments. The team saw evidence of embedded questions in tests, an extensive discussion of rubrics across departments, recitals (or their equivalent), and use of student self reports. Department Chairs are using the results to change the sequence of topics within courses, the sequence of courses, the General Education program, the requirements in the major, etc. Faculty expressed renewed interest in pedagogy as a result of the conversations that have taken place around these issues. The team was impressed with the poster session, which included 23 academic and 15 administrative assessment posters, and believes its implementation was very valuable for the campus members involved because it allowed for the exchange of ideas among faculty on this topic.

Institutional Research supplies departments annually with data on numbers of students, retention, GPAs, and other information that is requested. Those departments with programs undergoing review receive more extensive data. The review cycle, now entering its second phase, is six years in length, and it includes all programs, academic and non-academic (CFR 2.7). For the programs with specialized accreditation, the review cycle of the accreditation agency replaces the Dominican program review. Academic program reviews include an examination of the program by an external reviewer. The process culminates in the production of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the department and the Provost that specifies the recommendations that will be funded and the timetable in which each initiative will occur. Because many of the reviews to date have included recommendations beyond the fiscal means of the University, it has often taken some time for the MOU to be finalized. External reviewers often recommend more faculty, more up-to-date facilities and equipment, or other changes that are not the institution's highest priorities. The current system is discouraging to Dominican faculty when the recommendations cannot be funded. It also seems cumbersome to team members (requiring too many steps that result in the process being drawn out longer than necessary). The team suggests that a system for completing the review cycle more quickly be devised, but not at the expense of separating the funding process from the review.

As might be expected, the assessments are not of equal quality. Some pre and post-tests, for example, attempt to find significant differences in student skills in too short a time to be realistic. Because Dominican has small classes, some assessments represent too small or too skewed a sample to allow general conclusions to be drawn. Nonetheless, based on the poster sessions and the individual meetings with six specific departments, the team believes the

campus has the expertise to correct these false starts and continue to build a track record of using evidence to make changes.

A new general education program has just been adopted, partly because of assessments of the current GE program where faculty discovered that students were not gaining certain writing and research skills as early or as deeply as they would like. Of course, the new program has not yet been assessed, but plans for assessments, both at the course and the program level are built into its description. A new course sequence, Big History, is proposed. It has been assigned a director and provided with resources that will enable faculty to meet this summer to coordinate their teaching and assessment ideas (CFR 2.4). Understandably, there is a lot of excitement about this endeavor among the faculty.

As Dominican continues to assess and improve student learning, it has a process to review its learning objectives. Already, the number and scope of the objectives have been refined, and plans are in place to assess each in a timely manner. Raising expectations of students may occur, but for now faculty in general seem basically content with the level of performance of most students with the exception of the writing and research goals noted above.

Genuine efforts also have been made to integrate assessment, program review, and data-driven decision making into the operation of the institution's co-curricular and academic support programs. The Team reviewed assessment activities in the areas of Service-Learning, Athletics, the Institute for Leadership Studies, Student Life, and the Honors Program (CFR 4.1). In some cases, that assessment was driven by outside forces (e.g., the move Athletics from NAIA to NCAA, Division II, and the expectations of the NCAA).

In addition, there were other evaluative and program review initiatives. Career and Internship Services has utilized the Graduated Student Survey. For each of the past five years, the University conducted the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) which Student Life supplemented with focus groups in areas of concern identified by the survey results. Based upon those results there was often evidence of application of resources to address the areas of concern. (CFR 4.4, 4.6) . For example, student concerns about the residence halls resulted in interior painting and the replacement of a roof in one building. Orientation Programs, which have been formally assessed annually since 2004, have resulted in a number of program changes. And, the annual Program Review of Student Health Services did result in an increase in staffing. Data on alcohol use and binge drinking has been collected and monitored by Student Life staff for the classes that entered from 2007 to 2009 although staffing constraints in Student Life have not allowed for the planning of new alcohol education programs.

In some cases, outside consultants were retained to review and evaluate a specific program or service (e.g., the “External Review of Career and Internship Services Evaluation Report”). While the penetration of the assessment/outcome mindset is not complete, the Team recognized that an effort to make a major shift in the campus culture was underway.

The Dominican strategic planning process systematically worked to identify gaps in the alignment of co-curricular and curricular efforts (CFR 4.1, 4.2) and attach resources to areas of need (Strategic Financial Plan, 10 November, 2009). However, since the Plan was only recently adopted and actions are just now being implemented, it is difficult to evaluate their effectiveness or appreciate their sustainability. While the direction and momentum is

exceedingly encouraging, the actual achievements will be much more apparent several years from now.

Theme 3: Student Life

As indicated in the 2005 Institutional Proposal, Dominican University focused on Student Life as one of the areas for their EER. As a part of the Student Life (Thematic Area 3) review, the EER reported on the Office of Student Life, Athletics, Retention and Diversity. In order to include other areas that impact student learning and effectiveness inside and outside the classroom, the Thematic Area 3 was expanded to include Academic Programs and Community Engagement. The three key programs that were reviewed in this area are the Service Learning Program, Career and Internship Services, and the Institute for Leadership Studies. And within the Strategic Plan several initiatives spoke directly to this theme – career and life planning, student life, engaged learning experiences, and NCAA Division II athletic program. The Strategic Plan has outlined a promising new roadmap for DUC that, as noted elsewhere, is in the earliest stages of implementation. Among the challenges to the realization of this vision for the University is the very ambitious nature of the initiatives in the plan given the limited development of supporting infrastructure and inadequate staffing.

Office of Student Life, Athletics, Retention, and Diversity

Office of Student Life. Each office within the Student Life division is responsible for assessing the effectiveness of its programs and services. These assessment activities are made by using quantitative and/or qualitative tools such as surveys, interviews, and focus groups consisting of students or alumni. In addition, Program Reviews of the student Life offices are conducted on a regular basis (CFR 2.10, 2.11, 4.4). Comments regarding the Student Life assessment activities have been imbedded in content in the Assessment section above and the Retention section below.

Athletics. In 2008, Dominican University began the first year of conditional NCAA participation in its pursuit of full Division II membership. In addition to competing in the PacWest Conference, the transition has required Dominican to address a broad range of compliance and support issues. Current pressures on facilities will be ameliorated by the eventual completion of the 'Field of Dreams' project. In discussions with student athletes and the staff of the Athletic Department, it was clear to the Team that the emphasis remains balanced between success in the classroom and on the field/court. As a part of this process, the Athletic Department has developed a strategic plan that established strong academic performance metrics in addition to fundraising, attendance, and winning percentage.

Both the move to Division II NCAA and the completion of the 'Field of Dreams' project are included as strategic initiatives in "The Dominican Strategy 2011-2015". These changes reflect an effort to increase the visibility of DUC, to create an elevated level of campus activity and energy, and become more attractive to traditional, campus-focused students. It will be critical for the University to ensure that the investment in intercollegiate athletics yields the expected results in the coming years.

Retention. The EER Team noted that the six-year student retention/graduation rates, which range from 41% to 54% for the classes that entered in 1994 to 2003, are still a cause for concern. However, the Team also found that the Strategic Plan for 2009 – 2015 includes student retention as an integral part of the decision-making process. Eight Key Performance Indicators (KPI) have been identified and the specifics of how these results will be achieved are detailed in the financial and action plans, which supplement the Institutional Strategic Plan (CFR 1.2, 2.7, 2.10, 2.13, 4.2).

- A campaign was initiated aimed at raising the awareness of all members of the campus community, particularly faculty members, to the importance of retention of students (CFR 4.6, 4.7).
- During the 2008 and 2009 summer months, faculty chairs, faculty advisors, as well as admission and financial aid staff members were asked to personally contact students who had not registered to see what type of help was required to ensure the students' return to the University. One need that surfaced was for additional financial aid because of the economic crisis. To help students in this situation, a Dominican Loan Program was established as a last resort for students whose families could not obtain loans from other sources. Eight students participated in this special loan program during the 2008-2009 academic year and all eight students returned to start the 2009-2010 academic year.
- A study that was undertaken to benchmark Dominican with comparable institutions showed that the University's four-year graduation rate was at or slightly above the rate of the comparable institutions. However, the six-year graduation rate comparison was slightly below the average of the comparable institutions.
- A consultant was brought to DUC in late, 2009 to examine undergraduate retention. Among the recommendations were to re-examine the current advising model, to strengthen faculty-student interaction in the first year, and reduce the reliance on adjunct faculty in introductory courses. It will be important to carefully consider and respond to these findings.

Concerns Identified – Retention. As was noted above, there is continued concern about the rise of alcohol abuse and binge drinking by the Dominican students. The data tracked by the Counseling Services Office supports the fact that there has been an increase in the number of students who present to that Office due to problems related to alcohol abuse. Counseling

services has also seen an increase in the number of students of color as well as international students who seek services for a variety of reasons that if left unresolved often lead to students failing to be retained by the University.

However, one of the two rooms assigned to the Counseling Services Office is currently not available. Consequently, staff had to make a decision to either reduce the number of sessions that students can be seen or have a long waiting list of students who wish services. The decision was made to restrict the number of counseling services.

Diversity. As noted in the EER report, Dominican University is committed to maintaining a campus climate and infrastructure that promotes diversity and multiculturalism and prepares students to live in a diverse and changing world. The University appears to have established a climate and culture of respect for diversity, which has fostered a diverse ethnic profile among its undergraduate students. In 2009 approximately 46% of the undergraduate students self-identified as Hispanic, Native American, Asian American, African American, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. The enrollment of undergraduate students of color has increased by 1% each year from 44% in 2006 to 46% in 2009 (CFR 1.5). The University has not been as successful in attracting graduate students of color. The enrollment of graduate students of color has not increased significantly but has kept steady at 15% between 2007 and 2009, which is an increase from 12% in 2006.

It is expected that the strategic plan action item to increase the enrollment of international students from a baseline of 4% to 10% by 2015 will further increase the diversity of the student body. With the increase in the diversity and the internationalization of the student body there will be an increased need to develop and implement a system designed to ensure that the students feel welcomed, wanted and included. It will be equally important to establish academic and co-

curricular programs which help to ensure that students, including the students of color, graduate in a timely manner (CFR 1.2, 4.6).

With the increased diversity of the student body it is important that the University strives to increase the diversity of the faculty and staff who can act as role models for the students of color. Information received from the Center for Diversity Initiatives (CDI) indicates that the gains and the momentum derived from the focused diversity hiring efforts between 2001-2005, which were supported by funds received from the Irvine Foundation, has retrogressed in spite of active efforts to institutionalize a diversity faculty hiring policy. Data show that the percentage of full-time faculty of color, which was at 19% during the 2006-2007 academic year, decreased to 14% for the 2008-2010 academic years. Diversification of staff also continues to be an important need; according to the EER report the percentage of staff members of color dropped from 18% in 2007 to 16% in 2008, but increased to 19% in 2009.

The University has made progress toward establishing and incorporating diversity-centered data collection processes across the campus. The Office of Institutional Research has spearheaded this effort and has joined forces with the CDI to collect, report, and analyze diversity information in the admission data, recruitment and retention data for faculty, staff and students; Academic Program Review Data sets incorporating diversity data; Student Satisfaction Survey data; and GPA data disaggregated by ethnicity (CFR 4.5).

The CDI has made several recommendations in its five-year plan for the 2010-2015 period that have not yet been accepted or adopted by the University. The Team strongly encourages the University to incorporate the CDI recommendations into the institutional strategic planning and budgeting processes. It will be important for the institution to include diversity policies, procedures, processes, strategies and benchmark measures in the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan and

develop collaborative efforts between the Student Life areas, the CDI, and the Office of International Programs. The Team would like to see the CDI provide intercultural education and professional development to the entire Dominican University community, review institutional operations and plans in reference to their impact on the diversity and intercultural initiatives, analyze and report diversity data (including diversity climate assessments) periodically, and link co-curricular student experiences for students of color and international students with the CDI as part of a recruitment and retention strategy.

Improvement Needed

Additional support for the Student Life staff must be provided in order to continue to develop and offer alcohol education programs for students (CFR 3.1). The EER Team expects the campus to provide adequate and appropriate offices be found for the Counseling Services so that the restriction on the number of counseling visits can be lifted and additional client service contacts can be offered to the increasingly diverse and international student body (CFR 2.13). The Team strongly encourages the University to incorporate the CDI recommendations into the institutional strategic planning and budgeting processes (CFR 1.5, 4.2, 4.4, 4.8).

Academic Programs, Community Engagement, and Engaged Learning.

The strategic planning document includes the core values of ‘community’ and ‘service’ and takes the rich Dominican tradition of community engagement and broadens the emphasis so that the focus is on engaged learning, one element of which is community engagement/participating in a service experience (the others being participating in an internship, study abroad, and research with faculty) It also articulates an ambitious commitment to “ensure that all graduating bachelor’s students have had at least three engaged learning experiences and 50% of graduating master’s students have had a least one engaged learning experience”. (CFR 2.5) While the Team

applauds the goal, the Team is concerned that the infrastructure does not currently exist to support this goal and what exists is fragmented.

Like much of what the Team observed on this visit, there is a sense of promise and an articulated intent to correct existing limitations. But, the current capacity and organization is inadequate to achieve this goal. For example, currently about 12 percent of Dominican University students participate in an international study abroad or a short international trip. In order to achieve the goal of international experiences for 31 percent of the student body additional staffing support will be necessary to establish international partnerships, organize and coordinate trips, and address the logistical requirements of having such large numbers of students abroad. Perhaps indicative of the relative newness of this laudable goal is the relative absence of any mention of the internationalization efforts in the EER submitted to the WASC team (a very brief mention on p. 2) or that the International Programs Director position is yet to be included on the October 29, 2009 DUC organizational chart. It is all in a nascent stage.

Career and Internship Services. As with international trips and study abroad opportunities, the intent to dramatically expand the numbers of internships will require more staff in the Office of Career and Internship Services. The provision of quality internships is a time-consuming venture that necessitates considerable one-on-one work with employers or agencies, supervision of the students, site visits, trouble-shooting, evaluation, and more. The current staff is inadequate to grow and sustain such a comprehensive program. Funds have been designated for this purpose in the “Strategic Financial Plan” but as the EER states (p. 38), “The University agrees that additional staff should be added to CIS, but other more pressing hires have taken priority.” Again, time will be required to evaluate the ability of DUC to realize these goals.

Service Learning. And, in the arena of service learning the current staffing is also inadequate to grow the program. The roughly ten service learning courses being offered each semester tax the .75 staff position which supports this program. In conversation with the Team, even faculty members who have been long-time supporters of service learning indicated that it has become increasingly difficult to give the extra time necessary to arrange for placements and organize the service learning component of their classes. While Dominican has replaced some soft money with general fund dollars to support the program, there are a number of barriers to realizing expansion of service learning.

As noted above, although additional funding has been promised for each of these initiatives in the ‘Strategic Financial Plan’ (Revised 10 November 2009), allocations are spread over the next five years and dependent upon some very optimistic enrollment scenarios. Since the current infrastructure is inadequate to realize these goals, it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of these efforts. It seems that the Team is still faced with capacity questions.

Institute for Leadership Studies (ILS). Although much of the current focus of the Institute is directed toward the business, government, and non-profit sector (including the Leadership Lecture Series), the ILS has partnered with the division of Student Life to host the LeaderShape program. This is a small but valuable engaged learning experience that involved twelve DUC students in 2009. The ILS is also home to the Dominican Leadership Learning Laboratory which offers MBA students the opportunity to practice their coaching and consulting skills with community business and non-profit leaders.

Administrative Consolidation. In addition, the programs involved in achieving the “engaged learning experience” initiative are spread throughout the institution. The Team has some concern about the potential for fragmentation of effort (International Programs reports to the

Chief Academic Officer, Career and Internship Services reports to the Vice President for Enrollment Management, Service Learning reports to the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Institute for Leadership Studies reports to the Dean of the School of Business and Leadership, and research opportunities are spread across academic departments). There may be merit in considering ways to consolidate this collection of programs and services under fewer administrative areas or insure that they are carefully coordinated in some other manner. The team approach used to tackle the issue of retention may be a useful model.

Parenthetically, the Team would suggest some consideration be given to administratively relocating the Office of Career and Internship Services. From a purely functional perspective, it is difficult to see advantages from its current location under Enrollment Management especially given its central role in the strategic initiative around engagement. Greater synergy would exist with the programs affiliated with Student Life or several other administrative units. The impending relocation to the Dominican Heritage and Alumni House may also support administrative reassignment.

B. Institution's Systems for Enhancing Educational Effectiveness and Student Learning

The EER team believes the campus is willing to sustain its assessment endeavor; however, it believes the attempt will be possible only under the following conditions:

- More faculty and staff are hired to relieve current employees of the heavy workload under which they work;
- Current senior leadership is maintained, and the incoming president continues the current priorities of the campus

SECTION III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Dominican is highly commended for a palpably positive atmosphere experienced on campus throughout all team meetings and with all personnel. There is a sense of accomplishment of what DUC has done over the last two years, as well as optimism about the future. This sense of accomplishment and optimism is demonstrated in many areas:

1. The strategic plan is in place. The development of the plan has been inclusive and there is buy-in for its directions;
2. Communication on campus has improved considerably. This is demonstrated in structural changes (Deans are part of the Faculty Forum and there are faculty representatives on the President's Council). It is also demonstrated by members of the community consistently reporting that communication is good. Transparency is the watchword;
3. There is a new strong executive management team. They demonstrate commitment to the strategic plan in each of their individual areas; they also seem to operate well as a team;
4. Dominican continues to make improvements in facilities. The new admission building is a very inviting introduction to the campus. The Dominican Heritage Alumni House will soon be finished and provide a lovely remodeled multipurpose facility;
5. Team meetings with students were very positive. Students have high energy, are excited about changes going on at Dominican, and they feel they have a voice in campus life. They believe they are being well-educated both inside and outside the classroom;

6. Dominican is very fortunate to have a dedicated and energetic faculty and staff. They are student-centric and are committed to Dominican and its mission;
7. Dominican is commended for strides it has made in assessment – not only in academic programs but as a tool for continuous evaluation and improvement in all departments.

Recommendations.

1. Dominican is challenged to clarify priorities in the strategic plan and to find additional (non-tuition) revenues to fund these priorities.
2. Dominican is challenged to improve financial modeling to inform decision-making.
3. Dominican is challenged to increase staffing levels for faculty and staff positions immediately. Enrollment has grown considerably in the last few years and the enrollment futures are very bright. Yet staffing is lower in many areas than it was two years ago. This counter trajectory represents a great risk to quality for the immediate future of Dominican.
4. Regarding the Presidential transition, maintain openness in the search and select a candidate in sync with the University and the strategic plan.
5. Monitor the international recruitment initiative in regard to staffing, strain on campus infrastructure and commitment to resources of particular need to international students.
6. Incorporate faculty scholarship into faculty workload, recognizing the implications in any policies developed for hiring additional fulltime faculty.