

Focused Interim Visit Report

Seattle Pacific University

October 17, 2008

Prepared for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

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Introduction
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Enclosed you will find the Focused Interim report requested by the Commission following the Comprehensive Visit to Seattle Pacific University in the spring of 2007. In a letter dated July 26, 2007 the Commission requested this report to address each Recommendation from the Comprehensive Evaluation Report. This report specifically ensures that Seattle Pacific has made significant progress in resolving Recommendations 2, 3, 4, and 6. Furthermore, the report includes our response to Recommendations 1, 2 and 4 for which we will host a Commission representative on October 17, 2008.

Recommendation 1

“The Committee recommends that planning processes, including the preparation of budgets, involve appropriate constituencies to include students, staff, faculty, administration and Board members in a more interactive mode of shared decision-making (Standard 1B.3).”

The report from the visiting team states that the evaluators “found that various constituencies were concerned about greater participation in the planning and budgeting process, and/or participation at an earlier stage of discussion.” While we always strived for a participatory approach to planning and budget we welcomed the Commission’s insights and again reviewed our processes. This review led to a number of concrete changes that we believe has increased communication and opportunities for input from the various constituencies. We have been and continue to be committed to a culture of conversation across campus.

In the summer of 2007, as the President reviewed the processes he decided to form a broader group of campus leaders that would serve as a means to gather insights from staff. This group is now called the President’s Advisory Group (PAG) and the membership includes all members of the President’s Cabinet, all members of the Deans’ Cabinet, Special Assistant to the President for Real Estate Resources, the Athletic Director, the Director of University Communications, the Assistant Vice President for External Relations, the Associate Vice President for Business and Finance, the Director of the Perkins Center, the Director of University Ministries, and Associate Vice President for Information and Data Management. This group met first in early September 2007 for a full day retreat which was given to listening to input from all areas of the campus community. It has met regularly throughout the academic year and once again for a retreat offsite in early September 2008 (exhibit 1.1).

Feedback appears to indicate that PAG is becoming an effective means of communicating to faculty and staff as well as providing those groups a structured means of providing input to planning and budget.

In the past, the President has held forums to communicate and share about strategic planning and this year was no exception. However, as the President planned these forums he was very intentional about providing time for open questions and comments. The input from these forums has been very helpful in shaping our ever-evolving strategic plan. For example, the spring forum on April 28, 2008 provided an opportunity to respond to a “white paper” by the President regarding the direction of strategic planning (exhibit 1.2). This paper was posted to our Blackboard system to receive comment and discussion. Faculty and staff were also asked to be prepared to provide comment and question regarding the paper at the forum. The comments and insights gathered at these forums have greatly informed the current direction of strategic planning and budgeting in fact have contributed to major changes in the final form of the plan.

Further the President and faculty governance worked together to create more opportunities for him to be with faculty leaders and to receive input on strategic planning. The President also hosted informal faculty breakfasts, called Breakfast Conversations with the President, to hear

from them on any topic they wanted to discuss (exhibit 1.3). Much of this input has been incorporated into our strategic planning.

While the Board of Trustees has always been involved in strategic planning, the Board has recently taken action to be more involved and supportive in the strategic planning process. At their May Board meeting they formed an advisory group to work with the President's Cabinet on strategic planning. This group has met several times and is working with the President's Cabinet to shape the strategic plan as it is informed by input from all constituency groups (exhibit 1.4).

In regard to providing more meaningful and earlier input and communication on the budget three concrete actions were taken. First, in early September, and then in early December, the President called a half day meeting of the President's Cabinet and the academic deans to discuss the emerging budget. This was an important time of listening to the budgetary challenges for the deans as well as to provide input on the early development of assumptions for the emerging budget. The President's Budget Assumptions to guide the 2008-09 budget planning included this input (exhibit 1.5).

Second, the faculty revised the membership and charge of the Faculty Budget Committee. Previously this group met only three to four times during the budget building process. There was some concern that this created a situation where too much time was committed to helping faculty understand the complexity of the budget which left minimal time for open discussion. The faculty renamed the committee the Faculty Budget and Stewardship Committee and charged it with meeting year round for a more intentional and focused process of understanding and providing input. The Vice President of Business and Planning is very supportive of this change and the President encouraged and endorsed this move.

Third, the Student Budget Committee did not revise its membership and charge but did decide to meet early in the fall with the Vice President for Business and Planning to be more informed about the budget. A Financial Aid Committee of the ASSP meets annually with the Vice President for Administration and University Relations and sometimes provides a written recommendation for the budget planning process. There was no recommendation last year. Both the Faculty Budget Committee and the Student Budget Committee provide reports to the President in the annual budget process (exhibit 1.6).

There is evidence that these moves address the recommendations of the Commission by meeting the NWCCU standard regarding a participatory planning process involving all constituencies. We believe we have moved even more toward a very open process of communication and input, a true culture of conversation about things that matter for the institution and our future planning.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the University develop and implement appropriate procedures for its Study Abroad Programs. (Standard 2.G.12 and Policy 2.4).

During Fall, 2007 the Office of Academic Affairs created a plan to both continue our efforts in establishing a Study Abroad office as well as begin a faculty-involved process of creating a comprehensive Study Abroad program.

In Winter 2008, two separate committees were constituted to examine the issues around study abroad as well as provide recommendations for the program. The first was the Study Abroad subcommittee of the Accreditation Taskforce. The committee was comprised of three faculty members who have previously led study abroad trips (Doug Downing, Michelle Beauclair, Kim Segall) , the Registrar (Ruth Adams) and the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs/Dean of Students (Jeff Jordan) and chaired by the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs (Cindy Price). The purpose of this committee was to review all existing policies and procedures for study abroad and create a task list (exhibit 2.1).

The second group was a subcommittee of the Global Education Task Force and was comprised of faculty interested in study abroad programs. The charge of this subcommittee was to think not only about immediate policy and procedures but also to look even more broadly at things like best practices, possibilities of new programs and ways that these issues were relevant to the larger conversations on the Global Education Task Force (exhibit 2.2). By the conclusion of the academic year the work of the two committees was brought together in a single, comprehensive task list that will enable the establishment of a Study Abroad office and will provide a realignment of responsibilities for those already involved in study abroad.

By mid-July the Vice President for Academic Affairs recommended to the President a new position and the Study Abroad Coordinator was posted and was subsequently filled by Gail DeBell. Ms. DeBell had worked previously for the University, providing her a good understanding of our campus, students, faculty and administrative structures alike, and comes with an extensive background in the travel industry. We are fortunate to have her. This position will report to the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs (AVPAA) (exhibit 2.3).

Prior to Ms. DeBell's beginning on September 8, 2008 the AVPAA began coordination of numerous aspects of Study Abroad. Six broad 'task lists' were created in order to assure study abroad operations would be well coordinated across campus (exhibit 2.4) and that each concern in Policy 2.4 would be addressed. These task lists are as follows:

- Policies and Procedures
- Budget and Costs
- Student Selection
- Orientation
- Communication
- Academic Program

All tasks on each of these lists have been prioritized and are either currently underway or will be fully addressed by the end of the quarter. By mid-quarter it is anticipated we will have completed the following (exhibit 2.5):

- a uniform, comprehensive student application;
- a timeline for students and faculty for all relevant dates;
- a scheduled (and implemented by the end of the quarter) orientation program for all faculty who currently lead or have interest in leading a study abroad tour to inform them of all news policies, procedures and timeline;
- a study abroad committee to review all current and future curriculum for study abroad programs;
- a fully functional study abroad website providing current information for all interested constituencies.

While the lists of tasks to accomplish are significant with the opening of the new study abroad office as well as new energies committed and in-process for these endeavors it is anticipated we will have all tasks completed by 2008-2009.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the University take necessary steps to make available to prospective and enrolled graduate students information on rights and responsibilities, student conduct code, grievance policy and student organizations and services (Standard 3.B.5)

The University has gathered all relevant information for graduate students and placed this information in several, easily accessible locations. In order to ensure that all necessary information was included, several individuals provided input and reviewed the information. The Graduate Policies and Evaluation Committee (GPEC) took the lead in identifying the necessary information (exhibit 3.1). After the review by that committee, the following individuals/groups also reviewed the information: the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs/Dean of Students, the Registrar and Student Academic Services and the Graduate Center. This information is now located in the following places:

- Information on student conduct code, grievance policy, student rights and responsibilities as well as student services and organizations are included in the graduate catalog posted on the university website:
<http://www.spu.edu/acad/GRCatalog/20089/studentlife.asp>
- Additional departmental level information on rights and responsibilities, departmental academic and grievance policies and student organizations is included in department handbooks published in individual degree programs. These departmental documents will be linked to the Graduate Center web page:

<http://www.spu.edu/prospects/grad/Academics/index.asp> and is easily accessible to potential and current students.

- All current graduate students will be notified of these changes via an email communication from the Graduate Center and a separate mailing from their respective program (exhibit 3.2).

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the University take necessary steps to make counseling and health services readily available in a timely manner to residential and commuter students, including full-time graduate students (Standard 3.D.12)

Part way through the 2005-2006 academic year, a new delivery model was introduced to better serve our undergraduate students. This model included adding a counseling assessment system where all students who apply for counseling services are seen within a week of their initial application, a triage system where immediate services are provided to any student in crisis, session limits (typically 6), additional group counseling sessions, increased number of graduate interns providing services, and an additional .5 FTE therapist for the spring quarter. In 2005-2006, the Student Counseling Center (SCC) waitlist was at 100 students. In 2006-2007, the waitlist was at 55 students. This past academic year, 2007-2008, the waitlist never exceeded 30 students, and no student waited longer than 3 weeks to be served, following their initial face to face assessment. The number of students contacting the SCC has stabilized over the past three academic years. In 2005-2006, 604 unduplicated students sought services. In 2006-2007, 607 unduplicated students sought services. In 2007-2008, 594 unduplicated students sought services (exhibit 4.1).

In addition to this model other steps were taken to assure that students were seen in a timely fashion. During this past spring quarter, the time of year when the SCC is most challenged due to the steady accumulation of clients throughout the year as well as responding to new clients who are first applying for services, a .5 FTE therapist provided additional time and resources necessary for the SCC to continue to serve clients currently on their caseloads, serve all clients on the wait list, and serve new clients first applying for services. An important aspect of this work is to help clients determine services they will need during the summer and make appropriate referrals. With this model there were no students on the wait list the Spring quarter. Additionally, the SCC has a close working relationship with off-campus referral services. They are routinely contacted and a system of agreement has been reached with most providers so that SPU students receive discounted rates, making services more affordable and accessible. The referral list is available as a handout at the SCC and is posted on the department's website.

Student health services are currently provided to graduate students regardless of full-time status on a pay-per-quarter basis. Graduate students who appear at the health center are charged a per-quarter fee (currently \$50) on the first visit. This initial payment covers additional health service visits during the remainder of the quarter.

Graduate students who request counseling services are not currently seen in the SCC. All graduate students who request services from the SCC center are provided referrals to local non-profit community counseling centers offering services on a sliding scale based on the student's income/ability to pay and/or to private mental health counseling providers who have agreed to accept all students from Seattle Pacific University at a guaranteed reduced fee (approximately half the usual fee). This referral service is the same level of care provided to undergraduate students who need ongoing mental health treatment after initial sessions at the SCC and during the summer.

The continuation of this policy for graduate students is merited because:

- Graduate students are not currently assessed a fee for health or counseling services. Providing a fee for service counseling clinic on campus would drastically change the staffing and funding model of service delivery and yield costs that would not differ from community costs for counseling services.
- Graduate students are often in class and on campus during evening and weekend hours. Campus-based counseling services would not provide a more convenient method of service delivery for these students compared to community services more likely to be accessible after hours.
- Graduate students serve as student therapists in the SCC. The majority of fulltime graduate students are from the same departments and programs as the student therapists and could only be seen by a limited number of fulltime staff members, further decreasing the likelihood of timely services. A reciprocal relationship with other local University Student Counseling Centers would not solve this problem as SPU students are placed as trainees in every University counseling service in western Washington.
- Graduate students have been successfully served by this referral model. The fee-per-quarter health services and referral service for counseling services will be added to the information on student services posted on the Graduate Center web page.

Recommendation 5

“The Committee recommends that the University review its procedures for post-tenure review with the intent of clarifying standards and responsibilities to ensure that regular post-tenure reviews occur (Policy 4.1).”

Although our Post Tenure Review policy was accepted by NWCCU in 2001, the recommendation of the 2007 Ten Year Self Study visit team identified our need to communicate the policy and procedures to faculty, clarify the oversight and process of Post Tenure Review (PTR) and provide evidence of a systematic application of the policy. The recommendation provides us with the opportunity to review the PTR policy and procedures to ensure that it is functioning to retain competent faculty in order to fulfill the mission of the university.

On January 3, 2008 Academic Vice President Les Steele met with the Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) to review the recommendation with them and to ask that they initiate a review of the recommendation and the PTR policy and process (exhibit 5.1). Dr. Steele stated that they should review the clarity of the process, communication of the policy, application of the policy and the evaluative authority of the policy. Faculty Affairs Committee created a working group to carry out this review and in February 2008 this group offered an interim report to FAC. The working group also offered proposed changes to the policy to FAC (exhibit 5.2). The process continues with FAC, the group that will ultimately make proposals to the faculty.

The academic administration also reviewed the recommendation and is conducting a review of the administration of the PTR policy in each school. The Office of Academic Affairs is also conducting an inventory of past PTR's and a review of the PTR schedule for the next few years (exhibit 5.3). They are also working in conjunction with faculty governance on the possible modifications to the policy as well as initiating means of communicating the policy more clearly to the faculty by the conclusion of the academic year, 2008-2009.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees regularly evaluates its performance to demonstrate to its constituencies that it carries out its responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner. (Standard 6.B.6)

2007-08 Board Evaluation

The Trusteeship Committee of the Board of Trustees developed a process and survey instrument in 2007-08 to conduct a formal board evaluation at the May 15, 2008 meeting (exhibit 6.1). Up until that point, the Board did evaluate its performance, but only informally.

On March 20, 2008, the Trusteeship Committee reviewed a draft overview of the board evaluation process and a draft survey instrument and agreed that with some revisions the survey would be sent to members of the Board of Trustees in early April for a board evaluation discussion at the May 15, 2008 board meeting.

At the May 14 meeting, the Trusteeship Committee reviewed a summary of responses to the survey, which was compiled by a third party, SPU's legal counsel, Skip Li of Ellis Li McKinstry. Excellent input was received and the findings were thoroughly discussed by the Committee and the Board. One drawback was that only 9 of 15 board members completed the survey. The goal is 100% participation in next year's survey. A draft action plan was developed to capture concrete actions that could be taken to improve the work of the Board based on the trustee input. Both the Trusteeship Committee and the full Board thoroughly discussed the survey findings, and some of the findings will be considered more carefully by the Board in 2008-09, with the intent of adopting a plan of action.

Based on recommendations from the Trusteeship Committee, the Board decided to take the following immediate actions regarding future meeting times and work of the Board: (1) the meeting timeframe in the future will be Wednesday/Thursday (with a Wednesday night dinner

with the Board and the President); (2) there will always be an Executive Session, including both regular and closed sessions; the Board Chair will report to the President on the content of the Closed Session immediately following the Board meeting; (3) a retreat will be planned on a Thursday to Saturday timeframe for November 2008, perhaps annually; (4) there will be a two-hour teleconference call planned in October to keep the Board apprised of any developing news from the campus; and (5) there will be a Christmas celebration in the President's home in December with spouses. The Executive Committee was asked to draft a charter for its work, and it was determined that the role of the Executive Committee needs to be clear and consistent with the functions outlined in the Bylaws.

2007-08 Trustee Self-Evaluations

Trustees who finish a three-year term of office are evaluated for continuation for another three-year term through a self-evaluation process and interaction with the Trusteeship Committee. At the March 20 Committee meeting, three trustees were reviewed and they were recommended for another three-year term (exhibit 6.2). The recommendation was approved by the full Board at the May meeting. Trustees must retire from the Board after three consecutive three-year terms, or 9 years. They may be re-elected to the Board following a one-year break.

2007-08 Affirmation Statement

Each Trustee reviewed the 2007-08 Affirmation Statement at the November 2007 board meeting and signed the statement indicating their commitment to each point of the statement (exhibit 6.3). In some ways, this affirmation statement serves as an annual self-evaluation for ongoing commitment to the mission and work for the University.

Conclusion

Seattle Pacific has found the process of addressing the recommendation to be fruitful. Each recommendation created the opportunity to examine practices in order to further our ability to achieve our mission and goals.

The University believes we are now in full compliance with Recommendations 1, 3, 4, and 6. The President has addressed Recommendation 1 through the development and establishment of new practices to improve participatory planning processes. Furthermore, the President has worked diligently with the Board of Trustees to ensure regular evaluation in order for their work to be carried out in an effective and efficient manner. Recommendations 3 and 4 were addressed by assuring the availability of the required information for graduate students (Recommendation 3) while 4 was addressed through the review of our policies and practices on the access of health services to assure compliance with the requisite standard. While we have not completed every aspect of the coordination of our study abroad program (Recommendation 2) we have made substantial progress since the Comprehensive visit and have no doubt we will have full resolution on all matters by the end of this academic year. Finally, Faculty Governance, through the work of the Faculty Affairs committee, continues their work creating handbook language to ensure effective communication of the policy and procedures for post-tenure review as well as clarification for oversight. It is expected this work, as well, will be concluded by the end of the 2008-2009 academic year.

List of Exhibits

RECOMMENDATION ONE – PLANNING AND EFFECTIVENESS

- Exhibit 1.1 –President’s Advisory Group Meetings and Agenda Schedule, 2007-2008
- Exhibit 1.2 – Preparation for the President’s Forum, April 28, 2008: Conversations On Next Steps for *The 2014 Blueprint*
- Exhibit 1.3 – Calendar of President’s Meetings with Faculty, 2007-2008
- Exhibit 1.4 – Meeting schedule with Board Advisory Group for Strategic Planning
- Exhibit 1.5 – President’s Budget Assumptions, 2008-2009.
- Exhibit 1.6 – Faculty Budget Report; 2008-2009 Student Budget Report

RECOMMENDATION TWO – STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

- Exhibit 2.1 –Study Abroad Committee Minutes, 2007-2008
- Exhibit 2.2 –Global Education Task Force Minutes, 2008
- Exhibit 2.3 – Announcement of Study Abroad Coordinator
- Exhibit 2.4 – Study Abroad Task Lists
- Exhibit 2.5 – Completed Study Abroad items

RECOMMENDATION THREE – GRADUATE STUDENTS

- Exhibit 3.1 – Graduate Policies and Evaluation Committee Minutes
- Exhibit 3.2 – Announcement to graduate students from the Graduate Center

RECOMMENDATION FOUR – STUDENT SERVICES

- Exhibit 4.1 – History of availability of services to undergraduate students

RECOMMENDATION FIVE – POST-TENURE REVIEW

- Exhibit 5.1 – Faculty Affairs minutes, 2007-2008
- Exhibit 5.2 – Revised Faculty Handbook text
- Exhibit 5.3 – Post-Tenure Review audit

RECOMMENDATION SIX – BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- Exhibit 6.1 – SPU Board Evaluation Survey, 2007-2008
- Exhibit 6.2 – Board of Trustees Self Evaluation and Board Feedback Form
- Exhibit 6.3 –Trustees Annual Affirmation Statement 2007-2008