

Year One Peer Evaluation Report

Pacific Lutheran University

Tacoma, Washington

April 25, 2011

A confidential report of findings prepared
for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

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Roster with names and titles of the chair and evaluators

Chair Dr. Marvin Henberg, President of The College of Idaho

Evaluator Dr. Dawn Gallinger, Director of Institutional Effectiveness of Carroll College

Evaluator Dr. Matt Lucas, Provost and Executive Vice President of Corban University

Introduction

The Year One Report had a number of important strengths. In general it was clearly written and easy to follow. The report closely followed the pattern of the *Revised Standards for Accreditation* which assisted the evaluators in evaluating the University's parameters for mission fulfillment. It is clear that the University is actively engaged in comprehensive, thorough, and mission-based planning. The institution is commended for its *PLU 2020* long-range plan with evidence of broad inclusivity as documented in the university-wide focus study groups and 26 "Topic for Discussion" papers. The evaluators were particularly thankful for the inclusion of the helpful links.

The Year One Report also provided evidence that the University had taken the two (2) recommendations seriously. While both direct and indirect assessment processes are evidenced, the University needs continued commitment (building on the current 28% level) of efforts to "close the assessment loop."

...and 28% [of programs] identifying specific curricular, resource, or instructional change resulting from assessment efforts.

The post-tenure faculty review system is well documented in the Faculty Handbook policy revisions.

Progress on Recommendations from Most Recent Evaluation.

In 2009, a focused interim visit was conducted. From the 2009 visit the Commission asked that Pacific Lutheran University respond to two (2) recommendations in the Year One Report.

1. It is recommended that the University continue to develop and implement systematic assessment of all academic programs and general education. Both direct and indirect assessment evidence should be reported for all academic programs. The use of assessment results for program decision making should be documented (Standard 2.B.1, 2.B.3, and Policy 2.2).
2. It is recommended that the University provide documentation that all tenured faculty have been evaluated within the last five years, consistent with the policy on faculty evaluation adopted in April 2009. The University should document that non-tenured tenure-track faculty have been evaluated consistent with the policy on faculty evaluation adopted in April 2009 (Standard 4.A.5 and Policy 4.1).

Based on the narrative of the report and supporting documents, it appears that Pacific Lutheran University has taken seriously these recommendations and had dealt with each in a comprehensive manner.

Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility Requirement Two, *Authority*, was not discussed in the report. Eligibility Requirement Three, *Mission and Core Themes*, was met. Understanding the request to write an executive summary of the Eligibility Requirements associated with this report was a late addition to the guidelines, the institution is encouraged to follow the guidelines released March 2, 2011 to ensure its next report addresses the Eligibility Requirements as noted in the guidelines.

Section One

Standard 1.A. Mission

Pacific Lutheran University clearly articulates its mission and manifests it through long-range and annual initiative planning documents. The mission statement is parsed into major components which are introduced as aspirations in *PLU 2010*, the current long-range planning document. Beginning in 2003, the institution has periodically evaluated and assessed the long-range plan, *PLU 2010*. The evaluation and assessment of the long-range plan is formalized, documented, and inclusive of faculty, staff, and administration. Department and divisional initiatives are shared annually with the community and assessed twice a year. It is clear that the documents are generally understood by the community and work together to give direction to institutional efforts.

It is stated in the self evaluation that mission fulfillment at PLU has traditionally been measured yearly by progress on university and divisional initiatives and periodically on the recommendations in the long range plan. While it is clear that these planning documents articulate institutional accomplishments, it is not as clear what defines an acceptable threshold or extent of mission fulfillment. Is mission fulfillment only achieved if all the planning initiatives are achieved? The evaluators recommend that PLU highlight particular planning initiatives and corresponding benchmarks in order to further clarify and define an acceptable threshold of mission fulfillment.

Standard 1.B. Core Themes

Four of the five aspirations from the long-range plan *PLU 2010* provided the core themes for the Year One Report. The fifth aspiration is a supportive element (representative of accreditation Standard Two).

The five action-oriented aspirations...express the university's highest hopes. They represent ideals to be pursued; they are much more than concrete goals that be rapidly achieved or simply measured...Taken in context, these aspirations point directly to the chapters that follow, and the recommendations that emerge.

These core themes individually manifest the essential elements of the university's mission and collectively encompass that mission. The evaluators compliment the University on selecting core themes that manifest their mission as foundational in seeking to educate students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care – for other people, for their communities, and for the earth. The rationale for each core theme is clear and appropriately informs the selection of objectives.

The report clearly identifies objectives that support each of the four core themes. For many of the core theme objectives there is evidence of both direct and indirect indicators of achievement.

Concern: Unlike Core Themes One, Three, and Four, Core Theme Two does not appear to have any direct measures of student achievement.

Compliment: The selection and rationale for each core theme is clear and mission-driven.

Summary

Pacific Lutheran University has taken positive steps to respond to its two Recommendations from the 2009 focused interim report. The Year One Report provides a thorough overview of mission, core themes, objectives, and indicators of achievement.

Commendations

1. The evaluators commend Pacific Lutheran University for their progress on implementing systematic assessment of all academic programs and general education.
2. The evaluators commend Pacific Lutheran University for providing comprehensive mission-based planning activities that involve campus-wide constituents.

Recommendation

The evaluators recommend that the University define an acceptable threshold or extent of mission fulfillment (Standard 1.A.2). While it is clear that the University's planning documents articulate institutional accomplishments, it is not as clear what defines an acceptable threshold or extent of mission fulfillment. The evaluators recommend that PLU highlight particular planning initiatives and corresponding benchmarks in order to further clarify and define an acceptable threshold of mission fulfillment.