

A photograph of a university campus. In the foreground, there are green trees and a bush of pink azaleas. In the middle ground, a paved walkway leads to a brick building with a red-tiled roof. Several people are visible: one walking with a backpack, and others sitting on a bench. The scene is bright and sunny.

# Pacific Lutheran University

Tacoma, Washington  
March 1, 2011

## Year One Self-Evaluation Report

Prepared for the  
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

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## INTRODUCTION

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Pacific Lutheran University, founded in 1890, offers more than 3,500 students a unique blend of academically rigorous liberal arts and professional programs. Students develop skills in decision making, analysis, communication, and reasoning that prepare them for a lifetime of success—both in their careers and in service to others.

Located six miles south of Tacoma on a 126-acre campus in suburban Parkland, Washington, PLU is a regional university with approximately 72% of the undergraduates residing in the State of Washington although a considerable number come from surrounding states. Overall, students from 40 states and 31 countries attend PLU. The campus is considered residential, with approximately 50% of the undergraduate students living on campus, and many others in close proximity. The new freshmen student enrollment has remained at approximately 700 the last six years, although new transfer student enrollment has been gradually declining.

The student body is 63% female, and 73% of the students are white non-Hispanic. The international student population has returned to approximately 200 students – a level last seen prior to September 2001. Students at PLU appreciate the emphasis on global education as each year an average of 35% of students earning a bachelor's degree have participated in a study abroad experience while at PLU. Many more students have study away experiences at U.S. locations. The student faculty ratio is 15:1.

There are 221 full-time faculty, approximately 37% of whom have joined the faculty in the past five years. The newest faculty tend to have an international connection, that is, either extensive study in another country or foreign born. Faculty are committed to a strong general education program, an alternative international honors core, student capstone requirements, student-faculty research, and global education.

Students are drawn to the academic rigor, the central role of the liberal arts in the curriculum, the professional schools, the fine arts, and the emphasis on educating for lives of service. Motivated by the Pathways of Distinction, PLU provides undergraduate education through majors and minors in three divisions of the College of Arts and Sciences, four professional schools, and eight interdisciplinary programs. Graduate education is offered in business, creative writing, education, marriage and family therapy, and nursing.

Pacific Lutheran University is affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. In particular, the emphasis on vocation (life of purpose) led PLU to establish the Wild Hope Project where students, faculty, and staff explore issues around life with meaning and service to others.

Helpful links:

PLU Profile (<http://www.plu.edu/about/Profile/home.php>)

PLU Factbook (<http://www.plu.edu/institutional-research/factbook/home.php>)

PLU 2010-11 Catalog (<http://www.plu.edu/registrar/Catalog/home.php>)

## **INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT**

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Pacific Lutheran University is pleased to present this Year One Self-Evaluation Report to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. The Core Themes have been developed through a university-wide process of discussion and study.

Pacific Lutheran University engaged in the NWCCU decennial accreditation process in Spring 2008, and accreditation was reaffirmed by the Commission in July of that year. The evaluator's report cited four recommendations. All were reviewed in a focused interim evaluation report and visit in October 2009. That evaluator proposed two recommendations, and those were accepted by the Commission. Our responses to those recommendations are located in the preface of this report.

This accreditation report has been developed while the university has been thoroughly engaged in a three-year long-range planning process called *PLU 2020*. In many ways, this accreditation report is at once a reaffirmation of our long-standing mission, a description of how PLU has successfully fulfilled that mission through the "pathways of distinction" articulated in the previous long-range plan (*PLU 2010*), and an aspirational look ahead as the mission is articulated in the context of the challenges of the next decade.

The body of this report contains information about the PLU Mission and the four Core Themes which embody and flow from the mission:

**A Challenging Academic Experience** as indicated by:

- Thoughtful Inquiry Rooted in the Liberal Arts, the Sciences, and Professional Programs
- A Curriculum in Support of the Mission
- An Engaged and Purposeful Learning Experience
- Faculty Distinction in Teaching and Scholarship

**A Supportive Educational Environment** as indicated by:

- Living and Learning Environment
- Educational Support Services
- Vocational Exploration

**Leadership and Care** as indicated by:

- PLU as a Community of Care
- Cultivating and Sustaining Leaders

**Community and Global Engagement** as indicated by:

- Community Stewardship and Service
- Global Distinction

Helpful Links:

Accreditation (<http://www.plu.edu/accreditation/>)

PLU 2000 (<http://www.plu.edu/president/documents-forms/documents/PLU%202000.pdf>)

PLU 2010 (<http://www.plu.edu/president/documents-forms/documents/PLU%202010.pdf>)

## PREFACE

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### INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES SINCE LAST REPORT

#### Governance

The Board of Regents, over a span of two years, reviewed and discussed the articles of incorporation and bylaws, and then recommended updates to these documents so that they better reflect adherence to best practices for nonprofit governance and current practice at PLU. Areas addressed included operational changes, technological changes, and substantive changes such as qualifications for the president and board members. Restated Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws for PLU were approved at the September 2009 meeting of the PLU Corporate Assembly.

The process leading to the new documents began when the Board Affairs Committee was authorized to develop proposed revisions. That Committee's process involved recasting the two documents (Articles and Bylaws) into three documents: Articles, Bylaws, and Standing Policies. Specifically, the process:

- shortened the Articles of Incorporation to limit them to legal requirements and foundational principles (completed and approved September 2009);
- both expanded and contracted Bylaws to change their focus to Board organizational issues, not operational policies (completed and approved September 2009); and
- revised the committee structure, developing charters for each committee (completed and approved January 2011).

Helpful Links:

Articles and Bylaws (<http://www.plu.edu/president/documents-forms/home.php>)

Board of Regents (<http://www.plu.edu/president/regents/home.php>)

#### Leadership

Since April 2008, there have been two changes among PLU officers: the provost and the vice president for development. The president and three vice presidents are the same as in 2008.

President Loren Anderson is serving in his 19<sup>th</sup> year as PLU president. Under his leadership, the university has forged a clear and shared educational vision through two comprehensive long-range plans. These two plans, and *PLU 2020* which is now under development, set forth the university's hopes and aspirations, guide strategic initiatives, and serve to measure the university's progress.

President Anderson has a long history with Lutheran higher education, serving at other Lutheran colleges and organizations. He is active in educational policy issues, including as a board member of the Independent Colleges of Washington, of the American Council on Education, and of the Institute for the International Education of Students. He was chair of the

National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies Steve Starkovich has been provost since spring of 2010, having served as acting provost for the 2009-2010 academic year. He was selected and accepted this permanent position when the previous provost, Patricia O’Connell Killen, accepted the position of academic vice president at Gonzaga University.

Starkovich is Associate Professor of Physics at PLU – a position he has held since 2001. He holds a Bachelors degree in atmospheric sciences with an emphasis in atmospheric chemistry from Oregon State University. His Masters degree is in educational policy and management with an emphasis in higher education administration from the University of Oregon. He earned his PhD in physics from the University of Victoria, British Columbia.

Provost Starkovich served in the Oregon State Senate prior to completion of his master’s and PhD. He first came to PLU in 1992. He has served as a department chair, a member of the PLU Faculty Affairs Committee, a member of the Budget Advisory Committee, Parliamentarian to the Chair of the Faculty Assembly, Elected Faculty Representative to the Board of Regents, and Special Assistant to the Provost for Budget Modeling.

Vice President for Development and University Relations Steve Olson came to PLU in 2007 as director for development. When Vice President Titus left PLU in 2008 to join a consulting firm, Olson was named vice president.

Vice President Olson received a bachelor’s degree from Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota, in 1980, with majors in business administration and psychology. In 1986 he earned a Master of Divinity from Luther Northwestern Seminary. Immediately prior to coming to PLU, he served in a Midwest consulting firm for philanthropy.

PLU Officers remaining in their roles include Vice President for Student Life Laura Majovski, Vice President for Admission and Enrollment Services Karl Stumo, and Vice President for Finance and Operations Sheri Tonn.

Helpful Link:

PLU Officers (<http://www.plu.edu/about/Profile/PLU-Officers/home.php>.)

### **Long-Range Planning**

In 1991, the Board of Regents called upon the PLU community to engage in a conversation about the university’s future. The dialogue resulted in the comprehensive long-range plan, *PLU 2000: Embracing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Beginning in 1999, four years of collaborative work resulted in *PLU 2010: The Next level of Distinction*. These two plans have helped clarify PLU’s identity and mission. In fact the current mission statement, “*PLU seeks to educate students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care—for other people, for their communities, and for the earth,*” is derived from the *PLU 2000* plan.

In 2009, the campus community came together again under the direction of the Board of Regents to work on the next long-range plan, *PLU 2020*. The university's Long-Range Planning Committee developed a planning process and calendar, a steering committee was formed, and work began under a three-year planning process. The Study Year (2009-2010) allowed issues and topics of university-wide interest to be explored. Eight study groups comprised of faculty, staff, administrators, and students crafted papers. In addition, academic and administrative units were asked to review their programs and their work. The Board participated in this process in an October 2009 retreat. Campus-wide forums were held in spring 2010 to provide feedback.

This year, the second of three, is the Discussion Year. From the study group papers, two major papers were developed and forums were held fall semester. From that experience, 26 "Topic for Discussion" papers were written by over 65 contributing authors from among faculty, staff, and administrators. These papers form the basis for further discussion in spring semester forums.

A writing team has been established for year three, 2011-2012. A first draft of their work will be available for the 2011 PLU Fall Conference (faculty, staff, and administrator annual event), and the Board will review the draft in October 2011. The planning process calls for adoption by the Board in January 2012.

The university is proud of its comprehensive, thorough, and mission-based planning. There is confidence that this next long-range plan will continue to guide programs and service to students.

Helpful Links:

PLU 2000 (<http://www.plu.edu/president/documents-forms/documents/PLU%202000.pdf>)

PLU 2010 (<http://www.plu.edu/president/documents-forms/documents/PLU%202010.pdf>)

## **RESPONSE TO OCTOBER 2009 RECOMMENDATIONS**

A focused interim visit was conducted in October 2009 for evaluation of four recommendations from the April 2008 decennial report and visit. From the 2009 visit the Commission asked that PLU respond to two recommendations in the Year One Self-Evaluation Report.

### **Recommendation One**

*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).*

The university continues to make sustained progress in the area of program assessment. All academic programs have put in place and are executing assessment plans for major courses of study. The director of assessment reviewed all annual assessment reports submitted from the 2009-2010 academic year and provided a progress report with general recommendations to the Academic Dean's Council in November of 2010. With all but one program reporting, significant progress was identified in the execution of assessment plans with 81% of programs providing detailed information on assessment instruments being used, 60% reporting that data had been collected at the time of the report, 50% interpreting data and findings in their reports, and 28% identifying specific curricular, resource, or instructional changes resulting from assessment efforts. These numbers represent marked improvements over previous years. The institution's commitment to a faculty-driven assessment process that is both authentic and didactic continues. Programs are embracing the use of imbedded assessments aligned to program outcomes and evaluated against commonly designed rubrics. Senior capstones continue to provide a forum for many summative evaluation efforts. Such efforts are commonly supplemented with exit surveys and interviews, standardized exams, and other performance assessment measures. The Office of the Provost continues to support program-level assessment through consultation, workshops, and refined reporting and review procedures.

The General Education Program has benefited from the formation of the General Education Council in 2009-2010. The Council, in consultation with the associate provost for curriculum, identified and began a series of strategic assessment efforts for General Education. These efforts were reported in the General Education Council Year-End Report, which included a "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats" (SWOT) analysis of assessment efforts at the close of the academic year. As a new council, the current challenge includes both the establishment of mechanisms for the oversight and evaluation of the program, as well as the continued refinement of a viable, long-term assessment plan. To date, the council has successfully piloted a student interview process for programmatic feedback and, as a result, identified several suggestions for improvement. A supplementary survey is also in development for this academic year. A review of capstone practices is presently occurring, and the effectiveness and appropriateness of the diversity element of the program is slated for detailed evaluation next year. Finally, the development of a comprehensive five-year assessment cycle aligned to the Integrative Learning Objectives of the university is currently underway with implementation expected to begin during the 2012-2013 academic year.

Appendix A: Assessment Progress Report

Helpful Link:

Assessment Web page (<http://www.plu.edu/assessment/>)

### **Recommendation Two**

*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).*

In response to the Commission's 2008 recommendation, the Faculty Assembly extensively revised its post-tenure faculty review system. Where tenured faculty were previously reviewed once every seven years after completion of a sabbatical, the new schedule now calls for a review of all tenured faculty on either a 4-year or 5-year cycle depending on rank and without regard to whether the faculty member was awarded a sabbatical. All tenured faculty are now on that new schedule, and the new schedule is being implemented in a way that meets the charge of the Commission. Consequently, the fraction of tenured faculty who have been reviewed in the last five years has grown from a very small percentage three years ago to nearly 80% today. Reviews for the remaining faculty are pending completion. The new review policy, the schedule guidelines, and a recently-developed flow-chart that describes the tenure and review process are attached as Appendices B, C, and D.

In addition, the Faculty Assembly adopted a review process for affiliate (non-tenure-track) faculty. This new process was initiated in Spring 2010 and is implemented via a one-page review form found in Appendix E.

The pre-tenure review process for tenure-track faculty remains as before, with annual reviews punctuated by a thorough third-year review. This review process is consistent with the April 2009 policy on faculty evaluation.

Appendix B: Faculty Review Policy

Appendix C: Review Schedule Guidelines

Appendix D: Faculty Review Chart

Appendix E: Affiliate Faculty Review Form

## **REVIEW OF MISSION AND CORE THEMES**

Through the long-range planning process and the adoption of *PLU 2000: Embracing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, the Board of Regents also adopted the one sentence mission statement, “PLU seeks to educate students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care—for other people, for their communities, and for the earth.”

Since the 1995 publication of *PLU 2000*, this single statement has guided the university through all aspects of planning, including prominent inclusion in *PLU 2010: The Next Level of Distinction*. At the January 22, 2011 Board meeting the Regents reaffirmed the mission statement and approved the four Core Themes. The Regents also gave the Executive Committee of the Board the authority to approve this report to the NWCCU.

The process of development of the four Core Themes grew out of the discussions currently underway for crafting the third long-range plan, *PLU 2020*. In 2010, an accreditation advisory group led by the provost was formed so as to ensure a close relationship between long-range planning and the development of the Core Themes. There is intentional overlap of membership

between the steering committee for *PLU 2020* and the accreditation advisory group. This group used information from the *PLU 2020* planning process and discussions and the components of the mission statement to inform and develop the four Core Themes.

The campus community was informed of the advisory group membership as well as the planning timeline for the development of themes and the preparation of the Year One Report. There were email messages to campus, reports at faculty meetings, reports at the program leaders meetings, and a website with all the content available and feedback mechanism for community input. The Board of Regents discussed the themes and process at their January 2011 meeting. Specifically, the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board discussed the themes and indicators of achievement, made suggestions, and then brought a motion forward to the entire Board for their approval. The motion was unanimously passed.

Helpful Link:

Accreditation Web page (<http://www.plu.edu/accreditation/>)

# **CHAPTER ONE: MISSION, CORE THEMES, AND EXPECTATIONS**

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## **SECTION I: STANDARD 1.A MISSION**

### **Mission Statement**

*PLU seeks to educate students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care  
—for other people, for their communities, and for the earth*

Now known as our single statement of mission, this mission statement was first constructed when the first long-range plan under the leadership of President Loren Anderson was developed and written (*PLU 2000: Embracing the 21st Century*, p 36). Since the 1995 publication of *PLU 2000*, this single statement has guided the university through all aspects of planning, and was prominent in *PLU 2010: The Next Level of Distinction*, where the statement is displayed in the first paragraph (p. 1). This statement is used repeatedly and is often recited from memory by students, faculty, and staff. More important still is the extent to which it informs yearly programming and planning activities. Academic programs, lecture series, the Wild Hope Project, and operational units of PLU use it as a basis for their mission-oriented development.

The mission statement is included in the catalog each year and is available in many PLU publications and online.

### **Interpretation of Mission**

The mission is interpreted through *PLU 2010*, the current long-range planning document. The statement is parsed into its major components, and it is addressed throughout the plan. As an overview and introduction, Chapter 1 of *PLU 2010* introduces five aspirations: Strengthening Academic Excellence, Expanding Community Engagement, Enhancing Global Perspectives and Local Commitments, Nurturing a Sense of Life as Vocation, and Seeking Fiscal Strength. The first four of these are direct expressions of the mission statement. The fifth is a supportive element (representative of accreditation Standard II). As indicated in *PLU 2010* (p. 8):

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 can be rapidly achieved or simply measured. ... Taken in context, these aspirations point directly to the chapters that follow, and the recommendations that emerge.

## **Extent of Mission Fulfillment**

Mission fulfillment at PLU has traditionally been measured yearly by evaluation of progress on university and divisional initiatives and periodically on the recommendations in the long-range plan.

### **Evaluation of Mission Fulfillment: The Long-Range Plan**

The long-range plan, *PLU 2010: The Next Level of Distinction*, lends itself to periodic evaluation and assessment. The plan is imbedded with a series of recommendations and action steps. It is noted in the forward of the plan that these recommendations are neither mandated actions nor imperatives, but rather they are advisory. This allows for flexibility in the yearly initiative process. Within each recommendation is a series of possible action steps aimed at accomplishing the recommendation.

Evaluation of the current long-range plan, *PLU 2010: The Next Level of Distinction*, has continued since the plan's inception in 2003. This evaluation and assessment of *PLU 2010* includes an assessment of progress on each of the recommendations. Faculty and administration, individuals and groups have recorded progress. The Board of Regents undertook a formalized assessment at important stages of the plan, such as mid-way and near the end. For *PLU 2010*, the Board participated in a half-day retreat in October 2006. The administration prepared a "recommendation-by-recommendation" evaluation, and the Regents discussed progress. As this long-range plan draws to a close (planned adoption of *PLU 2020* is January 2012), the Regents reviewed an Outline of Progress on Recommendations. This occurred at the January 2011 Board meeting.

### **Evaluation of Mission Fulfillment: Yearly Planning**

Well before the formal adoption of *PLU 2010* in January 2003, the university community had been translating mission and long-range planning into yearly university and divisional initiatives. Each year the entire university, through the administrative divisions, has participated in this effort by developing departmental and divisional initiatives. A President's Council review and study of these initiatives has led to annual university initiatives. (The President's Council consists of the president, the provost, the vice presidents, the executive director of university communications, and the assistant to the president.) Each fall the university and divisional (academic, student life, enrollment, finance and operations, and development) initiatives are shared with the campus community at the University Fall Conference and with the Board of Regents at the October board meeting. The divisions, and then the President's Council, review progress on the initiatives at mid-year (December). Adjustments of resources (human and fiscal) are made as needed so as to work toward accomplishment of goals. A full-year review by divisions and by the President's Council occurs in May. This review helps inform the process for initiative development for the following year. The Board of Regents receives the evaluation of the prior year at each October meeting. The initiative process has been very systematic and particularly effective for the university because planning at PLU is purposefully aligned to the recommendations in *PLU 2010*.

The process of initiative development and review is well received by the PLU community. It is structured and measurable. Although the process is time consuming, the process fosters both stability and growth. It has helped the university move major initiatives with continuity, transparency, and the capacity for continuous institutional growth and change.

### **Evaluation of Mission Fulfillment: Core Themes**

Going forward, the opportunities presented by identifying core themes and their relationship to and fulfillment of mission are important as the university grapples with the competing forces of the marketplace, educational program, and resources. While the long-range plan and the yearly initiatives tie back to the mission, explicit development of themes provides another opportunity to focus on mission.

## **SECTION II: STANDARD 1.B CORE THEMES**

The PLU mission is to educate students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care—for other people, for their communities, and for the earth. The Core Themes flow from the mission; the curricular and co-curricular programs accomplish this mission. The academic and scholarly experience of PLU students and faculty, the supportive educational environment, the commitment to the care and sustainability of our community and to the development of tomorrow's leaders, and engagement with the world around us speak to the commitment to fulfill the PLU mission.

### **Theme One: A Challenging Academic Experience**

Central to PLU's mission is the concept of vocation – one's purpose and role in life, both within a career and outside it. The undergraduate experience at PLU begins with a clear link between the General Education curriculum and vocation. The *Principles of General Education* statement says it best:

At the heart of the university is the general education curriculum. Through this program of study, students begin the process of shaping not only a career, but more importantly a life of meaning and purpose. This general education, in which students grapple with life's most fundamental questions, is deepened and complemented by the specialized work students undertake in their majors (*PLU 2010-11 Catalog*, p. 4).

Building from the General Education program, our blend of liberal arts and professional programs, augmented by a strong array of interdisciplinary programs, provides students with an academic program that is both rigorous and flexible, creating a foundation for their lifelong vocations and career possibilities. The roles and connections among the General Education

elements, the majors and minors, and the final capstone experience are emphasized across our community (*PLU 2010-11 Catalog*, pp. 4, 8-9).

Cycles of demand for programs often reflect the interplay between student need, the economy, and new innovations from the faculty. The curricular structure is flexible and responsive to these dynamics.

The *PLU 2010* pathway of distinction that emphasized “collaborative student-faculty research and creative projects” is evolving into a more inclusive notion of “engaged learning”—a deliberate form of learning that develops students’ capacities to discover, integrate, synthesize, and apply knowledge, ultimately fostering lifelong inquiry, service, leadership, and care.

As befits a vibrant university, research and scholarship at PLU are essential for faculty to remain current in their fields, and the professional development of the PLU faculty provides a foundation for creative and effective teaching and service.

### **Objectives of Core Theme: A Challenging Academic Experience**

There are four core objectives that support this theme.

#### **1. Thoughtful Inquiry Rooted in the Liberal Arts, the Sciences, and Professional Programs**

The elements of the General Education program—which includes the First-Year Experience (FYEP) and International Honors (IHON) programs—directly support this objective.

The General Education program employs an interdisciplinary approach via its distinct elements: Embracing the Life of the Mind: First Year Experience Program; Engaging Arts and Performance; Interpreting Living Traditions for a Humane Future; Exploring Nature and Number; Investigating Human Behavior, Culture, and Institutions; Encountering Perspectives on Diversity; and Producing and Presenting Culminating Scholarship (*PLU 2010-11 Catalog*, pp. 8-9).

The FYEP offers a comprehensive introduction to university life through both academic and co-curricular components. FYEP develops foundational academic skills and values that prepare students for courses in general education and within majors. Through co-curricular programming, FYEP helps students get situated, connects them with programs and services, and attends to their social and emotional needs. FYEP is thus critical as both a recruiting and retention tool.

The IHON program allows eligible students to fulfill General University elements through challenging and interdisciplinary coursework. IHON is for students who demonstrate an exemplary record in academics and service, as well as a desire to pursue studies in an international context. This distinctive curriculum supports PLU’s mission by challenging students to consider their vocation as leaders within both local and global communities.

## **Indicators of Achievement and Meaningful Measures**

### **General Education**

The Integrative Learning Objectives (ILOs) provide a common understanding of the approach to undergraduate education, encompassing both General Education elements and major and minor areas of study, as well as supportive co-curricular experiences. They are expressed within the Principles of General Education, and provide a mission-driven framework for curricular and co-curricular endeavors. Valued are critical reflection; clear and effective expression; interacting with others in respectful ways; understanding of one's own and respecting others' values; and acknowledging multiple frameworks. The ILOs provide direct criteria for General Education assessment, and inform program learning objectives for assessment in each major.

### **First-Year Experience Program**

The FYEP curricular components (writing and inquiry seminars) are key indicators of success for the program's academic mission. FYEP-specific learning outcomes are used to assess these courses. Co-curricular elements of the FYEP include Charting Your Course (first year registration); Orientation; Common Reading; Map-Works; the J-Term requirement; Explore! Retreat; First Year Residence Hall Wings; Psychology 113; and peer leadership programs. Participation levels in these programs are key indicators of their significance in supporting the FYEP mission.

### **International Honors Program**

The IHON program provides seven required courses that explore contemporary issues and their historical foundations through an interdisciplinary, transnational approach. First-year students are selected to join this multi-year program. Indicators include IHON-specific learning outcomes, with focus on the entire curriculum of the program, rather than discrete courses.

## **2. A Curriculum in Support of the Mission**

PLU's undergraduate programs reflect the values and mission of the university. We view the disciplines as "ways of knowing" through which students "gain an understanding of the ways in which educated people understand themselves and the world," and see majors and minors as ways to "complement and deepen study in the General Education program" (*PLU 2010-11 Catalog*, p.4). The programs provide students with the foundation to become lifelong learners equipped to shape and pursue meaningful vocational and career goals.

Just as graduates of 30 years ago could not foresee many jobs and industries of today, many PLU students will pursue careers that don't yet exist. To adapt to the challenges of tomorrow, students will need not only knowledge in a particular field, but skills of analytical problem solving and effective communication; creativity; and an understanding of difference and diversity. This emphasizes the importance of the skills and abilities articulated in the ILOs, and more specifically articulated as Department Learning Objectives (DLOs) for each program.

### **Indicators of Achievement and Meaningful Measures**

PLU faculty actively pursue curricular development within the framework of disciplinary standards, existing courses, and program requirements (reported in Faculty Activity Reports and Departmental Annual Reports).

#### **Aligned Curriculum**

DLOs mapped to the curriculum provide clear criteria to assess learning within major programs, and departmental assessment efforts engage faculty and provide rich and meaningful feedback on the quality of the academic experience. Indicators of achievement include published learning outcomes and curriculum alignment charts (maps) for all major programs that demonstrate alignment to the ILOs and serve as a basis for program assessment.

#### **Unit Level Assessment and Improvement**

Unit level assessment and improvement efforts guide informed curricular revisions that are responsive to the needs and interests of students, the growth and refinement in disciplines, and an ever changing world. Strong faculty governance and well established policies and procedures allow subsequent faculty driven curricular innovations to be manifest in timely and effective ways. Annual Unit Assessment Reports as well as Periodic Program Reviews provide indicators of achievement for each academic program. An Annual Assessment Update prepared by the assessment director provides a composite evaluation of the progress of assessment efforts and improvements in the academic sector.

### **3. An Engaged and Purposeful Learning Experience**

Engaged and purposeful learning experiences enhance the breadth and depth of the academic experience by allowing students to engage their liberal arts education within a larger community context and to pursue opportunities for specialized work.

### **Indicators of Achievement and Meaningful Measures**

Opportunities, participation, and performance in the various activities that constitute engaged learning are reported annually in various reports (individual Faculty Activity Reports; departmental annual reports; administrative unit reports), and in public presentations of capstone and student-faculty research projects.

#### **Student-Faculty Research and Creative Projects**

As the funding for student-faculty research continues to grow, students are able to participate in a wide range of research and creative activities across the campus. Indicators of achievement include the number and quality of these joint projects, the public campus presentations, and papers and conference presentations co-authored by faculty and students.

#### **Internships and Service Learning**

The breadth of internships placements and success of students in these placements is one indicator. The support of faculty through the academic internship office and the number of students who take a service-learning course is also an indicator of the commitment to this area.

### **Study Away**

Study away is an integral component of Theme Four. Indicators of achievement include formal assessments of all study away programming.

### **Capstones**

All PLU students complete a capstone course. Student success is indicated by the quality of their oral, written, and poster presentations at the end of the course.

### **Co-curricular Learning**

An ongoing commitment of funds to support academic lectures and programs, the range and quality of external speakers and performers, and engagement data from the NSSE provide examples of performance indicators.

## **4. Faculty Distinction in Teaching and Scholarship**

PLU “values as its highest priority excellence in teaching” (*Faculty Handbook*, p.42). Excellence in teaching is the top criterion for all personnel decisions (hiring, tenure, and promotion), and is supported and emphasized throughout PLU’s academic community. Faculty research and scholarship directly support the university’s educational mission. Scholarship allows faculty to connect more deeply to their disciplines and to the wider world of research and creative work. This professional growth allows them to bring new experiences and learning back to the classroom and their students, reinvigorating the curriculum and modeling, by their own example, the practice of life-long learning. In many fields of study, rich student-faculty research opportunities arise as well.

### **Indicators of Achievement and Meaningful Measures**

The faculty review process ensures the periodic peer review and evaluation of performance in areas of teaching, scholarship, and service.

### **Teaching**

Distinctive teaching by PLU faculty is regularly documented in students’ evaluations of individual instructors and courses, and by information from PLU’s student satisfaction surveys. In addition, teaching awards (from PLU or outside bodies) recognize exceptional teaching performance.

### **Scholarship**

Faculty scholarly activity is documented annually in individual Faculty Activity Reports and academic unit annual reports. Student-faculty research activities are recognized on campus, and many of these projects turn into conference papers and presentations, as well as published articles. Further, the Wild Hope Faculty Seminars provide a rich example of life-long learning and vocation among our faculty.

## **Theme Two: A Supportive Educational Environment**

PLU challenges students to succeed to the best of their ability academically, provides them support to reach their academic and personal goals and prepares them for a lifetime of success both in their careers and in service to others.

Many campus partners collaborate to promote the holistic development of students and steward a dynamic campus community. Throughout the university, purposeful experiential learning opportunities are offered that challenge students to make a difference in the world as they care for themselves and others and positively impact the diverse communities in which they live.

In addition, work occurs collaboratively across campus to provide programs and services that advance the development and well-being of students through their PLU education. The campus climate is conducive to the holistic development of students in mind, body, and spirit and strives to be inclusive and supportive, modeling respect for every individual. The advancement of the Integrative Learning Objectives (ILOs) is imbedded in many programs, as is the call for active engagement as citizens of the campus, of their communities, and of the world.

PLU is clearly committed to a deep engagement with people, cultures, ideas, and the environment; a rich array of opportunities to inquire into the human condition and natural world; opportunities for experiential learning, leadership and service, and programs that support students physically, emotionally, ethically, and intellectually.

### **Objectives of Core Theme: A Supportive Educational Environment**

Three primary objectives support this theme. They are:

#### **1. Living and Learning Environment**

Foundational to the entire educational enterprise of PLU is providing an environment in which effective teaching/learning happens with regularity and for all participants. Key components of this environment include: a welcoming campus climate with respect and understanding for all community members; a safe campus with minimal intrusions of distracting, disruptive or illegal behaviors; facilities in which teaching and learning happen easily and well; a dynamic campus life (e.g. lectures, concerts, social events); and residence halls that provide comfortable living accommodations and that contribute to the overall desired PLU educational experience.

#### **Indicators of Achievement and Meaningful Measures**

##### **Welcoming and Diverse Campus**

A welcoming campus for a diverse student body is achieved through orientation programs, and on-going training on issues of diversity, social justice, and respect in keeping with the university's Equal Educational Opportunity and Equal Employment Opportunity policies. Assessment measures include the campus climate survey, Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)

data, residence hall surveys, class evaluations, and evaluations of specific retreats and programs.

### **Safe Campus**

A safe campus is achieved through effective safety, security, and conduct programs and practices implemented broadly across campus and for students living in surrounding neighborhoods. Indicators of achievement include: campus crime statistics, student conduct statistics, and evaluations of particular programs.

### **Academic Facilities**

Effective teaching and learning spaces are achieved by careful planning and implementation of regular upgrades to the classrooms, labs, and other capital and equipment needs of academic facilities. Indicators of achievement include: documented enhancements to, and overall proportions of, technology enhanced learning spaces; on-going and documented enhancements to laboratory and performance spaces; and a clear record of an comprehensive capital improvement budgeting process in support of the educational mission.

### **Dynamic Campus Life**

A dynamic campus community is achieved by multiple out-of-classroom experiences offered each week that advance the mission of the university as articulated in the ILOs. Indicators of achievement are the number and quality of the experiences and the level of student participation.

### **Residence Hall Living**

Accommodations that provide a comfortable on-campus living experience are achieved through careful planning and continual improvements to the buildings, both infrastructure and primary student spaces (rooms, bathrooms, lounges). The educational experiences gained by living in the halls are achieved through specific hall programs, roommate experiences, and partnerships with faculty and other campus educators. Indicators of achievement include the residents' evaluations of both the living space and the living/learning experience.

## **2. Educational Support Services**

Educational Support Services are broadly conceived as services that enhance and uplift academic success and promote educational and career planning. Services also assist students when academic, health, or personal difficulties arise and can aid in the retention of high risk and challenged students. In addition, the Library and Information Technology services are an important component of educational support. The combined utilization of these services can ultimately help distinguish students from their peers when they graduate and face the competitive job market or seek admission to the graduate program of their choice. In addition, support services exist to assist with the "business" of being a student and are provided through the Student Services Center.

## **Indicators of Achievement and Meaningful Measures**

### **Academic Support**

This is achieved through services that are offered to students in primary “hub” models of access. For ease of student utilization, the Ramstad Commons offers collaborative services for academic advising and educational planning, career exploration and preparation, volunteer and service opportunities, and work experiences through internships and student employment. An additional support “hub” is found in the Library where assistance with academic tutoring, foreign language acquisition, writing, research, and technology are all available. Indicators of achievement are measured by student satisfaction data and individual department/program effectiveness assessments.

### **Wellness Support**

This is achieved through services designed to assist students in maintaining their health and wellness during their academic studies. Many of these services are co-located in a hub in the University Center, the PLU student center. Some are medical assistance, counseling, spiritual guidance, and fitness and recreation. Indicators of achievement are measured by SSI student satisfaction data and individual department/program effectiveness assessments.

### **Student Business Support**

This is achieved through a hub, the Student Services Center, where the issues of finances, registration, and myriad other business transactions can be accomplished by the student at one easy-to-access location. Indicators of achievement are measured by SSI data and individual department/program effectiveness assessments.

## **3. Vocational Exploration**

An important distinction of PLU’s Lutheran heritage is the commitment to assist students with their vocational exploration while a student at PLU. At PLU this exploration is offered through the Wild Hope Project. As students determine their interests, skills, and talents related to selection of a major and/or minor, PLU encourages all students to wrestle with the Lutheran concept of vocation or calling. Through a variety of programs and at various times throughout their PLU career, students are encouraged to ask themselves where their deep concerns about life intersect with the needs of the world around them. This vocational exploration, coupled with the challenging educational experience of obtaining a PLU degree, assists students in moving forward on a path of meaning and purpose as they pursue their lives after graduation.

## **Indicator of Achievement and Meaningful Measures**

### **Wild Hope**

The process of vocational exploration is achieved through ongoing programs including new student orientation, the first-year Explore! Retreat, the Meant to Live lecture series, and opportunities for individual reflection. Indicators of achievement are measured through assessment of the program components.

## **Theme Three: Leadership and Care**

The university's mission commits it to educating students for lives of leadership, and care for others, their community, and the earth. While the curriculum and co-curriculum deliver this education, only a university that effectively models caring and practices the art of leadership development can hope to instill these characteristics in its students. PLU is indeed a community that cares for students and employees—a caring that extends beyond their immediate emotional needs, to more tangible ones pertaining to health, wellness, and performance. It models care for people, planet and prosperity, both now and in the future, through its sustainability practices and programs. However, *sustaining* the university's commitment to its mission requires the identification, development, and continuous renewal of individuals who will lead the university.

### **Objectives of Core Theme: Leadership and Care**

Two major objectives have been identified for this theme of leadership and care. They are:

#### **1. PLU as Community of Care**

While self-care is not specifically noted in the university's mission, the implication is that care for other people, for their communities, and for the earth begins with, and is sustained by, self-care in the area of health and wellness, and comprehensive professional development.

Creating lives of sustainable service, PLU students learn that an integrative and holistic approach to life is as important to *staying* well as it is to *getting* well and that self-care is integral to service, not its antithesis. Students develop life skills to live independently and to care for their health and wellbeing. To learn these skills, students see these values modeled in the university's culture and by its members' lives. Administrators, staff, and faculty make use of opportunities to model physically active and meditatively reflective lives beyond the classroom or the office. Often this occurs through the opportunities for spiritual growth as interpreted in a broad multicultural and spiritually-inclusive environment.

The importance of an integrated life-work balance for the health, wellness, and productivity of those who serve the university is supported and celebrated by the university. PLU strives for a healthy balance of internal opportunity for existing faculty and staff along with an ongoing infusion of new ideas and fresh perspectives brought by new employees. This objective is best achieved by the creation and maintenance of a deliberate and comprehensive program of faculty and staff development that supports all members of the PLU community in attending to vocational calling and associated professional growth and development.

The university as a whole also extends a specific commitment to the care of the earth as is reflected in our mission. Efforts directed as sustainability reflect a value that emphasizes the inseparable importance of environmental, economic and ethical principles; it is also a goal that calls us to ensure that our present way of life does not degrade that of future generations, but in fact leaves the world better.

## **Indicators of Achievement and Meaningful Measures**

### **Taking Care of Students**

This is achieved through services designed to assist students in maintaining their health and wellness during their academic studies. Many of these services are co-located in a hub in the University Center. These range from medical assistance to counseling to spiritual guidance to fitness and recreation. Indicators of achievement are measured by student satisfaction data and individual department/program effectiveness assessments.

### **Taking Care of Faculty and Staff**

This category of care is achieved through services and benefits designed to assist employees in achieving a work-life balance and maintaining their professional and personal wellbeing, which include compensation, and wellness and spiritual programs for administration, staff, and faculty. In addition, sabbatical programs are available for faculty and administrators. Indicators of achievement can be measured through program participation rates, outcomes, and faculty and staff satisfaction data.

### **Sustainability**

The university community encourages thinking together about what it means for PLU to strive for sustainability and what it means for each of us to lead more sustainable lives. In addition to existing programs (sponsored by Facilities – Sustainability Manager and the Sustainability Committee), additional programs will be developed in the future, with the goal of integration with academics and student life. Indicators of achievement will include the development of a strategic plan, along with a plan for program leadership and campus integration. Data pertaining to participation rates, level of community engagement, and program effectiveness will serve as measures of achievement.

## **2. Cultivating and Sustaining Leaders**

The mission compels PLU to educate for lives of leadership. It is a fundamental part of the curriculum and co-curriculum. Effective leadership is also essential to the sustainability of PLU and by extension, its educational mission. There are leadership challenges intrinsically linked to the PLU identity, its organizational structure and its educational mission. As the institution better articulates and expands the academic pathways (e.g. post-baccalaureate programming), a new and renewed academic vision will require appropriate expertise and leadership. PLU must develop a cadre of leaders who can lead the university now and in the future. And as part of our educational mission, the university educates our students for lives of leadership.

## **Indicators of Achievement and Meaningful Measures**

### **Faculty and Staff Development – General**

As PLU reaches out to new and expanding student populations (e.g. commuters, veterans, students of color, and graduate students), faculty and staff with familiarity and skill in recruiting, advising, and teaching these students will be necessary. Programming includes new faculty and new staff orientation, which starts the process of acquainting new members of the

PLU community. Faculty development opportunities include programs sponsored by Wild Hope, First-Year Experience Program and International Honors, Information and Technology Services, and the Office of the Provost. The Office of Human Resources sponsors staff development opportunities. Achievement measures include participation rates and program evaluation by faculty and staff.

### **Faculty and Staff Development – Leadership**

Faculty and staff development focuses on training the next generation of leaders for the university. Currently, the university sponsors an annual leadership program for staff and faculty. Indicators of achievement include participation rates, program evaluation by participants and alumni, and demonstrated acquisition of leadership skills (e.g. promotion, job effectiveness). Additional leadership-focused development programs (e.g. department chairs workshops) is also assessed.

### **Student Leadership Development**

This is achieved through training programs offered collectively and by individual departments that include retreats, institutes, and speakers. Indicators of achievement are measured by student evaluations of programs, demonstrated acquisition of skills, and a national leadership evaluation survey.

## **Theme Four: Community and Global Engagement**

PLU has a long history of engagement in the world and also in the local community. When PLU was founded in 1890, it was a church academy that emphasized citizenship and service, and more recently and explicitly PLU addresses the community in its broadest sense through the mission statement, “...care—for our communities....” A compassionate and engaged view of the world is encouraged (especially through the Wild Hope Project addressed in Theme One) and global education is enthusiastically embraced.

### **Objectives of Core Theme: Community and Global Engagement**

#### **1. Community Stewardship and Service**

Motivated by living out the mission, enriching the lives of our neighbors, and being globally engaged, PLU’s record of community stewardship and service is strong and vibrant.

### **Indicators of Achievement and Meaningful Measures**

#### **Range, Reach, and Support of Students in the Broader Community**

The suburban location of PLU affords students the opportunity to engage in many service projects and opportunities. Some of these are undertaken through service-learning courses and opportunities in internships, field work, and practica, some through the Center for Public Service, and others through student clubs and organizations. Specific outreach and service

opportunities are also embedded within the FYEP, the J-Term, and through campus ministry. Taken together, students (and faculty and staff) live out the life of vocation in service and care. Indicators of achievement include the number and quality of student outreach projects, the number of student internships and practica, the range of communities, individuals, and agencies served, and the explicit opportunities made available on campus for sharing and seeking deeper meaning from the experiences.

### **Impacting Community Development and Restoration**

PLU sits in Parkland, a non-incorporated suburb of Tacoma. Supporting local commerce and moving students, faculty, and staff out into the community in positive ways is one of our initiatives that is reflective of our commitment to care for our local community. The university's ability to successfully partner with local developers to rejuvenate and renovate the business district immediately adjacent to campus, the relation and redesign of the campus bookstore to serve both the university and the community, and partnering with restaurants in the area to accept student dining monies are indicators of the university's commitment to successful and mutually beneficial partnerships that enhance community development and restoration. While this articulates measures of commitment to the community, there is room to strengthen partnerships with our neighbors, to bring them more fully into the life of the campus, and to bring PLU's presence and resources more decidedly into the surround neighbors.

## **2. Global Distinction**

PLU offers programs that help students (1) be aware of their own place and culture in the world and understand the interrelation of sociopolitical, economic, scientific, cultural, religious, and linguistic facets of human life; (2) be sensitive to the historical, multinational, religious, and social roots of diverse cultures, and learn to value and promote global harmony and diplomacy; (3) be curious about other cultures and work to understand them through experiences within those cultures; (4) develop skills for navigating in a globally interconnected world by taking on- and off-campus courses that incorporate global and intercultural dimensions, and by attaining proficiency in a second language.

The challenge to maintain our status of distinction is acute. An initiative to formulate a new theme-focused strategic plan is part of the current discussion. Related to the goal to increase participation in global education, the university is determining what it means by "participation." Built upon existing achievements and supported by a robust resource base made possible by three major grants (Teagle, Freeman, and DOE), the 2003 global education planning document outlined an ambitious agenda that sought to "internationalize" all aspects of university life including "the core curriculum, graduate and undergraduate curricula on- and off-campus, co-curricular activities and student-life, academic advising, life-long learning opportunities for returning alumni and others, and university offices and services." Remarkable progress has been made on all these fronts. Pan-university participation increased markedly, fortifying the institution's claim as a leader in global education.

## **Indicators of Achievement and Meaningful Measures**

### **International Students and Faculty**

PLU's global initiatives continue to increase the number of international students studying at PLU and also the number of faculty who have international experience. PLU places an emphasis on recruiting faculty who have some kind of international focus. This may include foreign nationals, faculty who have studied or researched in other countries, or faculty who have taught abroad. Indicators of achievement include the number of international students on campus; the number and shift in number of faculty with international experience, connection, or focus; and the number of faculty who engage in study away with students.

### **Students Studying Away**

PLU is regularly placed among the top ten master's degree universities in the United States for percentage of students engaged in international study (Open Doors Report). As indicated in the Introduction to this report, PLU students study abroad at an exceptionally high rate—all part of a conscious effort to continue the vital initiative of globalization for the campus community.

The most prominent time for study away is during J-Term. PLU also offers five "Gateway" sites in China, Mexico, Norway, Trinidad & Tobago, and Namibia. At each of these sites students have the opportunity to engage in longer term study, do research, and participate in internship programs.

Indicators of achievement include formal PLU assessments of Gateway and J-Term programs, Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI) for students on third party programs, number of students studying in each kind of program, and how the campus is educated by students who have studied away (regular symposia and world conversation conferences).

### **Wang Center for Global Education Programming and Support Services**

The Wang Center for Global Education supports and strengthens PLU's internationally focused academic programs, coordinates and advances study away offerings, offers public education opportunities, and promotes and leverages the university's global and intercultural distinction. The funding for and central presence of the Wang Center exemplify the commitment the university holds for global education and engagement.

Indicators of achievement are regularly assessed by the Wang Center and include the degree of curricular integration of the global experience, student Returner Reflection seminar program, grants available for global study and research, World Conversations symposia, student global engagement, and Gateway program expansion and enhancement.

### **International Curriculum**

PLU offers eight foreign languages, international concentrations in Business and Economics, and cross-disciplinary majors in Chinese Studies, Global Studies, and Scandinavian Area Studies. There are programs for the study of global issues such as modernization and development;

global resources and trade; and peace, justice, and human rights. The international core (IHON) as presented in Theme One is a opportunity for students. All undergraduate students have global exposure through general education in the Inquiry Seminars and the cross-cultural diversity requirement.

Indicators of achievement include the number of students engaged in each program, the number and range of faculty participation in these programs, the quality of the student experience in each program as assessed and reported in annual unit assessment reports, and by strong positive responses on relevant items from surveys such as the national Survey of Student Engagement and program exit surveys.

#### **External Recognitions, Awards, and Grants**

PLU recognizes that external validation of programs is helpful in finding areas where programs are distinctive or distinguished. PLU has been recognized by receiving the Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization (2009 and first private college in the West), profile by NAFSA-The Association of International Educators, and studies of our international programs. In addition, PLU received a matching grant by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (\$1 million match plus \$1 million raised by PLU) to assist low-income students in participating in study away. Since 1975, 85 PLU students have received Fulbrights. Indicators of success include continued recognition of PLU programs by organizations and agencies and number of Fulbrights.

## CONCLUSION

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The Year One Self-Evaluation Report comes at a particularly opportune time for Pacific Lutheran University. The work thus far on the *PLU 2020* long-range plan has reaffirmed the PLU mission and has provided guidance for the development of the accreditation Core Themes. The two processes have informed one another, and both are richer and more robust as a result.

Throughout the planning and writing of the Year One Self-Evaluation Report, the accreditation advisory group drew information, examples, best practices, indicators of achievement, and measures from papers written for the *PLU 2020* process. Over 65 members of the faculty, staff, and administration contributed to these *PLU 2020* papers and many more participated in forums to discuss concepts in these papers.

The university has always been attentive to the fulfillment of mission. This is aptly stated in the long-range plan *PLU 2010, The Next Level of Distinction*:

It [the mission] flows directly from the university's Lutheran tradition, and it captures the institution's commitment to purposeful learning, academic rigor and lifelong vocations of service...Indeed, this report interprets and applies this mission statement as a guide for PLU's future—a future that is grounded in the university's Lutheran heritage and its location in the Pacific Northwest..." (p. 1).

We have learned many things in the articulation of our Core Themes. First and foremost is that the mission naturally lends itself to distinct themes, and that there are numerous "objectives" that have "indicators" for distinction and excellence. Further, it has been demonstrated that the PLU community can come together around the process with as much intensity, interest, follow through, and hard work as it does around many other undertakings, from the long-range planning process to day-to-day operations.

As Chapter One of the Self-Evaluation process is written and reviewed by peers, the PLU community is ready to begin working to ensure that in two years Chapter Two demonstrates the adequacy of our resources and our capacity to fulfill the mission and core themes.