

Year Three Peer-Evaluation Report

Pacific Lutheran University

Tacoma, Washington

Spring 2014

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

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II. Introduction

Pacific Lutheran University (PLU) is a private, non-profit institution offering baccalaureate and master level degrees in a 4-1-4 calendar. The origins of the institution date back to 1890 when it was founded by congregations of Scandinavian Lutherans residing in the Puget Sound area of Washington state, primarily for the purpose of training young people for lives of service. An ecclesiastical reorganization and the Great War forced a temporary closure in 1918. Since reopening in 1920 PLU has grown from a two-year institution into a university whose progression includes merger with two other colleges, creation of a four-year education program of teacher training in 1942, development of a liberal arts curriculum and achievement of regional accreditation in 1945. Currently, PLU is a university affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America whose 600 congregations in the region constitute its corporation.

Located on a campus of over 150 acres approximately six miles from Tacoma, Washington, the University is home to more than 3000 undergraduate and 200 graduate students, as well as over 650 faculty, staff and administrators. The University prides itself on its "academic rigor and the central role of the liberal arts in the curriculum," as well as its "emphasis on education for lives of service" emanating from its Lutheran heritage. Students come to PLU from forty-five states and twenty-six countries, though 75% are Washington residents. Through its emphasis on global education, PLU facilitates approximately 400 students in study abroad opportunities in an average academic year.

The University offers nearly forty undergraduate majors and master's degrees in six areas. Several of the undergraduate and graduate programs are recognized by professional or specialized accrediting bodies.

III. Assessment of the Self-Evaluation Report and Supporting Materials

The Year Three Report is well-organized and well-written. The electronic version contains embedded links to secure webpages that enable easy access to the documents supporting the Report's analysis. Key data tables assist in the understanding of the Report's narrative and graphic representation support description of the relationship of factors in achieving mission fulfillment. In some cases, additional information required by the Evaluators was somewhat delayed in coming, though the University's staff was always helpful and responsive.

IV. Topics Addressed as an addendum to the Self-Evaluation Report

Recommendation One (August 2010):

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.

In response to this Recommendation Pacific Lutheran University has undertaken a significant renovation of its Core Themes, resulting in clarification of the methodology for determining mission fulfillment. One key development in this regard is the transition into a strategic planning process that promises greater quantitative precision in the institution's effort to address its planning.

Drilling into the planning reports provided by PLU, the Evaluators found evidence of relatively sophisticated integration of the "mapping" of annual initiatives with strategic priorities, Core Themes and the institution's mission. This is indeed a positive step toward definition of mission fulfillment. What is yet to be well described is which body at the University is empowered to makes judgments about the extent of mission fulfillment and what happens if/when a given objective has fallen short of its goal. There is little evidence of the completion of the assessment cycle leading to changes in practice or policy.

Considering the extensive shift that PLU has undertaken, the Evaluators acknowledge that this Recommendation has been adequately addressed.

V. Eligibility Requirements

On the basis of the evidence provided by its Self-Evaluation Report, supporting documents and clarifying interviews conducted with key personnel, Pacific Lutheran University's policies and practices are consistent with NWCCU's Eligibility Requirements 2-14 and 16-21. The Peer-Evaluation Report specifies throughout that the University functions in a manner consistent with these Requirements. The following report will comment on ER 15: Academic Freedom in the context of the analysis of Standard 2.A.27.

VI. Mission, Core Themes and Expectations

Standard 1.A Mission

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

The University clearly states its mission throughout its several publications, invoking it as the hallmark of all that it does. In a graphic presentation of the process of determining mission fulfillment, PLU's Report suggests a multidimensional deliberation of the University's curricular and co-curricular programs as well as its physical and technological needs. The axes of this process consider "Purpose," "Method" and "Level" in creating a "Mission Fulfillment Globe." All institutional activities fit within the globe and are situated somewhere on continua according to definitions appropriate for the respective axis.

This intriguing model provides a compelling vision for mission fulfillment. As any individual or group at the university engages planning, they can quickly realize the parameters on which their proposal might be evaluated. What is not yet clear is how this process works in terms of ongoing assessment after implementation of a given initiative. For example, one proposal suggests that "a major program objective of the PLU study away program is for students to gain an awareness of multiple perspectives and be able to appreciate and value situations in which they are in an environment very different from one to which they are accustomed" (19). When one consults the appropriate core theme and indicator presumably tied to this objective, one finds a qualitative measure of student satisfaction and a quantitative measure only of the number and percentage of students participating in this program.

1.B Core Themes

Since its Year One Report, PLU has modified its Core Themes, reducing from four to three by tightening two of the former themes into statements about "A Culture of Leadership, Service and Care." While the new version retains the terms "leadership and care" from the former construction, it now characterizes its former "global engagement" in terms of service. Explanations of the Core Themes and Indicators are consistent with Commission Standards in that they derive from PLU's mission and clearly project a pathway that promises, in most cases, direct assessment of achievement.

VII. Resources and Capacity

2.A Governance

Governing Board

PLU's Report and supporting documentation describes the institution as functioning in a "highly collaborative system of governance" (30). The Board of Regents functions under clear Bylaws which provide for oversight of policies, budgets, and personnel while granting latitude to administration and faculty for the day-to-day operation of the University. Conversation with the President and the Board Chair cited several instances of extensive faculty and staff involvement in decision making at the University.

The Board consists of eighteen members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (three of whom are pastors), three ELCA Bishops, as well as such other individuals who may lend expertise to the Board. Membership is limited to no more than thirty-seven in total. President Krise is an *ex officio* member of the Board. Approximately 600 ELCA congregations in the Northwest make up the Corporation of the University. The Corporation, in turn, elects the members of the Board.

The Report indicates that the president is evaluated annually by the executive officers of the Board. Though review of the Board's Bylaws does not fully describe this practice, conversation with the Board Chair Bruce Bjerke and the President Thomas Krise indicated that this is an extensive and sophisticated process that creates clear expectations and accountability. The Report also indicates that the members of the Board are evaluated annually through a "web-based survey," self-reported action plans and solicitation of recommendations for improvements in the Board meetings. These are reviewed by the Governance Committee. Conversation with the Board Chair confirms the effectiveness of this method of review, citing examples of increased reporting on financial and academic affairs as changes resulting from the annual evaluations. In as much as Standard 2.A.7 and 8 very clearly require that boards regularly evaluate the president and its members, PLU's Report and interviews confirm that this is happening.

Leadership and Management

PLU has recruited a talented group of senior leaders. Headed by Dr. Thomas Krise, in his second year as president, the university's Provost and four Vice Presidents are well-qualified for their respective roles. These senior leaders, along with two associate vice presidents and two other administrators, form the President's Council which meets weekly. One position in the senior leadership, Vice President of Advancement, is currently vacant.

Policies and Procedures

While most academic policies are well articulated and included in the various handbooks, a single consolidated policy regarding academic freedom was not in evidence. In this case, policy and practice seems to be distributed in a variety of places. While significant conflicts over this policy area were not in evidence, a specific statement of policy is lacking.

Policies and information concerning library use were in evidence, published and enforced.

While the report was lacking in certain areas concerning transfer-of-credit policy, after discussion with the registrar and staff, the evaluators are confident of substantive compliance with this standard.

Policies and procedures regarding students' rights and responsibilities are housed in the Office for Student Rights and Responsibilities. The associate director is responsible for maintaining, enforcing, and reviewing policies and procedures to ensure they support and are aligned with community expectations set forth by the university.

The Student Code of Conduct and the Student Rights and Responsibility policies and procedures are clearly outlined and are made available to students on the website. As each term begins, an email is sent to all students as a reminder with a link to the policies.

To ensure that processes and procedures are delivered in a fair and consistent manner, members of the review board are trained and agree to abide by the code of ethics required for the board and hearing officials.

The Student Code of Conduct may be revised when, in PLU's discretion, the need arises. Members of the campus community can make requests to change policies and procedures by submitting requests to the officers of ASPLU or RHA, the Campus Life Committee of the Faculty, or directly to the Vice President of Student Life and Dean of Students. Students are notified of changes as soon as they become effective.

The Office of Admission at Pacific Lutheran University has clearly articulated the criteria and outlined the application process for first-year students, transfers, international and graduate students on the Office of Admission web pages and in the catalog.

Standardized test requirements, expected high school curriculum and the policy for acceptance of advanced credits are outlined under the first-year admission application process.

Transfer applicants can access information on transferring credit through direct transfer agreements and equivalency guides published on the website. The transfer policy is publicized in the catalog. College credits from a foreign institution are evaluated by the registrar's office, a faculty member associated with the content area, or by an outside credential evaluation service. International students are provided with information on how to meet English language levels required for admission. Graduate applicants may petition for approval of transfer credit. The number of credits and approvals are determined by the director of the specific graduate program.

The Schools of Business, Education, Nursing, and the Social Work Department each require a separate application and prerequisite courses for full admission to those programs.

New undergraduate students must take a math placement exam before taking any math course offered at PLU. A foreign language placement exam may be required depending on the student's

academic program selection. Instructions are provided on how to complete the exams prior to registration.

The criteria for good academic standing, warning, probation and dismissal are outlined for undergraduate and graduate students in the catalog. The policy is also included in the Student-Athlete Handbook. The School of Nursing and the Department of Education have additional standards required to remain in good academic standing. These are clearly outlined in their respective handbooks. The Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Process Policy can be found on the Financial Aid section of the website.

Co-curricular programs at Pacific Lutheran University are aligned with the University mission and enhance the educational experience for students. The University publishes policies, rules and regulations that every student is expected to follow as a responsible member of the PLU community. Those regulations are found in the Student Code of Conduct handbook and include those items that fall within policies set by the Board of Regents and the university administration, along with local, state, and federal laws. Students participating in co-curricular experiences associated with individual departments or services may be instructed to follow additional policies or procedures found in the respective office manuals.

The Evaluators were able to review and verify that PLU has substantially met the NWCCU standards in regards to Human Resource policies, conditions of employment and security of personnel records. It is evident with review of the Faculty Handbook, Personnel Manual and interviews with staff that all employees have access to University policies and procedures in regard to their employment and that confidential personnel information is secure. Verification of personnel records security occurs annually through the independent audit process.

The University provides several means by which students and others may come to an understanding of the academic and co-curricular offerings of the campus. Most prominent of these opportunities is the well-organized institutional website. Through the internet, the Evaluators were able to find information ranging from program planning documents to marketing guidelines. Students particularly can access important information about their rights and responsibilities as members of the community. Employees have access to the personnel manual which outlines employee standards common in higher education and in keeping with NWCCU expectation.

PLU's Report includes an explicit claim that Board of Regents members and University employees with "significant responsibility and authority," are required to submit a signed conflict of interest disclosure form annually. Though not initially clear from reading the Bylaws, subsequent information provided by the President confirms the accuracy of this claim. The Faculty Handbook contains an extensive discussion of copyright issues and a brief statement regarding intellectual property, with assurances that individual rights are upheld for work created independent of a faculty member's assignment with the University. The Evaluators determined that the University's commitment to respect the intellectual property of its community members is not adequately articulated in its documents.

PLU accurately identifies its status with the NWCCU and several special program accrediting bodies on its website and catalog.

Department Budget Heads are given latitude to engage relatively low cost and low risk agreements, though PLU's Risk Manager is available for consultation in all cases. If significant expense (over \$7,500) or greater institutional vulnerability is at stake, the Risk Manager undertakes an initial review of the proposed contractual agreements. Ultimately, the Vice President of Finance and Operations signs off on such requests. The process and procedures for review, with standardized criteria, are outline on the Finance and Operations page of the University's website.

Given the requirements of Standards 2.A.27-29, the Evaluators could not find a specific statement articulating the University's commitment to Academic Freedom and its respect for intellectual property. Though the concepts are deeply rooted in the culture of shared governance, and general information is presented in a variety of places, including the Faculty Handbook, under sections related to assessing, disciplining and dismissing faculty, there appear to be no Board authorized comprehensive statements. Furthermore, discussions with academic officers and the chair of the faculty indicate that no serious challenges in these areas have arisen in recent memory. The Evaluators, nonetheless, recommend that the University publish clear and comprehensive policy statements on academic freedom and intellectual property.

With the exception noted above, regarding specific policies on Academic Freedom and intellectual property, it is evidenced in the Report and subsequent conversations that the University promotes independent and creative thought among faculty, staff, administrators, and students. No evidence of constraint of those freedoms was evident.

The report demonstrated expectation and policies which promote fair, accurate, and objective presentation of scholarship, and appropriate acknowledgement of intellectual property. In the PLU faculty handbook, under Subsection B. Appointment, Promotion and Rank the university presents the university's understanding of scholarship as a responsibility of the faculty which substantively covers the elements of the standard. In addition, the handbook contains, under Section V, a policy on Copyright Law and Fair use, as well as a "Policy for Dealing With and Reporting Possible Misconduct in Science."

It is evident the policies are in place for oversight and management of financial resources as defined by the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of the Board of Regents of Pacific Lutheran University. It is clear that the structure is in place and information is provided on a timely basis for the financial operations of the institution. The Budget and Finance Committee of the Board receives detailed information regarding finances, budgets, reserves, investments, fundraising and debt management. The Audit and Compliance Committee and Investment Committee are kept informed and updated regularly. All committees report to the full Board of Regents for final approval.

2.B – Human Resources

The University employs an adequate number of qualified personnel to maintain support and operations functions. Current position openings were reviewed and they are complete as to duties, responsibilities and authority. The Report stated there was a lack of consistency in administrator and staff job descriptions and evaluations. Some departments are current and copies are on file in the Human Resource office. Other areas have current job descriptions and evaluations but are kept in the department. There are a few areas where evaluations have not been completed annually. This inconsistency is being addressed with the implementation of administrative software for human resource management which includes job descriptions and evaluations. A written statement or policy that specifically requires staff and administrator evaluation on an annual basis could not be found by the Evaluators.

PLU continues to follow their tradition of quantity and quality of faculty that are engaged, and committed to teaching, learning, service and leadership. This is evidenced by the faculty to student ratio, commitment to their disciplines, a strong governance structure and active involvement in education, service and leadership both within the academy and communities local and worldwide. It is evident through review of the Faculty Handbook that all faculty are evaluated following the standards of the University and NWCCU.

2.C – Education Resources

While programs appear to be mission consistent, a specific process for the review and affirmation of mission consistency of new and existing programs was not in evidence. While occasional program review processes are present, there appears to be no formal, systematic calendar for program review against defined student outcomes.

The institution seems to be in the midst of significant redefinition with regard to explicit program and degree outcomes. There is an effort underway, led by the Director of University Assessment, Accreditation and Research and Associate Provost for Undergraduate Programs to assist faculty in the creation of outcomes, metrics and measures for each program and degree. This process, embedded in an attempt to organically develop authentic learner outcomes and metrics seems to be unhurried, and it is questionable whether it will lead to substantive compliance with this standard, and the completion of the assessment-modification cycle by the Year Seven report. While current information on student learning outcomes for some programs is available, though difficult to find, they are admitted to be substantively incomplete and out of date. No specific web links that articulate the expected learner outcomes, program-by-program, are readily accessible. Several professional programs with specialized accreditation are more likely to link to learner outcomes.

While the curriculum scope and sequence demonstrate coherent design, and appropriate breadth and depth, the report lacks clear connection between credit and degrees granted and documented achievement of learner outcomes beyond classroom performance on individual course goals. No clear process of regular program and general education review that assesses student competencies against program/general education learning objectives is in evidence.

There appears to be limited process of faculty involvement in assessment of student achievement against general education and programmatic learning outcomes beyond course based student performance assessment. There is some program specific review which appears to be highly qualitative, based heavily on student perceptions, and with seemingly small student populations. It is noted that this is designed as an incremental process, accumulating more evidence over time.

NWCCU's Credit Hour Policy (dated November 2012) requires that an institution publish its definition of a credit hour and monitor a verification process related to that expectation. PLU's Year Three Report (pages 52-53) is descriptive concerning scheduling of traditional class times, but does not provide a specific definition for the credit hour which includes experiential, competency-based, "reduced seat time," or asynchronous credit bearing experiences. A policy that meets this requirement is not in evidence. It seems that the specific requirements for credit hours in nontraditionally scheduled courses is determined at the department/unit level.

After discussion with the registrar, and other personnel, the Evaluators are confident that the Standards addressing faculty involvement in information literacy, policies regarding transferability of credit are substantively met.

Credit for prior experiential learning is not granted.

Undergraduate Programs

As stated in the Report, students may fulfill the general education requirements via two programmatic routes: 1) the General Education Program (GenEd) or, the International Honors Program (IHON). The University's current General Education Program was approved by the faculty in Spring 2008, and implemented in Fall 2009. It requires a total of 48 credits and consists of the following elements: Embracing the Life of the Mind: the 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. The IHON program requires a two-course sequence for first-year students (IHON 111 and 112); four 200-level courses aligned with requirements for a course from four perspectives (Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Science, and the Arts); and a culminating 300-level seminar that focuses on integrating knowledge through a lens of social justice.

Requirements for general education at PLU are framed by the Integrated Learning Objectives and the Principles of General Education. The ILOs, which were adopted by faculty in 1999, provide an understanding of the learning objectives for PLU graduates and help integrate the work done in majors and minors with GenEd and IHON. The Principles of General Education, adopted by the faculty in 2004, explain the purpose of the general education program and provide a rationale for the requirements. These principles reflect the long-range planning documents (PLU 2000, PLU 2010, PLU 2020), the ILOs, AAC&U documents, and the catalog in explicit ways.

Oversight of the General Education Program at PLU is provided through the Office of the Provost via the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Programs. A General Education Council, with representation from all program elements, maintains faculty oversight roles. The Council has implemented an assessment system for gathering student outcome data.

The Evaluators compliment the University on a coherent and engaging general education curriculum, and for the International Honors Program option.

Graduate Programs

PLU's graduate programs are offered at the master's level and are consistent with, and outgrowths of the undergraduate curricular strengths. The programs demonstrate appropriate academic integrity, rigor and mission consistency. Policies related to admission and transfer of credits are published and consistent with the program design and goals. Graduate programs demonstrate appropriate levels of student engagement, performance and development.

As expressed in the Report, "In January 2014 PLU created a new position of Associate Provost for Graduate Programs and Continuing Education. A Graduate Council, consisting of the individual graduate program directors and others who work directly with graduate students, is responsible for developing and monitoring graduate policies and overseeing some graduate program coordination. It is chaired by the Associate Provost. Although individual graduate program faculty adjudicate requirements and graduate program directors enforce them, policies and procedures are reviewed each year by the Graduate Council."

Continuing Education and Non-Credit Programs

Policies and practices related to the development, assessment, recording and reporting of CEUs are dispersed and inconsistent. There is an apparent lack of institution-wide policies, coordination and assignment of responsibility for CEUs. In addition, there appears to be no consistent mechanism or requirement for proposed CEU-bearing activities to be formally assessed against the mission of the University. Responsibility seems to be vested in individual departments and there seems to be no standard or centralized mechanism for reviewing and recording specific student outcomes for these experiences. In addition, there seems to be no centralized record of awarded CEUs.

2.D – Student Support Resources

“Pacific Lutheran University seeks to educate students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care - for other people, for their communities and for the earth.” This mission statement informs program offerings, methods of delivery and services to achieve the expected outcomes for every PLU graduate.

The University continues to make improvements toward equipping offices and program spaces with the technology and services needed. This includes instituting a regular replacement cycle for computers for employees, classrooms, and labs. Classrooms continue to be upgraded with smart technology to support student learning.

Students, faculty, and staff at PLU are included in a collaborative planning process involving users and occupants, facilities management staff, architects, and senior administrators to evaluate current and future space needs. This effort informs the planning process for any renovation and construction that better supports student needs.

Pacific Lutheran University’s Campus Safety department works with Facilities Management, Emergency Programs, and Environmental Health and Safety to create and sustain a safe environment for all students, staff, faculty and guests. The Campus Safety department works with the Pierce County Sheriff’s Department and Central Pierce Fire & Rescue when there are occurrences outside the jurisdiction of the department.

The Evaluators compliment Campus Safety on the web presentation that educates the community on the Jeanne Clery Act and the community’s role in reporting, as required by law.

The Faculty and Retention of Students Committee works with an advisory group to review admission, retention, and student academic status policies. This shapes the message presented to prospective students and their families to ensure that students admitted to the university are those that have the greatest potential to value and benefit from Pacific Lutheran University’s educational philosophy and program offerings.

New student orientation occurs prior to the beginning of each term and is required for all new students. At that time, they register for classes with the assistance of a registration advisor.

Graduate student orientation is scheduled by program. International students attend an additional orientation to ensure they are familiar with services and understand how to remain in compliance with student visa requirements.

For transfer students, the evaluation and awarding of credit is carried out by the Registrar's Office based on faculty approved policies and procedures. The Registrar's Office determines transferability of courses that meet general education requirements. Credit for the major is based on the respective school or department's evaluation of the course content.

Undergraduate transfer applicants can access information on transferring academic credit through direct transfer agreements, equivalency guides and in the registration section of the website. Determination of transfer credit for other prior learning experiences will be found under the transfer policy, clearly outlined in the catalog. Any college credits from a foreign institution are evaluated by the registrar's office, faculty or by an outside credential evaluation service.

The CAPP report allows all students and their advisors to see how prior credits earned are applied to a degree program and allows them to track of progress towards major and degree requirements.

Pacific Lutheran University has a clear process for proposing new programs or changes to curriculum or degree requirements. The Faculty Handbook clearly outlines the proposal process including submission of required documentation, and evaluation of the proposal by the Educational Policies Committee and the Faculty Assembly. The handbook also carefully outlines the process for a possible reduction and reallocation of faculty positions based on a planned discontinuance or reduction of an academic unit or sub-unit. PLU did eliminate an engineering program several years ago and students were able to complete the program. However, the Evaluators were unable to find documentation that articulates how the institution supports current students with program completion in the event of program elimination.

The catalog, published on an annual basis, provides a comprehensive description of Pacific Lutheran's mission; academic program offerings; academic and general policies; entrance requirements; and refund policies. Faculty names, areas of expertise and their academic credentials are presented. Any corrections or updates made to the catalog are published in a separate document. Given the commitment to its Core Themes, the Evaluators were surprised not to find these published in the catalog.

Undergraduate and graduate Education and Nursing, and the Master of Science in Finance have specific licensure certification or program designation requirements. Requirements for each program can be found in the catalog. Education and Nursing also cover requirements in their program handbooks.

Pacific Lutheran University provides secure retention of all student records. For faculty, staff and students that have various approvals for access to student records, safe guards are in place to ensure confidentiality of those records and that the records are safe and secure. The FERPA policy is clearly outlined in the catalog and on the website under the Student Code of Conduct. A brief outline of the policy is included in the faculty handbook. The Vice President

for Student Life and the Dean of Students have oversight of the policy ensuring that members of the community are trained and are compliant with the law and institutional policy.

Over 90 percent of the students attending Pacific Lutheran University receive some form of aid. Families must apply for financial aid by filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to determine eligibility for need-based aid. Merit aid is awarded to both first-year and transfer students and is based on academic achievement and leadership. Criteria for eligibility, additional application materials and terms for renewal are included in each scholarship description. Details on the types of available aid are outlined on the website and in the catalog.

Graduate students may also have access to scholarship funds available through their department. Information on each scholarship and the eligibility criteria can be found on the website under individual program pages.

In accordance with the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, Pacific Lutheran University offers a net price calculator so first-year students and their families are able to see an estimate of financial assistance from the government and institutional resources.

As prospective students explore options for financial assistance, the University's financial aid office discloses detailed information on the website that describes each loan, eligibility, amounts available, fees, interest rates and repayment obligations.

Once a student has been admitted and an offer of financial aid has been sent to the student, the award package includes an explanation of the award and each element included in the award. Students are guided through several steps to accept and finalize their offer of financial aid. All recipients of loans are required to complete online entrance and exit counseling tutorials. These sessions provide official notification of loan obligations, terms and repayment requirements.

The University regularly monitors and reports on funds awarded, as well as funds refunded to various lenders including the Federal Direct Student Loan Program and preferred alternative loan providers. Policies and practices regarding the handling of Title IV federal financial aid are audited each year.

Pacific Lutheran University has designed an advising system that supports students with defining their educational, personal and professional goals. An academic advisor is assigned to all new students. Students and their advisors share the responsibility for staying informed about academic programs and requirements. Through this partnership, students learn about available resources for academic success and opportunities that will help prepare them for the future.

Advisors receive training on a variety of advising topics. The professional advisors provide resources to assist faculty with advising issues and are available to work with faculty when questions arise.

The Academic Assistance Center, Career Services and the Registrar's Office are also partners supporting student success by offering tutoring services, career exploration, and tools such as the two-year course cycle, the four-year advising guide, and CAPP (curriculum, advising and

program planning) that assist students in planning their pathway to degree.

Pacific Lutheran University's co-curricular programs and activities are deeply connected to the mission of the University and support the Integrative Learning Objectives of the University. They are designed to introduce students to opportunities that connect classroom learning to co-curricular experiences that will shape their development.

While housed in the Division of Student Life, there is a collaborative effort across campus to create a wide variety of opportunities that can be associated with the mission related topics of leadership development, service, people and communities, sustainability, and global education.

Some programs are created based on a student's association with a particular affinity group such as students of color, first generation students, transfer students, commuter students, veteran students, and international students. Other groups may focus on a topic such as leadership, wellness, service to others, sustainability, and being a responsible citizen in a global society. Participation is open to all interested students.

Residence life at Pacific Lutheran University builds community and presents learning opportunities outside of the classroom. Students may choose to live in one of several themed residential learning communities. The experience is further enriched by offering housing options that appeal to continuing students that have met the residency requirement, graduate students, married and domestic partnered students.

The Executive Director of Residential Life and the Director of Residential Programs are responsible for working closely with student leaders on topics such as housing options, rules governing life in the halls and the events and programs offered, all integral to a living/learning community.

Dining and Culinary Services is owned and operated by Pacific Lutheran University. There are five on-campus restaurants available to the campus community offering a variety of nutritious food options during hours that span from 7:00 a.m., to 7:30 p.m. seven days a week. The Old Main Market is open as late as 1:00 a.m. on designated nights of the week.

Students residing in traditional residence halls are required to sign-up for a meal plan. Whether a student lives on or off-campus, several meal plan options are made available to all students. Students are able to submit comments online to share concerns or express appreciation.

Pacific Lutheran University owns and operates the Garfield Book Company. Located two blocks off campus, the bookstore offers textbooks, art and office supplies, general and technical books and PLU merchandise, clothing and gifts. The bookstore is open to the campus community and the public and hosts a variety of activities. The website offers a convenient way for the community, alumni, and parents to engage with the bookstore. The bookstore, in partnership with the National Association of College Stores, distributes benchmark surveys to faculty and students that allow the bookstore to evaluate and plan for any needed change that might better serve the Pacific Lutheran Community.

Pacific Lutheran University is committed to offering male and female students a variety of intercollegiate athletic and other co-curricular programs that provide equal opportunities for participation and access to facilities and support services.

Student athletes and students involved in co-curricular programs are evaluated for admission and institutional aid in a consistent manner with other students. Degree requirements and standards to maintain good academic standing that apply to all students are clearly articulated in the Code of Conduct Handbook, the catalog, and the Student-Athlete Handbook.

Pacific Lutheran University is a member of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) as a Division III affiliate. Athletics publishes a department mission statement and NCAA Division III philosophy statement on the website and in the Student-Athlete Handbook. Student-athletes are subject to the provisions of the Student-Athlete Handbook and to regulations of the NCAA covering unethical or unsportsmanlike behavior and other specified misconduct. The University Policies/Student Code of Conduct Handbook and all disciplinary procedures apply to all students at PLU.

Student-athletes have the opportunity to join The Student-Athlete Advisory Committee. The committee participates in the creation and amendment of athletic rules and policies that impact their experience at PLU.

Currently, Pacific Lutheran's Department of Education is the only program that delivers online course offerings. The department currently uses several pieces of personally identifiable information to verify a student's identity before enrolling in online courses. During the admissions process, students are asked for legal name, social security number, birthdate, residence address, and e-mail address. Students also check a box or sign the application verifying the information submitted is accurate. Accepted participants are given instructions on how to register for the program and set up their online class account.

Identification of students can be further verified with the department's use of the synchronous learning format that requires instructors and learners to be online simultaneously and interact in real-time. Some programs also require onsite meetings and field work in addition to their online coursework.

2.E – Library and Information Resources

Mortvedt Library at Pacific Lutheran University supports the university with its mission in providing a quality education for its students. The library staff articulates a commitment to securing and providing access to a quality collection as well delivering excellent service to the campus community.

The library serves as an information commons, housing the University's print collection, Information and Technology Services (I&TS), the Academic Assistance Center and the Writing Center. The library works closely with faculty on providing extensive services in areas such as instruction, collection development, copyright clearance, reference and research consultation.

The library services staff can access comparative data from other institutions to assess the adequacy of current resources available through the Northwest Association of Private College (NAPC) libraries and through results of the National Center for Education Statistics Academic Libraries Survey (ALS) biannual survey. In comparison with NAPC member institutions, PLU ranks above average in several areas such as expenditures per 1,000 FTE, physical collection of books, and circulation transactions. The number of staff and the total number of librarians was lower than average. The university has responded by hiring an instruction faculty librarian. While the library expenditures were less by approximately 2.5% in Fiscal Year (FY) 2013, expenditures for FY 2014 and FY 2015 are projected to be higher.

Additional resources are made available to faculty, staff and students through the interlibrary loan system, ILLiad and a cooperative agreement with Orbis Cascade Alliance's Electronic resource Sharing Program. Faculty have additional borrowing privileges through the Puget Sound Academic Independent Libraries and the Northwest Association of Private Colleges and Universities Libraries. PLU is a charter member of the Northwest Digital Archive.

Students can access 24-7 assistance from librarians across the country through the service "Ask-a-Librarian."

The Pacific Lutheran University Librarians and staff work closely with students, faculty, and staff to ensure that adequate resources are provided to support the teaching and learning needs of the PLU community. Several tools are used to collect valuable data that informs the planning process.

In 2010, the University hired Mithum, an architectural firm to seek input from the University community to plan for library improvements. Feedback from students, faculty and staff resulted in improving seating, study rooms and aesthetic improvements.

The Librarians utilize ScholarlyStats to evaluate subscriptions and to look for new and evolving platforms that will better support learning and curriculum.

Mortvedt Library serves an essential role in supporting the instructional needs for faculty, staff, administrators and students. The library provides access to information resources that advance the teaching of critical thinking and the pursuit of knowledge for the Pacific Lutheran University Community.

The library is serving a significant role in incorporating information literacy into the curriculum. Beginning with the University's First Year Experience Program (FYEP), students begin to learn about scholarly research and writing. This is one of four components in achieving Critical Reflection, the first of the Integrative Learning Objectives. This effort aligns with the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) IL standards. Mortvedt Library was selected to participate in ACRL's Assessment in Action (AiA) program. PLU's goal for this project is to assess the impact of Information Literacy on learning for students enrolled in the FYEP.

New faculty are provided with a check list to help them become familiar with available services

and how those can be accessed. Librarians assist faculty with building a collection of learning resources that supports their students' information needs.

I&TS uses a survey instrument from Merged Information Services Organization Survey (MISO) to gather critical data about the IT and library services that measures how faculty, staff and students rate the importance of services offered, utilization and ease of use, and satisfaction level with those services.

The Pacific Lutheran University library utilizes several means to secure the library and information resources and services. The library employs a student who has been trained by Campus Security to monitor the building during the evening hours. The lobby is monitored by PLU Campus Security through a live video feed. Security tape is used on all library materials housed in the building. An internal alarm system provides security for the University Archives, Special Collections, equipment in Instructional Technologies, and for the data center. IP authentication and ID management are used to authorize who has access to online materials. Faculty, staff, administrators and students can have access to the building after the library is closed to the public by swiping their PLU ID card to gain entry to the building.

2.F – Financial Resources

The University as stated in the Year Three Report has been able to operate without significant reductions through very conservative and top level budget and planning. Long term planning was implemented in conjunction with PLU 2000, 2010 and 2020. More recently with change in Presidential leadership, the campus community and Board of Regents are moving the long term planning to a strategic model. Effort and commitment are in place to revise their planning processes with strategic identification to ensure financial stability and provide additional resources for new initiatives and goals identified in PLU 2020. In the last year a significant amount of time, work, and progress has been made to revise a budget planning model. This will include more detailed projections for revenues and liabilities, departmental budget re-alignment and responsibility based budget and expenditure accountability as a tactical base. Reference to decision making that is in line with mission, core themes and objectives is assumed in many cases although maybe not as evident in the documents that were provided. Staff interviewed felt the link to core themes specifically is a work in progress and the connection between mission, core themes and objectives will be better demonstrated as they begin the new process and identify objectives and measures. Campus involvement through formal committee structure and campus discussions has been on-going during the year to clarify and define the detailed processes needed to roll out budget model changes in the near future. Evidence of focused strategic planning and development of an activity level budgeting is noteworthy. PLU has operated in a fragile environment with the majority of their revenue coming from tuition which heavily relies on recruitment and retention, therefore making it difficult to mitigate the risks of investment in current operations.

Resource planning and development are significant priorities of the institution at this time.

Current targets for resource development and allocation have been identified in "The Box" which is the campus terminology for the action need to follow a resolution passed by the Board of Regents that identified compensation, campus maintenance and institution reserves as priorities to continue and strengthen the University financial sustainability. The goal timeline is consistent with the 2020 long range planning. PLU has identified the need to generate net resources of \$6.7 million dollars in new revenue per year to meet the goal. It is evident that this shift in planning and development is thorough and involves all levels of the University. It clearly shows that enrollment management, endowment growth, auxiliary enterprises, new programs and existing operational activity are all being reviewed in their modeling efforts. Concerns related to risks inherent in such an aggressive strategy are to be managed and mitigated with contingency planning throughout implementation and review. The Evaluators compliment the University for their actions and detailed planning to move the University to the next level in financial stability and sustainability.

The major components of PLU's revised budget model are better communication, transparency and informed decision making. The two major campus working groups are identified as the Strategic Enrollment Management Advisory Committee (SEMAC) and the Budget Working Group. While prior budget and financial planning was high level and appeared to be "one bucket," new policies and procedures are being developed to become more transparent and performance based with incentives, rewards and department level accountability. It is acknowledged that the development of the new budget and financial model has been a collaborative effort and communications have been clear and consistent.

The University has an enterprise-wide software system that enables their financial information at all levels to be up-to-date and provides real time information at all levels. Departments have access to all of their areas' information from summary form and budget to transaction level detail. Internal controls are in place with appropriate levels of authorization and the controls are reviewed and analyzed during their annual financial audit. It is evident the University has the financial tools and expertise for process improvement, data collection, implement outlined process improvements and long-range financial modeling.

All capital debt of the institution must have final approval by the Board of Regents. Capital needs are identified in the 2020 Plan. Debt management and oversight is evident and has also been considered in future renovations, major deferred maintenance and resident hall improvements. With the University's Standard and Poor rating "BBB" the future effect on operational budget is in consideration. The review also has identified the future Capital needs are also targeted in the Vision 2020 and development of the next Capital Campaign will rely on donor investment for major construction and renovation.

The auxiliary enterprises of the University are separately accounted for and careful consideration of their changes in operations are monitored. Most noted was the university planning efforts to improve revenues in the Bookstore which they have moved to a new location and increased inventory to provide a public retail orientation in connection with the textbook and institution based inventory. The location has provided the surrounding area with access. This project had

surrounding community support and partnerships with development in the area surrounding the campus property. As stated in their Report and evidenced in documentation, the enterprises of bookstore, dining, residence halls are all in the process of strategic planning for their revenue stream to increase to better enhance their own financial stability and provide additional financial resources to the university. Auxiliary enterprises have been able to contribute to the University general operations but only to the extent to cover its portion of Capital debt.

The institution undergoes annual external audits including A-133 and separate statements for KPLU-FM as required by Public Broadcasting. The 2008-12 audits were accessed through the Report link to the Financial Reports. The Audit Committee reviews the audits and any management letters. It was noted in the report and through review no findings or recommendation have been identified by the auditors for the last two years.

The institution has policies and guidelines in place to assure their fundraising is conducted in a professional, ethical and is in compliance with governmental requirements. The policies and guidelines are reviewed bi-annually by the Board of Regents. A search is underway for the Vice President of Advancement. The recently hired Vice President for Marketing and Communications is responsible for the fundraising policies and guidelines for KPLU-FM with oversight and are aligned with institution process and review.

2.G – Physical and Technological Infrastructure

The institution completed Campus Master Planning 2006 which included an extensive space utilization study. Currently the Master Plan is being reviewed to add specifics that will be in line with the long range 2020 plan. The institution has demonstrated the physical facilities are sufficient in quantity and quality to carry out instruction for 3,700 students. Accessibility, safety and security is planning and review is evident in their documentation.

A major component of their efforts to re-align budget and accountability is in the area of facilities operations. It is evident that facilities operations has been under-budgeted and the need to cover expenditures by the institution has been ongoing. The resulting resolution of the Board of Regents and current budgeting modeling will review and allocate realistic operations budgets.

PLU's Report shows evidence of substantive compliance with the requirements regarding hazardous or toxic materials.

The institution is currently contracted to update the 2006 Campus Master. The update is scheduled to be completed in 2015. It will provide the detail and content for the next Capital Campaign. It is noted that a comprehensive plan MIMP (Major Institutional Master Plan) is in place and has been adopted by the county in 2013. This is important to the institution to detail approval of by the county to expedite planning for major construction and renovation. The campus is located in an unincorporated community and therefore it was important to adopt urban planning criteria versus the rural planning and building codes.

It is evident that the identification of improvements and identifying future needs is well

documented resulting in a completion of many of the goals of the previous facilities planning. Future priorities and resource needs will be included in their updated Master Plan and necessary to launching the next fundraising campaign. Data-driven analysis is also evident in the Sightlines LLC reports that are comprehensive and include peer comparisons. The outcome of commitment through resolution is evidence of the awareness and considerations of continued improvements, reduction in deferred maintenance, and facilities that reflect the vision of the university needs to maintain a competitive residential campus.

Equipment needs of the University are reviewed annually. The Central Equipment Committee receives all requests for new and replacement equipment. The structure for funding equipment needs is through an allocation by the institution based on the identified priorities. Budget resource allocation to support the functions of university is allocated to the Technology Initiative Fund which is administered by I&TS. Many sources of funds are used to achieve the goals for its programs and services. One time large purchases such as the current upgrade to the telephone system require additional budget planning and it is currently a priority for resource allocation. Technology planning is well documented and long range in efforts to identify needs of programs and services. Detailed inventory for all components of technology provide annual replacements schedules for all areas of the campus.

VIII. Summary

The Evaluators found Pacific Lutheran University to be a very fine institution. It is characterized by excellent employees who are dedicated to a strong mission with the ultimate goal of preparing students to make substantial differences in the world. The University stewards its resources wisely, leveraging opportunities to strengthen student programs, faculty support and facility development through careful management and planning. The academic and co-curricular programs of the University attest to its dedication to the growth and development not only of the minds of their students but to their character as well. Leadership of the University is well qualified, possessed of a strong vision and collegial in manner. As PLU looks forward it does so with its greater communities in mind in an effort to be a good neighbor in Tacoma, in the state and around the world.

The issues identified in the Recommendations at the end of this Report result from a lack of attention to detail in policy articulation and follow-through. The Evaluators detected no resistance to Commission standards, either in letter or in spirit. On the contrary, interviews with faculty and staff were positive, helpful and open about strengths as well as challenges. The Evaluators are very grateful for this level of cooperation that made our tasks collegial and productive.

IX. COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commendation 1: The Evaluators commend Pacific Lutheran University staff for being supportive and responsive to the needs of the Evaluators, especially as we navigated together the new format of a “virtual visit.”

Commendation 2: The Evaluators commend Pacific Lutheran University’s move to more intentional strategic planning, linking the mission and core themes to measurable metrics, as well as connecting them to operational planning and budgeting.

Commendation 3: The Evaluators commend Pacific Lutheran University on the collaborative effort to map information literacy instruction to departmental learning objectives and student learning within the First-Year Experience Program.

Commendation 4: The Evaluators commend Pacific Lutheran University for significant progress in facilities and technological infrastructure improvements to support its mission. This is evidenced by new construction and renovation, data driven analysis, continued updating of Master Planning, creating community partnerships (Garfield), detailed technology replacement and renewal, and collaborative support to the University.

Recommendation 1: Though the Evaluators’ discussions with Pacific Lutheran University personnel found evidence of respect for academic freedom and intellectual property, the Evaluators recommend that explicit policy statements regarding these issues be included in its key documents such as the faculty handbook and human resources materials. The Evaluators also recommend that the University publish its credit hour policy and identify the means by which it monitors the policy for compliance. (Standards 2.A.23, 2.A.24, 2.A.27 and NWCCU “Credit Hour Policy” statement dated November 2012)

Recommendation 2: While the Evaluators found that some academic departments made initial efforts to identify students learning outcomes for its majors and general education program, the Evaluators recommend that this process be comprehensively implemented and that assessment of student learning outcomes become a high priority in institutional planning for mission fulfillment. (Standards 2.C.1, 2.C.2, 2.C.3)

Recommendation 3: The Evaluators recommend that the University develop and implement policies that clearly articulate institution-wide responsibilities, expectations and standards related to Continuing Education Units. (Standards 2.C.16, 2.C.17 and 2.C.18)

X. INTERVIEWS

Kevin Berg, Registrar

Bruce Bjerke, Chair of the Board of Regents

Dr. Geoffrey Foy, Associate Provost, Graduate Programs and Continuing Education

John Kaniss, Director of Facilities Management

Dr. Thomas Krise, President

Dr. Jan Lewis, Professor of Literacy Education and Associate Provost for Undergraduate Programs

Dr. Frank Moore, Associate Provost for Information and Technology Services

Dr. Teri Phillips, Director of Human Resources

Kris Plaehn, Senior Advisor to the President, President's Office, (former Registrar)

Dr. Tina Saxowsky, Assistant Professor of Chemistry, Chair of the Educational Policies Committee

Dr. Wendelyn Shore, Professor of Psychology, Chair of the Faculty

Dr. Steven Starkovich, Provost

Dr. Sheri Tonn, Vice President for Operations

Dr. David Veazey, Director of University Assessment, Accreditation and Research and Accreditation Liaison Officer

Vicky Winters, Director of Administration and Secretary to the Board of Regents