WASC | Senior College and University Commission

July 11, 2022

Mr. John Gotanda
President
Hawaii Pacific University
500 Ala Moana Boulevard
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear President Gotanda:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning Hawaii Pacific University (HPU) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting June 24, 2022. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Accreditation Visit to Hawaii Pacific University February 8-11, 2022. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by Hawaii Pacific University prior to the Offsite Review (OSR), the supplemental materials requested by the team after the OSR, and the institution's April 27, 2022 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Jennifer Walsh, Provost; David Kostecki, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer; and Valentina Abordonado, Assistant Provost. Your comments were very helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations. The date of this action constitutes the effective date of the institution's new status with WSCUC.

Actions

1. Receive the Accreditation Visit team report
2. Reaffirm accreditation for a period of six years
3. Remove a Formal Notice of Concern
4. Schedule the next reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in fall 2027 and the Accreditation Visit in spring 2028
5. Schedule a Special Visit in spring 2024 to address all requirements in this letter
6. Schedule a Progress Report to be submitted by March 1, 2023 to address:
   a. new program enrollment and net tuition generation.
   b. update on all new programs under development.
   c. demonstration of continuing compliance with debt covenants.
   d. update on relocation of Hawaii Loa campus and rehabilitation of Makapu'u campus.

The Commission commends Hawaii Pacific University in particular for the following:

1. Consistent incorporation of the three Hawaiian values: *pono* (righteous, honest, moral, to do the right thing; be in a state of balance with oneself, others, the land, work, and life itself); *kuleana* (personal sense of responsibility for self and others); and *aloha* (regard/treat one another with love and respect).
2. Dedicated commitment and active engagement of the board of trustees.
3. Identification of new programs with the goal of improving financial sustainability.
4. Engagement of undergraduate and graduate students in research including creative alignment with the university's physical location at the Makapu'u campus.
5. Dedication demonstrated by the entire campus community to promote the health and welfare of students throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
6. Ongoing commitment to serving the educational needs of students in the armed forces on military bases in Hawaii.

The Commission requires the institution to respond to the following issues:

1. Strengthen financial sustainability through increased net tuition revenue. (CFR 3.4)
2. Improve financial stability by diversifying revenue streams, improving the effectiveness of fundraising, and reducing debt. (CFR 3.4)
3. Develop accurate revenue, enrollment, and timeline projections of new degree programs based on evidence-based assumptions and data, and on realistic assessments of specialized accreditation requirements. (CFR 3.4)
4. Complete windward island relocation and improvement to ensure adequate capacity for academic program quality (both new and continuing). (CFRs 3.4 and 3.5)
5. Promote faculty development to ensure academic quality of degree programs and effectively manage workload of faculty to support integrity of all degree programs. (CFR 3.3)
6. While in pursuit of new graduate degree programs: (a) sustain focus on legacy degree programs, (b) remain true to university mission, and (c) continue to maintain academic quality of undergraduate programs through systematic assessments of teaching and learning. (CFR 4.3)
7. Provide evidence of direct role of faculty in curriculum design and ongoing assessment of student learning in support of all academic programs, including OPM programs. (CFR 2.4)
8. Design, deliver, and assess the effectiveness of co-curricular programs, including academic support programs, for both undergraduate and graduate students, and use results for improvement. (CFRs 2.10, 2.11, 3.5, and 4.1)
9. Develop appropriate staff capacity and institutional infrastructure to more effectively ensure equitable educational outcomes among the highly diverse student population. (CFRs 1.4, 2.10, 3.1, and 4.1)
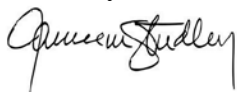
10. Promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in alignment with mission and strategic plan, throughout all levels of the institution following systematic assessments and campus wide consultation. (CFRs 1.4, 2.10, 4.1, 4.5, and 4.6)
11. Continue efforts to assess faculty, staff, and student satisfaction and campus climate regularly in order to make informed improvements in the living-learning-working environment. (CFRs 2.13, 3.2, 4.1, and 4.3)

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirmed that Hawaii Pacific University addressed the three Core Commitments and successfully completed the two-stage institutional review process conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. In keeping with WSCUC values, Hawaii Pacific University should strive for ongoing improvement with adherence to all Standards of Accreditation and their associated CFRs to foster a learning environment that continuously strives for educational excellence and operational effectiveness.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter is being sent to the chair of Hawaii Pacific University's governing board. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on Hawaii Pacific University's website and widely distributed throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement and to support the institution's response to the specific issues identified in these documents. The team report and the Commission's action letter will also be posted on the WSCUC website. If the institution wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WSCUC will post a link to that response on the WSCUC website.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that Hawaii Pacific University undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WSCUC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while contributing to public accountability, and we thank you for your continued support of this process. Please contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,

Jamienne S. Studley
President

JSS/so

Cc: Phillip Doolittle, Commission Chair
       Jennifer Walsh, ALO
       Richard Hunter, Board Chair
       Members of the Accreditation Visit team
       Susan Opp, Vice President

Response to the WSCUC Team Report
John Gotanda, President
April 27, 2022

On behalf of the entire Hawai'i Pacific University, I want to thank the WSCUC Commission and the WSCUC Review Team for their assistance during the most recent Reaffirmation of Accreditation review. Throughout this process, we have welcomed the opportunity to celebrate our past progress, examine our present operations, and illuminate a path forward that will lead to even greater success. This review process has also given us greater insight into ways in which we can continuously improve for the betterment of our students, staff, faculty, and community.

We also thank the WSCUC Review Team for its helpful discussions with members of the HPU community during the site visit. Though the pandemic meant that not all members could participate in person, we appreciate the team's willingness to adjust to a hybrid/hyflex visit in order to keep the visit on schedule. Furthermore, we appreciate the commendations and recommendations offered by the team, as it provides insights into how to strengthen the University.

We are pleased that the team found sufficient evidence to determine compliance with WSCUC Standards and federal requirements. To further assist the Commission, we appreciate the opportunity to offer corrections and clarifications of some of the items referenced in the report. In addition, we welcome the opportunity to share updates on our finances and enrollments and to highlight some of the items in progress that pertain to the team's recommendations.

Corrections of Fact

On page 18 of the team report, the launch date of our Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (PsyD) program is incorrectly stated as summer 2022. As noted in a correction email to the team chair on March 21, 2022, the new PsyD program launched in fall 2020 and is expected to bring in $0.8M in new revenue in FY22 and $1.3M in FY23. Our Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program is set to launch in summer 2022 with an initial cohort of at least 100 students. As of April 21, 2022, the DPT program has received 95 deposits for the July 2022 start.

Clarifications and Additional Context

1. Strengthening Financial Sustainability Through Increased Net Tuition

HPU has worked hard to transform its finances. We are pleased to provide an update on our current fiscal year financial results. Through February 2022, we have achieved an operating surplus of $1.5 million, which is a 50 percent positive variance to our budgeted year-to-date surplus of $975 thousand. We expect this positive variance to reach nearly $2 million for the entire fiscal year as our enrollment and net tuition are better than expected for the spring 2022 term. We are therefore confident that we will comfortably meet all debt covenants for FY22, as well as achieve another year of positive operating income.

We would like to take this opportunity to clarify the review team's comment (p. 15) of the University's "near lack of compliance with debt covenants" in at least one previous year. We are at a loss as to why the team reached this conclusion, as we have never been close to missing any of our debt covenants. The debt covenant calculations shared with the team show excess in all years: For the liquidity covenant, these excesses were $7.6 million, $6.8 million, and $17.2 million in fiscal years 2019, 2020 and 2021, respectively. For the debt service coverage covenant, the excesses were $5.8 million and $2.9 million in fiscal years 2020 and 2021, respectively. The debt service coverage covenant was not in effect for fiscal year 2019 as provided for in the bond refinancing documents to account for the moving of most of our facilities to downtown Honolulu that year.

With regard to the review team's concern about HPU's discount rate for first-year students (p.17), we wish to point out that our current (FY22) freshman discount rate of 55 percent, which is projected to remain flat for FY23, is consistent with other non-profit, private universities across the nation. According to the [2020 Tuition Discounting Study from NACUBO](#) (National Association of College and University Business Officers), the median discount rate for first-time undergraduates at Master's Institutions in Fall 2020 was 56 percent. Also, according to NACUBO, the median discount rate for all undergraduate students at Master's Institutions in Fall 2020 was 48 percent; HPU has maintained an overall undergraduate discount rate of 47 percent. Furthermore, HPU had the same discount rate in Fall 2021 as it had in 2018, whereas the average institutional discount rate at non-profit, private institutions has increased by more than 3 percent during this same period. In the end, HPU recognizes the need to increase total net tuition and understands that keeping discount rates stable is one way of accomplishing that goal.

We would additionally like to address the review team's questioning the ability of HPU to accurately predict enrollments (p. 20), particularly this past year. Over the past few years, HPU has developed complex enrollment models that have given the University the opportunity to track performance in real-time and to make adjustments as needed. We wish to also point out that the size of the fall 2021 first-year class was well above what was originally targeted.

Fall 2021

Student Type	Goal	Census Enrolled (FTE)	% of Goal Achieved
First-Year	545	783	144%
Transfer	210	189	90%
Graduate	225	222	99%
Visiting	40	261	653%
Military	195	124	64%

As shared with the team at the time of the site visit, HPU's only "enrollment miss" in fall 2021 was in the enrollment of military numbers, but this was noted in the institutional report and also during the site visit as likely being a confluence of three factors: a) a misinterpretation of HPU's accreditation status because the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs interpreted the 2020 WSCUC Notice of Concern as a loss of accreditation on the "GI Bill Comparison Tool" website. Although eventually corrected, it took almost a full year (August 2020 - July 2021) to get the website permanently corrected, which suppressed recruitment and enrollment efforts for fall 2021; b) a continuation of federal emergency conditions due to the Delta variant surge, which precluded some students from being permitted to enroll in fall 2021 by their commanding officers; and c) continued COVID restrictions at the military sites, which prevented staff from holding recruitment events on base. It was largely the low military enrollments that led to any missed fall 2021 enrollment projections. It is also important to note that while the FY22 budget was adjusted in June 2021 to account for the extra large freshmen class, earlier versions of the budget assumed only 545 first-year freshmen. Our final tally of 783 FTE greatly outperformed original projections.

More significantly, the prediction in enrollment was further complicated for the current fiscal year given that the decline in COVID-19 cases in early May, which coincided with the widespread availability of vaccines, seemed to indicate an end to the pandemic. As we know now with hindsight, the surge in COVID cases in late summer from the Delta variant significantly altered many institutions' and students' plans for the fall 2021 term. All of this caused greater than normal variance in our fall 2021 enrollment estimates. We believe it is unfair to criticize the University for having a variance in light of circumstances, particularly because the volatility and unpredictability of the pandemic undoubtedly played a role in the creation of this variance.

In the report (p. 20), the WSCUC Team noted that HPU would have a net tuition "shortfall" in the current year, meaning that the forecasted net tuition for the full fiscal year is likely to trail the budget by $3.4 million or 6 percent,[1] and expressed concern over what it called the "magnitude

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[1] Note that the most recent forecast of net tuition as of April 2022 shrinks this variance to budget to $2.1 million or 4 percent due to higher Spring enrollment.

of the estimation variance" and its effect on the current and future years of net tuition revenue. We respectfully disagree with this characterization, particularly in light of the circumstances explained above. We also fully expect to meet our budget goal, which is to have a positive cashflow at the end of the fiscal year. This is because our budget processes and procedures are designed to ensure that we meet our financial targets, even when unanticipated events like the Delta and Omicron variants affect enrollments and the functioning of the University.

As discussed with the team during the site visit, our budgets are finalized internally in May and then approved by the Board of Trustees in June. Because the traditional academic year enrollment cycle does not neatly align with the fiscal year cycle, it is difficult to precisely predict August enrollments and tuition revenue when the budget is developed and approved months in advance. Like most institutions, we estimate fall numbers based on May 1 deposit numbers, with some expectation that enrollments will continue to fluctuate between May and August. Not surprisingly, fall numbers have fluctuated more these last few years when compared with the past because of the evolving nature of the pandemic and because of the removal of enrollment norms stemming from the 2019 U.S. Department of Justice antitrust settlement with the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). Even with our complex enrollment models, there will always be variances in our model given the multiple assumptions utilized; therefore, we now consider a +/- 6 percent variance to be within acceptable range. More importantly, however, we must note that *our budget process is designed to accommodate these variances*. All budget managers understand that HPU is a net tuition dependent institution and that reductions to budgeted expenses must be made if forecasted net tuition is less than originally budgeted. We have become very good at tracking expense levels monthly and adjusting throughout the fiscal year as necessary. One need only look at our current fiscal year results through February 2022 to see evidence of this. While we were experiencing lower net tuition than budgeted through February, we also had lower than budgeted personnel expenses of 7 percent and lower other expenses of 10 percent. This was due to our deliberate steps to adjust hiring and spending to accommodate the lower forecasted levels of net tuition. As a result, we believe that we are proficient at monitoring our monthly financial results and making the necessary adjustments to ensure that we meet our financial targets for the entire fiscal year. The fact that we have never missed meeting our bond covenants and will be on track to be in the black at the end of the fiscal year demonstrates our ability to effectively manage our budget.

2. Improving Financial Stability Through Increased Fundraising

With respect to fundraising activities, it is important to provide some context as to how far the University has come in this area since the last full site visit in 2016. At that time, HPU raised a total of $1.6 million through its development operations. By contrast, from 2018-2020, we raised an average of $3.1 million per year, and, in 2021, the University raised a record $6.4 million. This year, we are on track to raise over $4 million. Additionally, the University's fundraising production compares favorably to peer institutions. A 2021 benchmarking report prepared by Executive Advisory Board (EAB) for HPU found that median dollars raised at similarly situated institutions (during the period 2018-2020) was $3.1 million (the 25th percentile was $2.4 million and the 75th percentile was $3.5 million). Moreover, the EAB study determined that the University's cost to

raise a dollar was $0.25, and it compared favorably to the peer median of $0.46 (the 25th percentile was $0.39 and the 75th percentile was $0.59). This indicates that we have a high fundraising production per FTE compared to our cohort. The EAB Report was not originally included in the Institutional Report, nor was it in the category of requested documents given to HPU after the off-site review. However, because the team raised the issue of fundraising production for the first time in its final report, we believe it important to make this information available to the Commission to provide an accurate picture of our fundraising efforts. We would be pleased to submit the EAB Report upon request.

3. Developing Accurate Revenue, Enrollment and Timeline Projections of New Degree Programs Based on Evidence-Based Assumptions and Data

HPU understands the need to scrutinize third-party partnerships carefully, as it now has become commonplace for some institutions to rely too heavily on these partner-supported programs for the financing of day-to-day operations. The team report discusses our plans to significantly expand net tuition revenue via partnerships with *Evidence-in-Motion (EIM)* and *Pearson* and rightly notes that this is an important part of our future growth. However, the report implies that these programs must achieve aggressive targets in order for the University to be "sustainable." We disagree with this characterization. We believe that HPU is sustainable now, as evidenced by our positive operating income in FY21 and our expected positive operating income in FY22. These programs are important to expand the scope of our mission, not to correct any deficient financial decisions in other areas of the University. We monitor all programming at HPU and do not accept underperforming programs as loss leaders. Indeed, the first partnership programs to launch in FY22, MSN and DNP through *Pearson* and DPT through *EIM* have both outperformed enrollment expectations in the first enrollment cycles. For example, the original Board-approved proforma for DPT predicted an inaugural cohort size of 80; however, enrollment demand has been stronger than predicted, and HPU now expects to secure an inaugural cohort of between 100-110, which is the maximum permitted by the professional accrediting body, CAPTE.

Importantly, none of the new *EIM* and *Pearson* programs requires any significant upfront investment other than pre-launch faculty costs as dictated by accreditation standards. These start-up costs amount to approximately $2.5 million for each program, a very low figure given that each program will bring in approximately $10 million in net tuition annually. Even with the revenue share, we will be able to pay back the up-front investment costs in less than three years.

While we are very confident of the market demand and projected enrollments, we also designed contractual off-ramps with our third-party partners should enrollment not meet our expectations. During the site review, the team noted that HPU's contracts with *EIM* and *Pearson* were, in-fact, well-constructed. Accordingly, we believe these new programs will create the opportunity for significant mission and financial expansion without excessive financial risk. Nevertheless, the performances of these programs are monitored weekly by senior officials, including the provost, the CFO's financial analyst, the graduate admissions director, academic deans, program administrators, and financial aid staff. As shared with the review team during the site visit, these weekly meetings ensure that HPU and the OPM partners are able to work together quickly and collaboratively to adjust strategies and tactics in order to secure the desired outcomes.

This group also works collaboratively to develop enrollment and financial models and to achieve specialized accreditations. Although the team noted specialized accreditation as an item to address in **Recommendation #3** (p. 41), HPU shared in advance of the visit (as part of the Line of Inquiry documentation due in December 2021), confirmation that specialized accreditation (through CCNE) had already been attained fully for the *Pearson*-supported Nursing programs, and that provisional accreditation (through CAPTE) had been secured for the *EIM*-supported DPT program. We also shared correspondence that the PA program is on-track with its professional accreditation body (ARC-PA) and shared evidence that the accreditation process had begun for the OTD program (ACOTE). PsyD, which is not supported by an OPM, is also on-track for APA accreditation.

4. Completing Windward Island Relocation

With respect to the team's **Recommendation #4** (p. 41) that the University complete the windward island relocation, we are pleased to report that earlier this month construction began on the building of a new 24,000 square foot facility that will house natural science labs. This facility, which is being financed and built by a third-party developer, is expected to be completed by fall 2023. At that time, HPU will close the Hawaii Loa Campus on the windward side of the island as all academic operations at that campus will be relocated to our downtown campus.

5. Promoting Faculty Development

We would like to take this opportunity to update the Commission on the University's efforts to promote faculty development to ensure academic quality of its degree programs and effectively manage the workload of faculty to support the integrity of all of its degrees as noted in **Recommendation #5** (p. 41-42).

Full-time faculty assigned to support traditional (non-accelerated) academic programs typically follow a 24-credit (4-4) teaching load, in which the average class size at the undergraduate level is 25 students per section or less. Faculty who teach large sections, defined as sections in which enrollment exceeds 50 students, typically receive double the instructional workload credit. Faculty assigned to support accelerated programs that run continuously over the calendar year typically teach between 30- and 36-credits per year. During the WSCUC Team Visit, some faculty reported teaching numerous overloads, which constrained their ability to complete their other responsibilities in the area of scholarship and service. Like many other institutions during the pandemic, we experienced a few last-minute vacancies. Indeed, we had one faculty resign right before the start of the fall 2021 semester to take care of an ill family member on the U.S. mainland, and another faculty member resigned abruptly in the middle of the fall semester to return to family in Mexico. We very much appreciate that our faculty members immediately volunteered to fill these spots to ensure that our students were able to take and complete their courses and receive high-quality instruction.

In general, while overload teaching is permitted for additional compensation, it is always performed on a voluntary basis and is restricted to a maximum of 12 credits per year. Continued

voluntary overloads are only approved upon verification from the dean that the faculty member continues to perform well in teaching, scholarship, and service. With respect to the staffing of first year classes, because HPU officials knew before May 1, 2021 that the incoming first-year class was likely to be extra large, several lecturer positions were approved for hire to supplement instruction in typical first-year subjects, including Biology, Chemistry, Math, and Writing. This absorbed most of the extra sections created to support these students; career-track faculty were not compelled to teach extra to accommodate this large first-year class.

Prior to the pandemic, professional development funds had been largely used to support a narrow range of research and scholarship activities, including travel to professional conferences to present research findings and teaching release time to complete scholarship activities. While these development activities represent an important component of faculty professional development, it is not inclusive of the range of professional development activities required by a diverse body of faculty. Consistent with the team's **Recommendation #5** (p. 41-42), the emphasis on professional development now includes support for online teaching pedagogy through the creation of a short course designed to improve teaching and learning in online instruction. Additionally, faculty responsible for overseeing General Education assessment attended a virtual conference in 2021 sponsored by AAC&U. Professional development funds will also be diversified in their use to include support for faculty who need to stay current on developments in the field for teaching and continued professional licensure. Funds have been and continue to be available for faculty who need to attend conferences in order to prepare for upcoming external accreditation reviews, such as the ABET review for engineering in 2023. Starting next fiscal year, funds will also be available for faculty who wish to improve their effectiveness in the area of teaching and mentoring.

6. Details and Plans Concerning Graduate Programs and Support for Graduate Students

The review team noted that, with respect to new graduate programs coming on board, the University did not provide sufficient details and plans concerning those programs and the extent of support for graduate student learning and engagement. We did submit this information for each new graduate program in connection with the WSCUC Substantive Change process. Because all of the WSCUC Substantive Change reviews were positive, resulting in approval for the offering of new degrees and/or new programs, and because the Commission already had the relevant documents, we did not embed these documents again in the institutional report. However, we did make the review team aware of these documents during the site visit, but were unable to share them after the visit because they were not specifically requested.

As the University expands enrollments into new graduate programs, HPU is committed and prepared to ensure graduate student success. Indeed, as part of the comprehensive WSCUC Substantive Change review of the new Doctor of Clinical Psychology (PsyD), Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT), and Master in Medical Science Physician Assistant program, HPU provided more than two dozen documents that addressed how the University planned to support graduate student learning and success at the program level, where students have the most affinity and where students expect the most support.

In addition, the documents included in the WSCUC Substantive Change process also provide evidence addressing the team's **Recommendations #7** and **#8** (p. 42). As shared in meetings with the review team at the time of the site visit and as noted by the team on p. 24 of the report, HPU policy requires faculty to create the curriculum. Faculty are also responsible for assessing the learning outcomes in each course and for assessing learning outcomes for the program in conjunction with HPU, WSCUC, and specialized accreditation standards. Furthermore, HPU's curriculum review is comprehensive, involving faculty review at the College curriculum committee, the University-wide curriculum committee (Undergraduate Curriculum Committee or Graduate Curriculum Committee), and approval by the Faculty Senate Chair, before new programs or revisions are sent to the WSCUC ALO for review (and completion of screening forms, if needed), and to the provost for final review and approval. Following the approval process, the Registrar's office is responsible for archiving the approval forms. Approval forms for all new programs and program changes, including new courses and course revisions, are archived and can be produced upon request.

Finally, each of the new graduate programs launched in the past four years was created with specialized accreditation requirements in mind. HPU would welcome the opportunity to resend the WSCUC Substantive Change documents for each of the new graduate programs if they would be helpful to the Commission.

With respect to ensuring support for graduate student learning and engagement, HPU has already expanded digital library resources to support the new PsyD, DNP, and DPT programs, and has plans to add library resources for the PA and OTD programs in FY23 and FY24. These additional resources were included in the program budgets provided to the WSCUC Substantive Change Review committee as part of the review process. In addition, HPU has begun construction on a new clinical laboratory space that will be used by DPT and OTD students for their on-campus interaction with faculty. Finally, HPU has secured an agreement with Academic Live Care for virtual behavioral health services for online/hybrid graduate students to supplement in-person services available to all HPU students on O'ahu. This service expansion was in progress at the time of the review team site visit and was finalized a short time later.

7. Student Life Activities

The review team recommended that the University design, deliver and assess the effectiveness of co-curricular programs and use the results for improvement. **(See Recommendation #8**, p. 42**).** The assessment of co-curricular programs was identified as a strategic plan priority by the Dean of Students in 2019, and this has already resulted in the completion of several assessment instruments, including the EAB Title IX survey in 2019; the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS) Sexual Assault Campus Climate Survey in Spring 2022 (with results to be delivered in late summer/early fall 2022); the HEDS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Survey in Spring 2022 (which results to be delivered in early fall 2022); a survey of undergraduate students about academic advising by staff and faculty advisors in fall 2021; the addition of a Fall Residential Experience Survey in fall 2021, which will repeated each fall hereafter; the continuation of the Residential Experience Survey each spring; and the assessment of student participation and satisfaction of various student life activities and events. We will use these survey

results to adjust our annual objectives to ensure that we continue to make progress toward our strategic plan key performance indicators.

HPU would also like to provide the context for the use of University Relations staff during the pandemic to oversee the planning and implementation of student activities, a practice which the review team criticized. It is unfortunate that the site visit meeting with the University Relations staff was canceled because the staff in that department could have helped to provide greater understanding for the "pandemic pivot" that resulted in the shift of some of the student activities over to the University Relations team for the present academic year. In fall 2021, the City & County of Honolulu and the State of Hawaii implemented tightened COVID regulations due to a surge of cases resulting from the Delta coronavirus variant just days after students completed fall 2021 orientation activities. Gathering sizes were reduced from a prior maximum of 500 down to just 25, and the slate of large-scale events and activities designed to promote social connections, including a concert for students at Aloha Tower, had to be canceled at the last minute. The restrictions on events meant that the Events staff within University Relations had the capacity to refocus their efforts on curating dozens of small-scale events designed to promote social bonding and connections. At the same time, the Dean of Students and residential life staff were once more focused on ensuring that the University's COVID surveillance testing program, contact tracing, and quarantine/isolation procedures were rigorously followed in order to ensure that COVID infections remained low on campus. This strategy to reallocate staff capacity worked well: last fall, over 2000 students were able to participate in approximately 280 small-group activities, which was essential for their social and mental well-being, while the COVID testing and tracing teams were able to quickly identify and isolate community members who tested positive.

HPU agrees with the review team that the purpose of having student activities goes beyond mere recreation. However, unlike institutions on the U.S. mainland, or even other institutions in Hawai'i, the complexity of HPU's diversity means that approximately 70 percent of students come from outside the state. From a student's perspective, this means that their closest family and friends are 2,000-5,000 miles (or more) and several time zones away. Students who are not able to make friends, or unable to quickly reconstitute a support network in their new, adopted community, present a high risk for dropout. Indeed, research has regularly shown that promoting social connections creates a sense of belonging that improves academic persistence, retention, and performance, especially among students from under-represented and under-resourced backgrounds (see, for example, Davis, et. al., "Students' Sense of Belonging: The Development of a Predictive Retention Model," *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, Vol. 19, No. 1, February 2019, pp. 117-127).

To be sure, HPU also recognizes that student success also depends on co-curricular events and experiences. In fall 2021, new student orientation featured a customized session on the risks of alcohol and substance abuse for college students with Dr. Jason Kilmer, Associate Professor in Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Washington, who is a well-regarded, sought-after expert on this topic. Throughout the current year, the Residential Life staff offered numerous events focused on health and wellness issues, and the Student Affairs staff, led by the Dean of Students, promoted sessions each month featuring academic guest speakers related to identity months and other "national topics," such as Pride Month in October, Black History Month in February, Women's History Month in March, Sexual Assault Awareness month in April, and

Asian/Pacific Heritage History Month in May. Co-curricular events are planned jointly by staff housed within University Relations and the Dean of Students, with active participation by academic deans, faculty, and staff. In addition, academic programs and colleges regularly schedule authors, industry experts, and other professionals to present to students.

To confirm what was shared with team during the site visit, and consistent with the team's **Recommendation #11** (p. 42), each of the events - all 300+ so far - are being assessed in real time. Staff in Student Activities and Student Affairs will compile the data this summer to make recommendations for the following year. The newly hired Director of Student Activities, who will begin no later than May 1, 2022, will have a shared reporting line to the Office of the Provost and will work cooperatively with staff in events, residential life, student affairs, and academic affairs, to ensure that co-curricular events for undergraduate and graduate students are identified, implemented, and assessed in the coming year. The director will also ensure that programming is adjusted as a result of the student, staff, and faculty feedback.

8. Faculty Qualifications for Graduate Programs

With respect to the review team's uncertainty noted in the report (p. 11) as to whether appropriate faculty qualifications have been adopted for the expanded graduate programs, HPU would like to assure the Commission that this is the case for current and future graduate programs.

HPU offers programs for a diverse population of student learners, ranging from dual-credit high-schoolers through doctoral students in a range of fields. At minimum, all faculty, even those instructing dual-credit students within high schools, are expected to have an earned master's degree from an accredited institution; exceptions, which are rare, may be made for professional practitioners teaching specialized skills, such as might be found in theater, music, or the visual arts, and, even then, only upon petition by the dean and approval from the provost.

Faculty providing core instruction to graduate students are expected to have terminal degrees or clinical doctorates. This standard is upheld through the HPU hiring process and is reinforced by specialized accreditors working collaboratively to oversee the quality of the University's expanded graduate programs. Indeed, all faculty participating in graduate programs accredited by external specialized accrediting bodies meet the standards set by those organizations. Here is a listing of new graduate program faculty requirements by program:

- PsyD: All participating faculty must have terminal degrees.
- MSN/DNP: Per specialized accreditation rules (CCNE), all core faculty and coordinators must have terminal degrees.
- DPT: All participating faculty must have doctoral degrees, which can include clinical doctorates. Per specialized accreditation rules (CAPTE), at least 50 percent of core faculty must have a terminal degree defined as PhD, EdD, DSc, etc. The HPU DPT program exceeds CAPTE's standard for terminal degrees, and all faculty have at least a DPT (clinical doctorate).
- PA: All core faculty must have doctoral degrees. The specialized accreditation standards (through ARC-PA) specify a minimum number of faculty who must be PAs and hold

national PA certification, which requires that faculty have met the profession's standards for a terminal degree.

- OTD: Per specialized accreditation rules (ACOTE), all faculty need to have a doctorate, which can include the entry-level OTD (clinical doctorate).

9. Promoting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

With respect to the team's recommendation (**Recommendation #10**, p. 42) that the University promote diversity, equity and inclusion, in alignment with the University's mission and strategic plan, throughout all levels of the institution following systemic assessments and campus-wide consultation on a regular basis, we wish to report that we have begun to do so and want to clarify and highlight some of our efforts. In the team report, the reviewers noted that the promotion of cultural awareness of Hawaiian values alone is insufficient to impact equity and inclusion outcomes (CFR 1.4). We agree, but wish to point out that our infusion of Hawaiian values throughout the campus culture is more than a cultural awareness program. Our core values of *aloha* (love), *pono* (righteousness), and *kuleana* (responsibility) are akin to the implementation of spiritual values at faith-based institutions. Accordingly, HPU's commitment to *aloha, pono,* and *kuleana* is embedded throughout the campus culture: these values are central to HPU's educational mission. That means, for example, that faculty recognize that it is their *kuleana* to ensure that students have every opportunity and resource needed to succeed. Faculty take it upon themselves to reach out to students who are absent, struggling, or failing to engage; they also regularly fill out *Kuleana Forms* to summon additional help for students who are perceived to be struggling, whether it be with academics, finances, or mental health issues. They also recognize that it is their *kuleana* to provide extra assistance to first-generation, under-represented minority students, and those who are struggling with financial insecurities, in order to help improve outcomes.

HPU faculty and staff also practice the Hawaiian custom of *hanai,* which means to adopt people into their hearts and their families. In doing so, they go above and beyond to assist underrepresented minority, first-generation, and low-income students, as well as students who are feeling homesick and alone, often far away from friends, family, and their established support networks. Parents regularly remark on the sense of security they feel when they entrust their undergraduate students to the HPU 'ohana, and the University works hard to ensure that this sense of trust is well placed. This, too, is critical to ensuring equitable student outcomes.

The commitment of every member of the HPU 'ohana to live *pono* means that faculty and staff are committed to the principle of diversity, equity, and equality, because it is *pono* - the right thing to do. Living *pono* also means looking out for each person in the community, no matter who they are; to value her or his well-being above your own. For the last two years, the HPU campus community was able to keep COVID infections to a minimum because of the collective will to "Be *Pono*" with regard to health and safety protocols. Unlike some campuses, where mask mandates, mandatory testing, and other health and safety protocols were contested, HPU students, many of whom who hail from states where such protocols were routinely refuted by officials or contested by constituents, willingly complied with the rules out of a sincere desire to be *pono* and to live righteously with regard to one another. Living *pono* also means to stand up for the rights and well-being of those who are marginalized or who have historically oppressed, whether because

of race and ethnicity, or because of sociodemographic and other identifying categories, such as gender, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.

Finally, the core value of *aloha* is exhibited in HPU's practice of inclusion. It is also seen as members of the community extend gracious welcome at every event, in every class, and in every meeting. HPU promotes practices grounded in *aloha* toward racial and ethnic minorities, toward those who are under-resourced and those who are more affluent, toward members of the LGBTQ+ community, and towards those who hail from local, continental U.S., or international communities. Accordingly, and despite the complex diversity of the HPU community, complaints about mistreatment, bias, or discrimination are exceedingly rare. HPU challenges itself regularly to show *aloha* toward friend and stranger alike in order to ensure that the campus culture is as supportive as it can be toward each member of the community.

The commitment to these values is designed to promote equitable outcomes for students, faculty, and staff. But like all institutions of higher education, HPU desires to do more. As shared during the WSCUC visit, and consistent with the review team's **Recommendation #10** (p. 42), HPU will use HEDS diversity, equity, and inclusion survey data to inform specific and measurable diversity, equity, and inclusion goals into the strategic plan and to regularly monitor progress to ensure that the University is moving forward.

As the needs of HPU students have grown over the years, HPU has also been intentional in adding resources and additional staff support, including a third behavioral health counselor (spring 2021), a second undergraduate-focused Retention Counselor (spring 2022), two additional academic advisors (fall 2021), an expansion of tutoring services (spring 2021), and an Accessibility Coordinator to assist the Accessibility Director (spring 2022). In addition, consistent with the review team's **Recommendation #9** (p. 42), the University will continue to expand resources and infrastructure to meet the evolving needs of its diverse student body.

10. Efforts to Assess Faculty, Staff and Student Satisfaction and Campus Climate

As shared in the Lines of Inquiry documentation in December 2021, HPU has recently employed several national survey instruments to assess the risk factors facing first-year students (e.g., Ruffalo Noel Levitz College Student Inventory and Mid-year Assessments) and has also utilized HEDS instruments for campus climate (Title IX) surveys as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion surveys. We shared those instruments prior to the visit, and, consistent with **Recommendation #11** (p. 42), HPU will use the results to identify strategic goals and objectives in alignment with the University's strategic plan.

The Human Resources office also sends out engagement surveys every year to HPU employees, and these results, disaggregated by academic or staff unit, are used to evaluate problems and identify solutions in order to improve the engagement of faculty and staff within their units and within the University as a whole. These surveys, which were also shared with the review team, are planned to continue indefinitely; they are intended to assist supervisors, deans, and other senior executives as they continue to develop and execute policies that impact personnel decisions.

Summary

HPU has undergone significant transformation in all facets of the University since the last full WSCUC visit in 2016. We have brought to fruition a new triangular campus in downtown Honolulu, with Aloha Tower Marketplace serving as the center of student life, Waterfront Plaza housing our Library, Colleges of Liberal Arts and Health and Society, School of Nursing and math and engineering departments of College of Natural and Computational Sciences, and Pioneer Plaza housing of Colleges of Business and Professional Students. We are also pleased to report that earlier this month we broke ground on a new 24,000 square foot facility for our science labs, which is the last piece of the 2016 campus master plan. We have reformed our curriculum, sunsetting programs with low enrollments and commencing new ones in high demand areas, such as health care and engineering. In addition, in order to diversify our programs, we are building new graduate programs in highly sought-after fields, such as our new PsyD program, our new Doctor of Physical Therapy (first in the State of Hawai'i), and the new Physician Assistant Program. We also have rebuilt our enrollment management program, and have stopped the many years of declining enrollment. In fact, in 2020 and 2021, HPU saw enrollment increases in our first-time full-time freshmen classes, while most of the country experienced enrollment declines. While we do not expect to see numbers similar to this past year where we experienced an over 50 percent increase in our first-time full-time freshmen class, we do expect our freshmen enrollment to exceed that of 2019 and 2020, and be in line with our long-term projections. Most importantly, we have turned around our finances. In 2020, we showed a $10.3 million improvement in operating income from 2019, and, in 2021, we had a positive cash flow. We also project a positive cash flow for FY 2022. Our financial position will be further strengthened as our new graduate programs come online.

While much has been accomplished, we recognize there is still work to be done, and we plan to use the team's insightful and valuable comments and suggestions in this endeavor. We thank you for all of the time and effort spent on our behalf, and we look forward to our discussion with the WSCUC Commission in June.

REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM

For Reaffirmation of Accreditation

To Hawaii Pacific University
February 8-11, 2022

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Table of Contents

Section I: Overview and Context.

    A. <u>Description of the Institution and its Accreditation History</u>.

Hawaii Pacific University (HPU) is a private non-profit university located on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. HPU was established in 1965 as Hawaii Pacific College, a private liberal arts college. It received initial WSCUC accreditation in 1973, and became Hawaii Pacific University in 1990. In 1992 HPU merged with Hawai'i Loa College, a merger which expanded the physical footprint and capacity of the university.

Hawaii Pacific University's mission is to create an international learning community, providing an American education built on a liberal arts foundation. The university focuses its work around three Hawaiian values: *pono, kuleana* and *aloha*. *Pono* in Hawaiian culture means righteous, and can also mean to be in a state of balance – with oneself, with others, with life itself. *Kuleana* refers to an individual's personal sense of responsibility. *Aloha* is not only a gentle greeting in Hawaii, but also means to treat one another with love and respect.

The main operations of HPU are in Honolulu, and there are four primary sites across the island. In addition, HPU maintains a presence on seven military installations across Oahu. Since the last site visit, the university has relocated its primary facility to downtown Honolulu.

As of fall 2021, the university enrolled 3,575 students, with 3,144 FTE undergraduate students and 429 FTE graduate students. HPU is highly diverse, with students from all 50 states and around the world, and no majority racial or ethnic population. In 2021, HPU was designated as a federal Minority Serving Institution (MSI).

B. Description of the Team's Review Process.

The team conducted its review of HPU February 8-11, 2022 in a hybrid format, with three members and the WSCUC staff liaison on site, and two members participating remotely. The team found the accreditation report to be well written, and the university to be responsive to the team's requests. The team met with the president; senior leadership; the chief financial officer; the provost/chief academic officer; the board of trustees; deans; faculty leadership; as well as with administrators and staff concerning strategic planning, student success, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Open fora with faculty, staff, and students were also conducted. Team members were given tours of the Hawai'i Loa and Makapuu campuses, the HPU main campus, and Hickam Air Force Base. The university also provided the team with technology-enabled rooms on campus and at the hotel to facilitate its work and discussions.

C. Institution's Reaccreditation Report and Update: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence

The process of developing the institutional report was managed through the office of the chief academic officer with subsections developed primarily by the WSCUC Steering Committee. Members of the campus community were aware of the upcoming accreditation review and visit, but did not appear to have read the institutional self-study nor participated in its development.

The university has undertaken significant work to address concerns raised by the WSCUC Commission relative to financial stability. Much of this work is still in process. This work includes several contracts with online program managers for the launch of new, high demand academic programs. The university has also reevaluated facilities usage in an effort to address

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financial stability concerns, and has plans to renegotiate debt service. These initiatives and their progress were evaluated thoroughly by the team, and are discussed at some length in this report.

Like all institutions, the university has faced challenges associated with the pandemic. The shelter-in-place order issued by the State of Hawaii in March, 2020 required an abrupt move to fully online instruction. The university undertook the intensive work of creating a safe learning environment with diligence. Reduced revenue in auxiliary income, coupled with increased expenses related to the pandemic, led to significant pandemic-related financial losses. However, the university also positioned itself to respond to the pandemic in a manner that supported enrollment and ongoing operations. HPU offered limited in-person instruction in 2020-2021. Due to social distancing measures required by city and county mandates at the start of the 2020/2021 academic year, most classes were hybridized to some extent. Full in-person instruction then resumed at HPU in fall 2021. In summer 2020, the university upgraded its air conditioning systems with MERV (Minimum Efficiency Rating Value) 13 filters where possible. External air purifiers were subsequently purchased and installed during summer 2021, thus facilitating the university's actions to cease hybrid instruction and resuming in-person instruction in fall 2021. This provided a significant student recruitment advantage when other institutions, particularly those in California, were still operating in a primarily remote environment. Due to HPU's MSI status in 2021, it received an additional boost in Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) support as well.

Section II   Evaluation of Institutional Essays

A. Component 1: Response to Previous Commission Actions

In 2016 the university was reaccredited for a period of six years, with a progress report required in 2017, and a Special Visit scheduled for 2019. While commending the university for its program review process and progress in data-informed decision making, in its report, the 2016 evaluation team expressed concern about financial stability, communication, turnover at the senior leadership level, student advising, and enrollment declines. Following the scheduled Special Visit, in 2020 the university was issued a Notice of Concern, citing in particular concerns about "Criteria for Review (CFR) 3.4 regarding financial stability caused in large measure by enrollment declines." This Notice of Concern, which has been in place since 2020, has caused some specific challenges for HPU, including a misunderstanding about the institution's status with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (which has now been resolved), and questions from prospective students.

B. Component 2: Compliance: Review Under WSCUC Standards and Compliance with federal requirements

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

Institutional Purposes

The university has a distinctive mission that leans into its location: "*Hawaiʻi Pacific University is an international learning community set in the rich cultural context of Hawaiʻi. Students from around the world join us for an American education built on a liberal arts foundation. Our innovative undergraduate and graduate programs anticipate the changing needs of the community and prepare our graduates to live, work, and learn as active members of a global society.*" As discussed previously, the university centers its work on a set of three Hawaiian

values: *pono* (righteous, honest, moral, to do the right thing; be in a state of balance with oneself, others, the land, work, and life itself); *kuleana* (personal sense of responsibility for self and others); and *aloha* (regard/treat one another with love and respect).

<u>Integrity and Transparency</u>

HPU demonstrates that it has a clear purpose, has identified a distinctive mission, and developed a strategic plan with support for implementation. The strategic plan's call for enrollment growth appears to stray from the liberal arts foundation of the institution's mission; clarifying this would be helpful (CFR 4.6).

The recent establishment of a cross-campus Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (JEDI) Work Group is laudatory; two years into existence, it appears the group is catalyzing critical conversations that have not taken place and beginning to raise questions that can lead to positive change. However, there also seems to be an over-reliance on educating students, staff and faculty on the three core Native Hawaiian values as a pathway to addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); research has not shown cultural awareness programs to actually impact equity and inclusion outcomes (CFR 1.4). The university will administer its first-ever diversity, equity, and inclusion survey after spring break 2022 and plans to use the results to inform initiatives and interventions (CFR 1.1).

For an institution with such a diverse student population, it is incumbent upon the administration to strengthen its DEI efforts. Currently, the functions of Title IX compliance and diversity coordination seem to overlap. The university will want to proceed carefully and not confuse efforts to bring about compliance and cultural change simultaneously within the same organizational structure. The team recommends that the university promote diversity, equity, and

inclusion, in alignment with its mission and strategic plan, throughout all levels of the institution following systematic assessments and campus-wide consultation on a regular basis (CFRs 1.4, 2.10, 4.1, 4.5, and 4.6).

Commendation

HPU is to be ***commended*** for its consistent incorporation of the three Hawaiian values: *pono* (righteous, honest, moral, to do the right thing; be in a state of balance with oneself, others, the land, work, and life itself); *kuleana* (personal sense of responsibility for self and others); and *aloha* (regard/treat one another with love and respect).

Recommendations

The WSCUC Team ***recommends*** that HPU:

1. develop the appropriate staff capacity and institutional infrastructure to more effectively ensure equitable educational outcomes among its highly diverse student population (CFRs 1.4, 2.10, 3.1, and 4.1);

2. promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, in alignment with its mission and strategic plan, throughout all levels of the institution following systematic assessments and campus-wide consultation on a regular basis (CFRs 1.4, 2.10, 4.1, 4.5, and 4.6); and

3. continue efforts to assess faculty, staff, and student satisfaction and campus climate on an ongoing basis in order to make informed improvements in the living-learning-working environment (CFRs 2.13, 3.2, 4.1, and 4.3).

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided **sufficient evidence** to determine compliance with **Standard 1**.

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions

Teaching and Learning

The institution has demonstrated its compliance with CFRs 2.1 - 2.9 with regard to undergraduate and graduate students and programs. It should be noted that HPU enhanced student success through the creation of a mandatory first-year experience course (UNIV 1000), which debuted in fall 2020 and was co-led by faculty, staff, and peer mentors. The one-credit seminar focuses on helping students navigate college life and includes topics related to DEI, health and wellness, academic success strategies, and Hawaiian culture. Of the first-year students who completed the UNIV 1000 course, 90.5% re-enrolled for the spring 2021 semester (this was shared with the team in a meeting with the provost).

Student Learning and Success

The institution has not provided adequate information to demonstrate compliance with respect to CFRs 2.10 - 2.14 in particular with regard to graduate students and programs, and the team has concerns that the campus is at risk of being out of compliance. Specifically, there are insufficient details and plans concerning graduate programs and the extent of support for graduate student learning and engagement, in particular for the new programs coming on board. The institution acknowledges that it historically has served a predominantly undergraduate population; as such, it is not clear if it has invested in the requisite infrastructure and personnel needed to support graduate student educational needs. For example, graduate students – even when studying online - have unique mental health needs, are more likely to have difficulties related to child and elder care, and more likely to experience challenges related to interpersonal conflicts, harassment, bullying and other climate-related issues (CFRs 2.11 and 2.13).

The institution is encouraged, as it continues to implement, assess, and improve its student success efforts to focus not just primarily on strategies which strive to make students more "college ready," (which include activities such as orientation, freshman seminar, advising, summer bridge, tutoring and mentoring) but to also engage in a courageous self-analysis regarding institutional practices which may serve as barriers to student success, or impede educationally equitable outcomes - so that the college may become more "student ready." Similarly, a review of disaggregated data with regard to retention and graduation should not only identify students who may need additional support but also highlight gaps and deficiencies on the part of the institution in terms of instruction, student services, practices and policies (CFRs 2.10, 2.11, and 2.13).

The team suggests that it would be helpful if the institution were to make the results of assessments and surveys more readily available on its website, as well as make data on student success outcomes and educational equity gaps more accessible (CFR 2.10).

Furthermore, HPU recently reassigned responsibility for planning and implementing student activities and events to staff in University Relations. Reasons cited included lack of bandwidth among the Division of Student Life staff and a "mindset" about student events that was preferable. This shift is concerning, as it reflects a rather outdated view of the purpose of student activities and events, which ultimately should be part of co-curricular programming designed to advance the academic mission, complement the instructional experience, and promote student development. It seemingly reflects a greater emphasis on creating future donor alumni, than it is on fostering improved student success outcomes. It also further fragments the student affairs professional team, making it even more challenging to develop a cohesive, coordinated view of

the student engagement experience at HPU. In a meeting with the chief academic officer, the team learned that this restructure was a pilot, and would be evaluated after a year or so.

It is unclear if the institution has assessed the effectiveness of its co-curricular programs and uses the results for improvement. At a minimum these raise questions about CFRs 2.11 and 4.1.

The team learned in an open forum with HPU students, that there appear to be two themes regarding transparency: (1) students cited concerns that what was represented to them prior to admission differed from what actually happened to them once they enrolled at HPU; and (2) students perceive that the university is not communicating changes in academic policies and practices with students in a timely manner, and requested that HPU do better in this regard. Similarly, students report that access to student services is notably inequitable across the three locations, e.g., limited and/or delayed access to laundry in housing at the Hawai'i Loa campus, and inadequate parking at the Aloha Tower Marketplace location. Female students, in particular, also reported concerns about safety and security, especially during evening hours. Furthermore, students expressed concerns regarding the availability of timely mental health counseling, as well as the accuracy of advising information provided. Transportation and dining services were cited as not being reflective of students' (several athletes provided examples) academic schedules (CFRs 1.6, 2.12 and 2.13).

The team also raises the question as to whether appropriate faculty qualifications have been adopted for the expanded graduate programs (an HPU document cited that only 82% of faculty have a terminal degree) (CFR 2.1).

Suggestions

The WSCUC Team *suggests* that HPU:

1. evaluate the effectiveness of its recent realignment of student support services under University Relations; and
2. make available on its website the results of institutional assessments and surveys, as well as data relevant to student success outcomes and educational equity gaps.

Recommendations

The WSCUC Team *recommends* that HPU:

1. provide evidence of the faculty's direct role in curriculum design and ongoing assessment of student learning in support of all of its academic programs, including its OPM programs (CFR 2.4);

2. design, deliver and assess the effectiveness of, co-curricular programs (including academic support) for both undergraduate and graduate students and use the results for improvement (CFRs 2.10, 2.11, 3.5, and 4.1);

3. develop the appropriate staff capacity and institutional infrastructure to more effectively ensure equitable educational outcomes among its highly diverse student population (CFRs 1.4, 2.10, 3.1, and 4.1);

4. promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, in alignment with its mission and strategic plan, throughout all levels of the institution following systematic assessments and campus-wide consultation on a regular basis (CFRs 1.4, 2.10, 4.1, 4.5, and 4.6); and

5. continue efforts to assess faculty, staff, and student satisfaction and campus climate on and ongoing basis in order to make informed improvements in the living-learning-working environment (CFRs 2.13, 3.2, 4.1, and 4.3).

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided

sufficient evidence to determine compliance with **Standard 2**.

Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

Faculty and Staff

The team found the number of faculty and staff members adequate for the programs that the institution currently offers. Moreover, with the anticipated rapid growth in program offerings, the institution also anticipates adding faculty and staff as these new program offerings begin accepting students. The addition of these new programs, most requiring specialized accreditation, will provide hiring challenges, but will be made easier as Hawaii residency will not be required as much of the instruction will be conducted through a distance education modality. The university has a staffing plan that appears reasonable to support the new programs. The large class of new students in the fall of 2021 has taxed the current undergraduate faculty, requiring many overloads to accommodate the additional sections of classes. Together with the 4-4 teaching load, this has caused stress for faculty in meeting their teaching, research, and community service needs (CFR 3.1).

At the present time 78% of the faculty hold doctoral degrees, 18% master's degrees and 4% have master's degrees that are considered to be terminal degrees in their disciplines. The table below illustrates the racial composition of both full-time (FT) and part-time (PT) faculty:

	White	Asian	Native Hawaiian	Hispanic	Black/African American	2 or more	Native Americn
FT	63%	23%	3%	4%	1%	4%	2%
PT	53%	28%	8%	4%	2%	4%	1%

At the time of the preparation of the institutional report the university reported 146 full-time faculty members and 145 adjunct faculty. The 4-4 workload of 12 credits each semester, per full-time faculty member combined with the number of adjunct faculty, supported the conclusion

that the institution maintained a sufficient number of faculty to adequately staff its academic programs. However, the team also observed that many faculty were contracted for additional classes for which they were paid. The team could not conclude if this was a temporary need, due to a very large freshmen class or a need to supplement their income. The team believes that given plans for more students, both undergraduate and graduate, the university will need to carefully monitor staffing to ensure a sufficient number of staff and faculty for its program offerings, in order to effectively manage the workload of faculty to support the integrity of all its degree programs (CFR 3.1).

Hiring within the university is described in the faculty and staff handbooks and appears to conform to those handbooks in practice. Onboarding of new hires has been intentional since 2016 and includes an introduction to the ethos of Hawaiian culture. The institution considers itself an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identify, and other issues that are contrary to federal and state laws (CFR 3.2).

The university has a continuing contract system for faculty that for new hires is three years. Evaluations are conducted during this period and upon successful completion of the first three years are offered a four-year contract. At the conclusion of the four years and a satisfactory evaluation, seven-year contracts are then issued on a continuing basis and the faculty members are considered to be on career status. Once career status is achieved evaluations are conducted during the third and sixth year and includes peer reviews. The University Faculty Review and Promotion Committee is a standing committee of the Faculty Senate and provides peer reviews and promotion recommendations for the career faculty (CFR 3.2).

The faculty handbook describes a robust professional development plan that includes faculty working with their deans and department chairs to ensure professional development occurs and is supportive of individual and institutional goals. This is more rigorous prior to career status but continues throughout the duration of the individual's career. However, resources for professional development activities are only available upon request and demonstrated need, and are limited to $50,000 of budgeted funds for the entire faculty, leaving faculty development primarily supported by outside funding, rather than institutional funds. The team observed that this approach provided different programs with disparate resources and could unintentionally preclude some faculty from adequate professional development opportunities. Therefore, the team recommends that the institution evaluate and adequately resource faculty development activities and needs in order to ensure the academic quality of its degree programs and effectively manage the workload of faculty to support the integrity of all its degree programs (CFRs 3.1 and 3.3).

Evaluations for staff are conducted on an annual basis by the employee's supervisor and a sampling of staff confirmed reviews are routinely conducted. A well attended meeting with staff confirmed that many staff had been provided professional opportunities during the past year (CFRs 3.2 and 3.3).

Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources

Since the last WSCUC review the institution has strengthened its financial position, even with the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic provided. In at least one prior fiscal year, the near lack of compliance with the bond covenants, a primary focus of the CFO and the board's finance

committee was to ensure compliance, as the lack of compliance would have placed the institution in jeopardy. During the past few years, the institution complied with its covenants, and its future projections predict continued compliance. The institution routinely conducts audits of its finances for compliance with reporting standards and has unqualified independent financial audits for the past decade (CFR 3.4).

During the meeting with members of the board of trustees (BOT), the chair of the board's finance committee characterized the past five years as a "financial turnaround" but noted that at least another year or two will be required to provide a greater level of confidence that the future of the institution is secure. Overall, the team perceptions were much the same as the finance committee chair's, noting that much has been accomplished, but much is left to do. The following paragraphs describe the team's observations and recommendations.

The financial operating results for the past three years are reflected in the table below. The information was taken from annual financial reports with "clean audit opinions" conducted by a major, national level auditing firm.

Net Increase (decrease)	2019	2020	2021
Without Donor Restrictions	($14,240,729)	($1,157,437)	$ 4,516,986
With Donor Restrictions	3,779,600	(1,440797)	8,819,275
Changes in net Assets	($10,461,129)	($2,598,234)	$13,336,261
Losses shown in brackets			

As one can see, the institution has significantly improved its financial performance during 2021, as compared to the two preceding years, but again points to the notion that while a turnaround appears to be underway more financially successful years are needed to confirm that the turnaround is successful. The latest budgeted forecast for FY 2022 provides a net increase from operations at approximately $945,000, with larger increase in the future years. Discount rates for

the institution have been steadily rising for many years. In 2015 the rate was 37% and the number of freshmen was 473. By 2021 the rate had risen to 55% with 780 freshmen.

The following table illustrates the history:

Fall UG Fresh	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Discount %	37%	42%	47%	55%	58%	57%	55%
HC	473	449	480	556	479	514	780
Net Tuition per Student	13.7	13.4	13.5	11.8	11.5	12.5	13.3
Total Net Tuition	6,480	6,036	6,480	6,572	5,506	6,447	10,396

HPU believes that improved efforts at marketing, focused discounting and emphasis on retention and graduation rates led to the large fall 2021 undergraduate class (though the team perceives that the increase may be attributed, at least in part, to HPU's decision to run limited in-person instruction during the pandemic, while most universities were not doing so), and it believes that this will lead to improved undergraduate net tuition as well. However, this improvement is projected as minimal and will not lead to the level of undergraduate net tuition that the university experienced between 2010 and 2015. Hence, they have chosen the new graduate programs to generate the majority of new net tuition revenue.

For graduate students the rate has risen from 9% in the fall of 2015 to 18% in 2021. The following table illustrates the changes during those years:

Graduate Tuition Discount History							
Fall	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
% discount	9%	10%	11%	13%	12%	12%	18%
HC	745	613	541	499	469	441	519
Net tuition per Student	13.9	15.1	16.1	15.8	17.9	16.6	15.5
Total Net Tuition	10,320	9,235	8,717	7,898	8,395	7,322	8,005

The team noted that the institution set about planning for its future sustainability in an intentional way. Given its past declining undergraduate student counts and the anticipated significant decline in college age freshmen taking place in 2025, the senior administration concluded that diversification in tuition revenue must take place. As a result, three new professional graduate programs were envisioned and are starting in the next few years, Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT), Master's of Science in Medical Science (Physician Assistant), and Doctor in Occupational Therapy (OTD). In addition, three other programs, a Master's in Nursing, a Doctorate in Nursing Practice, and a Doctorate in Psychology (PsyD scheduled to begin during the summer 2022) have been rebooted in a new format. Together these programs are expected to provide an additional net tuition revenue of approximately $8,000,000 in FY 2023. By FY 2026 the institution believes it will realize $39,000,000 in net tuition revenue from these new programs.

The following table illustrates net tuition growth for these graduate programs:

5 Year Net Tuition Projections: FY 22 - FY 26	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26
UG/GR net tuition*	63	59	56	54	55	54	56	57	60	62	64
Graduate with OPM							0.6	8	20	32	39
Total	63	59	56	54	55	54	57	65	80	94	103
*excludes Grad partnerships with OPMs											
Source: December update on tuition discounts and tuition rate projections											

The table above illustrates the aggressive increase in tuition revenue projected from these graduate programs utilizing online program management (OPM) partners. A significant percentage of the revenue (over half) goes to the partners, and the costs of those partnerships are included in program expenses in the expense section of the institution's financial statements. In order to meet the established guidelines, these programs must attain specialized accreditation and begin delivering according to the established timeline. The team recommends that the institution continue its efforts to improve its financial stability by further diversifying revenue streams, improving the effectiveness of fundraising, and refinancing debt (CFR 3.4).

The December 31, 2021 interim financial statements for HPU forecast positive financial results for FY 2022. The institution is now predicting a surplus for FY 2022 of approximately $950,000; however, this is primarily the result of additional, unbudgeted federal financial support, amounting to approximately $9M. The following table is an excerpt of information provided to the team during the visit:

Excerpt FY Budget Forecast and Preliminary Forecast for FY 22				
	FY 22 Budget	FY 22 Preliminary Forecast	$ Variance	% Variance
Net Tuition	$ 60,489,000	$ 57,130,000	$ (3,359,000)	-6%
Private Gifts and Grants	$ 4,555,046	$ 1,578,248	$ (2,976,798)	-65%
Government Grants	$ 7,196,875	$ 16,687,740	$ 9,490,866	1Gitd32%

The preliminary forecast now raises the net asset increase from operations to $945,413, a significant improvement over the original 2022 budget, and primarily due to the large amount of unbudgeted federal financial assistance.

First time, full-time new students significantly increased from the previous year, 515 to 780. However, the budget was built upon 830 first time, full-time new students. This contributed to a net tuition shortfall of $3.4M, including $200,000 from graduate, military, and other programs. In addition, the unrestricted fundraising goal was set at $4,555,000 and the December 2021 forecast was for approximately $1.6M. The resulting shortfall of these two lines are offset by the additional federal support for the year. The team was concerned by: (1) the magnitude of the estimation variance; (2) the impact upon future year tuition revenues; and (3) the lack of federal COVID-19 generated support in future years. Therefore, the team recommends that the institution develop accurate revenue, enrollment and timeline projections of new degree programs based upon evidence-based assumptions and data, and clear assessment of specialized accreditation requirements (CFR 3.4).

During the visit, the CFO and members of his staff provided updated forecasts for future years. The net tuition forecast for FY 2023, indicates an increase of $7.1 from new programs. The team reviewed the reasonableness of this estimate in detail. The current status of applications for the DPT and the two nursing programs, appeared reasonable, and support the forecasted budget for

2023. However, given that these programs are supported by the OPM entities, *Evidence in Motion (EIM)*, and *Pearson*, who are paid over half of the net tuition, the team also noted that the net to the institution was much less. However, the institutional projections did carry these costs in the budget projections as well. The only unknown for the team was the amount of payback for up front costs payable to *EIM* and whether those expenses were adequately covered in the forecasts.

By FY 2026, revenues from the new partner-supported graduate programs are forecasted to reach $39.0M, which if the OPMs perform in a timely manner, is as expected would provide sufficient revenues to ensure the institution is continuing on a sustainable path. The team viewed these forecasts as aggressive, but possibly attainable. The team recommends that the institution continue to strengthen the financial sustainability of the institution through increased net tuition revenue (CFR 3.4).

In addition to the creation of new graduate programs, the institution began consolidating its physical facilities in downtown Honolulu. The results are nearing completion and <u>must</u> be completed by the fall of 2023, with the relocation from the Hawai'i Loa campus - that now houses most of the College of Natural and Computational Sciences, 207 on-campus residential spaces, and a library with study spaces - to new space in the downtown area. Most of the institution's downtown locations are within a 15-minute walk of each other, in a safer environment than some of its previous space in other downtown locations. The Makapuu campus also must have some renovation to accommodate approximately 180 upper-division marine science majors. The team recommends that the institution complete the windward island

relocation and improvement to ensure adequate capacity for academic program quality (new and continuing) (CFRs 3.4, and 3.5).

The team observed the following challenges still extant for the university in order to complete its turnaround:

- outstanding long-term debt of approximately $73,000,000;
- endowment of approximately $56,000,000;
- average interest rates on the debt of almost 7%;
- aggressive forecasts for students in new graduate programs;
- first-year undergraduate discount rate of 55%;
- first year retention undergraduate retention rates of 66% (2019);
- execution risks pertaining to new programs, with heavy reliance upon OPM entities;
- fungible fundraising to support operations of the university.

For these issues, the team concurred with the BOT chair of the finance committee statement that two more years is needed to assess that the turnaround will have been successful.

The institution has developed a robust information technology system that supports the needs of its current academic programs and supporting activities. Almost every classroom is a "smart classroom" with video conferencing capability. Wi-fi is uniformly accessible in each campus location, and the centralized computing systems appear to support the campus needs as well. The team heard no complaints about the learning management system from either the faculty or students (CFR 3.5).

The library appears to be adequately resourced at the present time, but will require additional resources as new graduate programs are brought online. Of more immediate concern is the anticipated closure of the Hawai'i Loa campus that has a library that is larger in physical space than the main campus library in downtown Honolulu. The resources there are being deselected in preparation for the upcoming move and the library staff are nervous about the potential

negative impact on holdings and student study space. Digital holdings have decreased during the past years as budgets for the library have been stagnant, while the costs for digital subscriptions have increased. A librarian search is now underway for a new head librarian as the vacancy existed during the visit. The institution should carefully review the library space and holdings needs to ensure sufficient resources continue to be available to support its academic programs (both existing and emerging) (CFR 3.5).

The institution's leadership has substantially changed since the last regular visit, and the team viewed the new leadership to be competent, prepared, and committed. The senior team was focused on its mission to provide a sustainable future for the university. During many of the meetings with staff at other levels the team encountered leadership that were committed, focused and well-prepared for their roles (CFR 3.6).

The institution's organizational structures and decision-making processes were well understood by the university community. The team did observe that the quest for financial sustainability was foremost in thought from almost all levels of the institution, sometimes appearing to place too little priority on educational effectiveness. For example, until 2021 increases in salaries had not occurred in many years; the library budget had been stagnant, or decreasing in ability to acquire new holdings, budgeted faculty development funds had become more scarce, or in some departments almost non-existent. Also, the team noted that the decision-making structures were very centralized at the senior cabinet level, and left a limited role of the faculty in decision-making. However, the team found no confusion in roles, responsibilities, or lines of authority (CFR 3.7).

The university has both a full-time president/CEO and chief financial officer, the resumes for both the individuals describe individuals with sufficient training and experience to fully discharge their respective duties. HPU also has sufficient other administrators to carry out the academic and supporting functions of the university (CFR 3.8).

The board of trustees is a self-perpetuating, independent board, that requires all members, except the president of the university, who is *ex officio*, to be independent members. An appointment from a community member to the board requires resignation from a staff or faculty position. The BOT selects, evaluates, retains, or dismisses the president. Each year the president is evaluated by the board of trustees. This review begins in late summer of each year, with the president preparing a self-review, which is supplied to the chair. From the board, additional members are brought into the review, and ultimately the review is discussed at a full meeting of the trustees. The board of trustees has the following standing committees: executive committee; student success committee; finance and investment committee; and audit committee. The team met with members of the board, primarily the executive committee members, and noted that the members were very engaged and knowledgeable of current issues and plans (CFR 3.9).

The faculty's role in shared governance is explicitly laid out in the Faculty Handbook which states that the faculty have primacy in the areas of policy relating to:

- the curriculum;
- modes and methods of instruction;
- academic standards and professional ethics;
- academic appointments and reappointments;
- review, evaluation, and promotion of faculty;
- degree requirements;
- program development; and
- aspects of student life that relate most closely to the educational process.

It states that the faculty is responsible to the administration for fulfilling these responsibilities. Should there be a disagreement, the administration must clearly explain why it does not agree. Furthermore, the faculty should also have a significant role in the following:

- mission development and strategic and operational planning;
- budget development;
- institutional assessment; and
- searches for key university leaders

The faculty senate is the primary deliberative and decision making body for the faculty's role. The faculty's role in terms of leadership in curriculum review and development meets the spirit of the definitions outlined in the faculty handbook, but the team noted that the initiatives for new programs are primarily generated from the senior leadership of the institution; however, the nursing faculty were supportive and encouraging of the new format for the MSN and DNP programs. The faculty do provide curriculum review and assessment of learning outcomes. In terms of budget development, a shared governance committee on budget exists and does have some influence upon budget inputs; however, these inputs appear to be limited. University search committees do often contain faculty members but institutional assessment appears to be limited to curriculum assessment (CFR 3.10).

Commendations

HPU is to be ***commended*** for:

1. the dedicated commitment and active engagement of its board of trustees; and

2. the identification of new programs with the goal of improving financial sustainability.

Recommendations

The WSCUC Team *recommends* that HPU:

1. strengthen the financial sustainability of the institution through increased net tuition revenue (CFR 3.4);

2. improve its financial stability by further diversifying revenue streams, improving the effectiveness of fundraising, and reducing debt (CFR 3.4);

3. develop accurate revenue, enrollment and timeline projections of new degree programs based upon evidence-based assumptions and data, and clear assessments of specialized accreditation requirements (CFR 3.4);

4. complete windward island relocation and improvement to ensure adequate capacity for academic program quality (both new and continuing) (CFRs 3.4 and 3.5); and

5. promote faculty development to ensure the academic quality of its degree programs and effectively manage the workload of faculty to support the integrity of all its degree programs (CFR 3.3).

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided

sufficient evidence to determine compliance with **Standard 3**.

Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

Quality Assurance Processes

There is considerable evidence HPU took seriously the WSCUC Commission guidance of February 26, 2020, producing a lengthy and detailed report with a large number of detailed appendices. It accomplished this in a period of major changes, both internal and external. Internally the institution grappled with challenges in finances, enrollments, shifting strategies and new leadership, while externally they had to cope with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The institutional report points to an emphasis on internal processes of engagement and an effort to be inclusive in their deliberations (CFR 4.1).

The response concentrates in large part on the pursuit of institutional financial stability, a key element of the Notice of Concern expressed by WSCUC. There was a coordinated effort to develop a strategy and long-term plan to address this fundamental, even existential matter. As part of the concern about financial stability, WSCUC called for an overall strategic plan with specific plans for implementation (CFR 4.6).

<u>Institutional Learning and Improvement</u>

The team met with the strategic planning group, the members of which described a detailed, iterative process. The three "pillars of success" (the term coined by this group) were described as enrollments, finances and student success. There were discussions at all levels and units that were centered on the pillars. Additionally, the university's investment in consulting services generated considerable data and perspectives that were incorporated into plans to develop new partnerships and other avenues to enrollment and financial enhancement (CFR 4.6).

While enrollment management staff were not part of the group's representation, all members of this group were acutely aware of the financial challenges facing a university with a modest endowment, significant debt and high tuition discounting. Such knowledge meant all units made only limited requests for additional support as part of the process. It was unclear how these data were incorporated by the overall strategic planning by the BOT and the senior leadership.

HPU was enjoined by WSCUC to develop a means to prioritize action steps and improve its capacity to measure and monitor progress in implementation. Prioritization was called for in recognition of HPU's limited resources and to caution against having more ideas and initiatives than could be managed effectively. A central element of monitoring and managing such efforts

was a call for HPU to develop a sophisticated institutional research capacity (CFRs 3.4, 3.6, 4.1, 4.3, and 4.6).

The institutional report addresses all of these matters. Major investments have been made or are being made in various means of data acquisition and analysis. These include several products and services provided by external vendors including: (a) a new data portal; (b) a web-based catalog and curriculum management software; (c) an enhanced student evaluation data; (d) an improved capacity to collect student learning data; and (e) software that supports program reviews and strategic planning efforts. The total investment in these services is presented as $600,000 per year (CFR 4.1).

This range of services raises questions about HPUs commitment to improvement based on data, as the coordinated management and effective utilization of so many disparate systems and services is unclear. The data collection effort is quite large for a small institution. The question arises as to how the "loop will be closed." Further, it is not clear how the university is coordinating, managing and overseeing these multiple efforts. Neither is it clear how HPU makes such efforts accountable. While the institutional research office has been restructured with new staff, there is little evidence in the report as to its effectiveness. The team found evidence of improvement in this area, but it is still a work in progress, as the institution concentrates on the implementation of its plans to build enrollments (CFR 4.3).

There are other new large scale programmatic initiatives that go beyond the collection and assessment of data. *Pearson* and *Evidence in Motion (EIM)* have both been contracted with on lengthy, multi-year bases for development and implementation of graduate professional programs. Much of the plan for achieving financial stability is staked on these arrangements.

It is not clear from the report how these initiatives and contracts will be led, overseen and managed. Experience shows that such vendors require considerable administrative oversight and it is unclear as to how a small institution will manage this. The team met with the Online Program Management (OPM) group which is composed of senior administrators and graduate program directors. The group is focused on implementing and growing the new partnership programs on which much of the needed new tuition increase depends. The largest program already implemented is the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT), while others are planned to come on line in the next two years (CFR 3.7).

HPU clearly has a strategy for pursuing financial stability. This is front and center for the entire institution. The plan's core element greatly increases graduate professional program enrollments in a short time period (by FY 2025) through the *EIM* and *Pearson* partnerships. At the same time, there is a common recognition of the continuing challenges for undergraduate enrollments, especially in the face of coming demographic changes. One example of this is the dilemma about tuition discounts. It is widely recognized by many of the dangers of the very high discount rates for first-year students (55%), but there are limited steps being taken to reduce these factors. Steps have been taken to improve undergraduate rates and make modest adjustments in the planned FY 2023 budget. However, the expressed hope was for HPU's capacity to keep its undergraduate enrollments from reverting to the low levels of two years ago (CFR 3.4).

Other strategies include the reorganization of facilities into a more integrated campus structure and finding ways to restore military enrollments that have dropped dramatically because of pandemic restrictions to military base access. The institutional report describes an extensive program review process designed to assure quality (CFRs 2.7, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.3, and 4.4).

Recommendations

The WSCUC Team *recommends* that HPU:

1. in its pursuit of new graduate degree programs, (a) sustain focus on legacy degree programs, (b) remain true to its mission, and (c) continue to maintain the academic quality of undergraduate programs by using systematic assessments of teaching and learning (CFR 4.3);

2. design, deliver and assess the effectiveness of, co-curricular programs (including academic support) for both undergraduate and graduate students and use the results for improvement (CFRs 2.10, 2.11, 3.5, and 4.1);

3. develop the appropriate staff capacity and institutional infrastructure to more effectively ensure equitable educational outcomes among its highly diverse student population (CFRs 1.4, 2.10, 3.1, and 4.1);

4. promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, in alignment with its mission and strategic plan, throughout all levels of the institution following systematic assessments and campus-wide consultation on a regular basis (CFRs 1.4, 2.10, 4.1, 4.5, and 4.6); and

5. continue efforts to assess faculty, staff, and student satisfaction and campus climate on and ongoing basis in order to make informed improvements in the living-learning-working environment (CFRs 2.13, 3.2, 4.1, and 4.3).

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided

sufficient evidence to determine compliance with **Standard 4.**

Federal Requirement: 1 – Credit Hour and Program Length Review

This area was reviewed, and HPU met all requirements in this area.

Federal Requirement: 2 –Marketing and Recruitment Review

This area was reviewed, and HPU met all requirements in this area.

Federal Requirement: 3 –Student Complaints Review

This area was reviewed, and HPU met all requirements in this area.

Federal Requirement: 4 – Transfer Policy Review

This area was reviewed, and HPU met all requirements in this area.

C. Component 3: Degree Programs: Meaning, Quality and Integrity of Degrees

The institutional report provides an overview of what it describes as the "unique ethos" underlying the meaning, quality and integrity of all academic programs. This "uniqueness" is described as having five characteristics: 1) a solid foundation in the liberal arts; 2) specific knowledge and content for professional development; 3) an infusion of Hawaiian values based on moral guideposts, a responsibility for service to community and that provide a lifestyle that treats others with respect and love; 4) applied experiences and 5) self-discovery that hones judgment and evolves through educational journey.

Further, the report states: "The educator and the student together ultimately determine the value of the degree" (p.38). There is no further explanation of how this is done, nor any discussion about how the institution translates this into action. Additionally, the report states "The HPU experience is a personalized delivery of content expertise in a unique and unsurpassed, culturally and scientifically rich environment" (p.38). The team could not locate any data to back up such a broad assertion. Indeed, versions of such statements can be found on the websites of many institutions.

The report goes on to describe active faculty scholarship along with its process for assigning adjunct faculty members to provide specialized and professionally oriented expertise and experience. There are some examples of faculty achievement, but no detailed data (CFR 3.1).

One element of assuring meaning, quality and integrity is the process by which faculty are evaluated. HPU clearly has an extensive process based largely on peer reviews and that stresses the importance of comprehensive reviews. There is excellent evidence for the faculty evaluation process (CFRs 2.9 and 3.2).

There are Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) at all degree levels and every program has detailed Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) linked to Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) (CFRs 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, and 2.7). The board of trustees has a student success committee that receives quarterly reports from each academic unit, as well as more general data on retention, graduation and student successes. This committee is designed to assure relevance and rigorous outcomes aligned with the needs of the larger external communities (CFRs 4.5, and 4.6).

The undergraduate common core General Education program is described as taking particular advantage of HPU's Pacific and Asian connections as part of the 14 required curricular components.

Program assessment is noted as being taken "quite seriously" as the key to assuring quality, meaning and integrity. There is a regular 5-8 year cycle of program assessment that involves deans and (starting recently) the provost. Several programs are reviewed and accredited by external specialized accreditors, including all programs within the College of Health and Society (Social Work, Public Health, Nursing.) A number of other programs are in the process of seeking such accreditation. However, there is insufficient information as to how these specialized accreditations are accomplished and reviewed internally. Such accreditation can be an important source of quality assurance (CFRs 2.6, 2.7, and 4.6).

Assessment of quality is also done through multiple forms of surveys (graduating students, alumni, employers and providers of practicum opportunities). However, it appears most of these surveys are focused on undergraduate programs. There are several new graduate programs and it is unclear how the university proposes to assess quality in those programs as they come online.

The university acknowledges that greater capacity is needed for the collection and assessment of data.

D. <u>Component 4: Educational Quality: Student Learning, Core Competencies, and Standards of Performance at Graduation</u>

The university is to be commended for completing alignment of its Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) with WSCUC and presenting relevant evidence. A comprehensive coordinating committee, Academic Assessment and Program Review Shared Governance Committee (AAPRSGC) is in place and the campus has adopted the use of *TaskStream* to document, analyze, manage and archive outcomes assessment and annual reporting. A five-year cycle is in place for review of ILOs for AA, BA, and graduate-level degrees. The team notes that HPU relied on *AAC&U* (*American Association of Colleges and Universities*) rubrics for written/oral communication to assist in assessing student competencies (CFR 2.3).

As with most institutions, "closing the loop" can sometimes be problematic, so HPU is encouraged to adopt measures to ensure that assessment outcomes are utilized to improve learning. The team supports efforts by the AAPRSGC to include professionals from student affairs, who also have expertise in student learning. HPU may want to consider employing other rubrics and/or instruments to assist in assessing student competencies, in addition to the *AAC&U* rubrics (CFRs 2.3 and 2.10).

Diversity is repeatedly cited as a strength at HPU. The team would like to see more evidence of how data is disaggregated by various student identities to identify any potential differences in ILO assessment and retention/graduation outcomes, as well as what mindful efforts have been made to close any educational/learning equity gaps (CFR 2.10).

E. <u>Component 5: Student Success: Student Learning, Retention and Graduation</u>

Attention has been devoted to improving graduation and retention rates, with specific goals set for improvement. HPU provided descriptions of improvements and evidence of progress at the undergraduate level. Advising became an important issue following the 2016 visit and notable improvements have been made, including increased training for advisors, incorporation of a one-stop model, and enhancements to online platforms. Efforts to automate four-year degree pathways have been initiated. A new system of advising has been instituted with plans for it to be evaluated in 2022 (CFRs 2.12 and 2.13).

There were improvements in the first-year retention rate; the campus provided some breakdown of graduation rates by activities students participate in. Investments have been made in some student services personnel, e.g., student services manager, retention specialist, clinical psychologist. (The team notes that the Title IX Coordinator is compulsory and that this role is ultimately more compliance driven).

The overall graduation rate seems low. Additional disaggregation and analysis of retention, graduation, and other student outcomes data by sub-cohorts of students would allow the campus to better gauge what helps or hinders student success and progress. For example, the campus should examine student success outcomes by race, ethnicity, first-generation status, and Pell-eligibility, as well as adopt best practices for improving retention/graduation for each of these target communities. Similarly, the institution has acknowledged that graduate students constitute a very different population with different assistance and support needs; specific improvements need to be adopted in the graduate programs to support student success. While the improvements to advising are positive, they also seem basic in nature and focus on

progress-to-degree; it is unclear if the campus provides more integrative advising or if advising is just about credits and class scheduling (CFRs 2.10 and 2.12).

In Appendix C.05.01 - Overview of Student Support Services, the university delineates inputs and processes more than it reflects impacts and outcomes. Many of the initiatives/actions implemented to improve retention sound promising, but it is not clear if HPU has determined the contributing factors to attrition and how these identified activities redress them. The institution will also need to develop plans to enhance student success metrics for its emerging graduate student populations. Similarly, plans for enhancing staffing, student support services and other infrastructure mechanisms will need to be delineated soon to support these emerging programs (CFRs 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13, and 2.14).

F. Component 6: Quality Assurance and Improvement: Program Review, Assessment, and Use of Data and Evidence

There is a single committee (Academic Assessment and Program Review Shared Governance Committee (AAPRSGC) composed of deans, college faculty, faculty senate representatives and administrators that has the mandate to review all program learning outcomes (PLO) and program assessment activities. One interesting element is the requirement that at the end of a review a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for further improvement is presented to, reviewed and executed by chairs, deans and the provost. The entire process is presented clearly in the University Program Review Guide, which also includes templates of MOUs, samples of prior reviews and the like. The review guide has been updated recently to better align with WSCUC standards and is accessible to all faculty members (CFR 4.1).

The MOU process creates a situation where the senior administrators have to understand key elements of various programs. Additionally, the MOU is an effort to make sure those with budgetary responsibilities consider the data outcomes and recommendations of the review.

HPU has also begun a process where the appropriate dean and provost must meet with the program's external reviewer. These and other process steps are evidence of recognition of the importance of "closing the loop" (CFR 4.1).

The WSCUC Commission action letter notes the need to enhance HPU's institutional research capacity and the report provides evidence of it doing so. *Banner* is the primary data software and there is a committee on data governance which works to coordinate and organize data processes (CFRs 4.2 and 4.7).

G. <u>Component 7: Sustainability: Financial Viability, Preparing for the Changing Higher Education Environment</u>

For a lengthy discussion in this area, please refer to <u>Component 2: Compliance: Review Under WSCUC Standard 4</u>.

H. <u>Component 8: Reflection and Plans for Improvement</u>

Hawaii Pacific University has a senior leadership team that is fully focused on addressing the significant financial challenges that have been facing the university, and their strategic initiatives are designed to generate more net tuition revenue, increase enrollment, and manage the institution's debt covenant. These initiatives are crucial to the stability of the institution, and indicate a commitment to the long-term health of the campus. The team discussed with university leadership in some detail about enrollment expectations, financial projections, reliance

on external partners (especially through OPMs), and the requirements of specialized accreditations that are necessary to realize the strategic plan. The team reviewed the current facilities of the university, and the considerable changes underway as it prepares for new programs while changing some locations and facilities. The team also explored the institutional context for academic excellence, student support and student success, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (CFRs 1.4, 2.13, 3.4, and 3.5).

The team was impressed with the level of engagement and knowledge shown by its board of trustees, most of whom are not alumni but who have a commitment to the mission of the university. HPU embraces its location, and incorporates Hawaiian values as well as utilizes its position to conduct regionally-specific research and serve students who are drawn to its unique location. The team also noted the ongoing dedication of HPU to serving the considerable number of military students based in Hawaii.

It is clear that HPU is in a state of transition, and the challenges, strains, and opportunities associated with intensive change are evident throughout the university. The focus on financial stability is essential, but the promise of these initiatives is far from certain and not yet realized. Undergraduate enrollment has increased the last two years, but it is unclear whether this improvement is due to new marketing efforts or the result of astute positioning to be fully in-person (while most universities were not) during the pandemic. The annual budget saw a modest surplus, with the infusion of HEERF funds, austerity measures, and increased undergraduate enrollment. The university continues to carry a large debt load with restrictive covenants (CFR 3.4).

The launch of new graduate programs in partnership with various OPMs offers the potential for significant enrollment growth, and if successful these programs would go some way to stabilizing the institution financially. However, most of the programs are in their infancy, or not yet underway, and many require specialized facilities, faculty, and accreditation that suggests the current aggressive timeline may be optimistic. The programs are being developed with third party providers, which can assist with infrastructure support but also creates risk in terms of curriculum design and academic standards, and will require significant oversight that is only now being developed by the university (CFRs 2.1, 3.4, 3.5, and 3.7).

Similarly, refinancing debt would also make a significant difference in financial stability; there are some intriguing efforts underway but not yet realized. Finally, facilities relocation and upgrading in support of the academic program and university ethos is also in process (CFRs 3.4 and 3.5).

While the financial efforts are essential, the laser focus on these initiatives may place other essential work concerning student support and academic quality in an unhealthy state. New graduate programs and dramatic growth in graduate students would require a change in culture from a primarily undergraduate, liberal arts-based institution to a more graduate focused culture. Graduate students need different support systems as well as research functions, and the university does not appear to have built such systems at this time (CFRs 2.6 and 2.10).

HPU has recently been designated as a Minority Serving Institution, and states it is the most diverse university in the United States, yet the institutional infrastructure to support diversity,

equity, and inclusion is nearly nonexistent, and to date the focus on MSI status seems to be related to grant writing and acquisition (CFR 1.4).

Student support systems and co-curricular work also need attention. The team believes the university should be much more intentional in designing current integrated co-curricular opportunities that strengthen the educational experience for students, and adapt these programs to the changing needs of a highly diverse –and perhaps increasingly graduate – student profile (CFR 2.11).

The focus on the development of new, revenue generating academic programs means the legacy degree programs are in danger of being neglected. If HPU grows at the scale and in the manner that it intends, the balance of student enrollment and faculty and staff positions will shift considerably, putting strain on the existing ethos. Moving forward, the university will either need to ensure it maintains the quality and goals of its legacy programs or consider revisiting its mission (CFRs 1.1, 2.1, 2.10, 2.13, and 3.1).

The team found Hawaii Pacific University to be in a state of significant transformation. While respecting the profound work that is underway to make the institution more stable and respond to a changing external environment, the team also believes the university has considerable work ahead before it achieves stability. Many of the major initiatives are just coming online or will do so in the next few years, and it will be important to reassess the institution's progress as they do so (CFRs 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, and 4.7).

Commendation

HPU is to be *commended* for its ongoing commitment to serving the educational needs of students in the armed forces on military bases in Hawaii.

Recommendations

The WSCUC Team *recommends* that HPU:

1. promote faculty development to ensure the academic quality of its degree programs and effectively manage the workload of faculty to support the integrity of all its degree programs (CFR 3.3);

2. in its pursuit of new graduate degree programs, (a) sustain focus on legacy degree programs, (b) remain true to its mission, and (c) continue to maintain the academic quality of undergraduate programs by using systematic assessments of teaching and learning (CFR 4.3);

3. provide evidence of the faculty's direct role in curriculum design and ongoing assessment of student learning in support of all of its academic programs, including its OPM programs (CFR 2.4);

4. design, deliver and assess the effectiveness of, co-curricular programs (including academic support) for both undergraduate and graduate students and use the results for improvement (CFRs 2.10, 2.11, 3.5, and 4.1);

5. develop the appropriate staff capacity and institutional infrastructure to more effectively ensure equitable educational outcomes among its highly diverse student population (CFRs 1.4, 2.10, 3.1, and 4.1); and

6. promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, in alignment with its mission and strategic plan, throughout all levels of the institution following systematic assessments and campus-wide consultation on a regular basis (CFRs 1.4, 2.10, 4.1, 4.5, and 4.6).

Section III   Findings, Commendations, and Recommendations from the Team Review

Commendations

HPU is to be *commended* for:

1. its consistent incorporation of the three Hawaiian values: *pono* (righteous, honest, moral, to do the right thing; be in a state of balance with oneself, others, the land, work, and life itself); *kuleana* (personal sense of responsibility for self and others); and *aloha* (regard/treat one another with love and respect);

2. the dedicated commitment and active engagement of its board of trustees;

3. the identification of new programs with the goal of improving financial sustainability;

4. its engagement of undergraduate and graduate students in research including creative alignment with the university's physical location at the Makapuu campus;

5. the dedication demonstrated by the entire campus community to promote the health and welfare of students throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; and

6. its ongoing commitment to serving the educational needs of students in the armed forces on military bases in Hawaii.

Recommendations

The WSCUC Team *recommends* that HPU:

1. strengthen the financial sustainability of the institution through increased net tuition revenue (CFR 3.4);

2. improve its financial stability by further diversifying revenue streams, improving the effectiveness of fundraising, and reducing debt (CFR 3.4);

3. develop accurate revenue, enrollment and timeline projections of new degree programs based upon evidence-based assumptions and data, and clear assessments of specialized accreditation requirements (CFR 3.4);

4. complete windward island relocation and improvement to ensure adequate capacity for academic program quality (both new and continuing) (CFRs 3.4 and 3.5);

5. promote faculty development to ensure the academic quality of its degree programs and effectively manage the workload of faculty to support the integrity of all its degree

programs (CFR 3.3);

6. in its pursuit of new graduate degree programs, (a) sustain focus on legacy degree programs, (b) remain true to its mission, and (c) continue to maintain the academic quality of undergraduate programs by using systematic assessments of teaching and learning (CFR 4.3);

7. provide evidence of the faculty's direct role in curriculum design and ongoing assessment of student learning in support of all of its academic programs, including its OPM programs (CFR 2.4);

8. design, deliver and assess the effectiveness of, co-curricular programs (including academic support) for both undergraduate and graduate students and use the results for improvement (CFRs 2.10, 2.11, 3.5, and 4.1);

9. develop the appropriate staff capacity and institutional infrastructure to more effectively ensure equitable educational outcomes among its highly diverse student population (CFRs 1.4, 2.10, 3.1, and 4.1);

10. promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, in alignment with its mission and strategic plan, throughout all levels of the institution following systematic assessments and campus-wide consultation on a regular basis (CFRs 1.4, 2.10, 4.1, 4.5, and 4.6); and

11. continue efforts to assess faculty, staff, and student satisfaction and campus climate on and ongoing basis in order to make informed improvements in the living-learning-working environment (CFRs 2.13, 3.2, 4.1, and 4.3).

Federal Compliance Forms

1. Credit Hour and Program Length Review Form

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate.)
Policy on credit hour	Is this policy easily accessible? **x**❑ YES ❑ NO
	If so, where is the policy located? *On HPU website, under Registrar.*
	Comments: *One credit hour constitutes a minimum of three class work hours where a "class work hour is defined as 50 minutes. Typically, class work hours include one hour of direct faculty instruction ("seat time") and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class work by the student per week of the 16-week term for a one-credit-hour course.*
Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour	Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)? **x**❑ YES ❑ NO
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? **x**❑ YES ❑ NO
	Comments: *Program reviews occur at regular intervals, at which time credit hour assignments are reviewed.*
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? **x**❑ YES ❑ NO
	Comments: *Available on HPU website.*
Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses *Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.*	How many syllabi were reviewed? *Four*
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? *Both*
	What degree level(s)? **x**❑ AA/AS **x**❑ BA/BS **x**❑ MA **x**❑ Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? *Business Administration, Biology, Nursing, Social Work.*
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? **x**❑ YES ❑ NO
	Comments:
Sample syllabi or equivalent for other kinds of courses that do not meet for the prescribed hours (e.g., internships, labs, clinical, independent study, accelerated) *Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.*	How many syllabi were reviewed? *Four*
	What kinds of courses? *Internships, independent study, labs, clinical.*
	What degree level(s)? **x**❑ AA/AS **x** ❑ BA/BS **x**❑ MA **x**❑ Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? *Marketing, Nursing, Chemistry, Aerospace Science.*
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? **x** ❑ YES ❑ NO
	Comments:
Sample program	How many programs were reviewed? *Three*

information (catalog, website, or other program materials)	What kinds of programs were reviewed? **Doctoral, Masters, Bachelor of Science.**
	What degree level(s)? ❏ AA/AS **x** ❏ BA/BS **x** ❏ MA **x**❏ Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? **Nursing Practice, Diplomacy & Military Studies, Criminal Justice.**
	Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? **x**❏ YES ❏ NO
	Comments:

Review Completed By: **Luoluo Hong**
Date: **2/10/22**

2. Marketing and Recruitment Review Form

Material Reviewed	Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.
**Federal regulations	Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students? **x**❑ YES ❑ NO
	Comments: *HPU complies with federal regulations concerning the recruitment of students.*
Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? **x**❑ YES ❑ NO
	Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? **x**❑ YES ❑ NO
	Comments: *Tuition and Student Fees information are available on the HPU website. HPU currently has a "California Match" program which holds the cost of tuition for California students to no more than $14,000 a year, which matches the cost of tuition at the nine University of California campuses.*
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? **x**❑ YES ❑ NO
	Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? **x**❑ YES ❑ NO
	Comments: *HPU's Career Development Center makes available to students companies that recruit for part-time, internship, and full-time work. It also arranges for seminar/workshops and other career events.*

Review Completed By: *Les Kong*
Date: *2/10/22*

3. Student Complaints Review Form

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Policy on student complaints	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? **x**☐ YES ☐ NO
	If so, is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Is so, where? *Yes, Student Complaint Procedures are delineated in the HPU Student Handbook.*
	Comments:
Process(es)/ procedure	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? **x**☐ YES ☐ NO If so, please describe briefly: *Yes, the Student Handbook outlines procedures for addressing – Complaints against Faculty or Staff, Discrimination or Harassment Complaints, and other Student Complaints (e.g., grades or academic integrity).*
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? **x**☐ YES ☐ NO
	Comments:
Records	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? **x** ☐ YES ☐ NO If so, where? *Dean of Students office.*
	Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? **x** ☐ YES ☐ NO If so, please describe briefly: *This is overseen by the Dean of Students office.*
	Comments: *Records of formal complaints are kept for a minimum of five years. The Dean of Students office tracks and monitors student complaints on a regular basis.*

Review Completed By: *Les Kong*
Date: *2/10/22*

4. Transfer Credit Policy Review Form

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Transfer Credit Policy(s)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? **x**❑ YES ❑ NO
	If so, is the policy publicly available? **x**❑ YES ❑ NO If so, where? ***Available on HPU website under Undergraduate Admissions: Transfer Students.***
	Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? **x**❑ YES ❑ NO
	Comments: ***Students seeking to transfer to HPU with 24 or more transferable credits are preferred to have a 2.75 GPA or higher. Applicants must submit official transcripts from each accredited college or university attended in order to be considered for transfer credit. For applicants who have been out of school for several years, HPU makes a comprehensive assessment by examining not only their prior academic performance but other factors (e.g., work experience) as well. Students seeking to transfer to HPU with fewer than 24 transferable credits must also submit official high school transcripts, GED, or their international equivalent for review.***

Review Completed By: ***Luoluo Hong***
Date: ***2/10/22***