Azusa Pacific University Institutional Report

Submitted to WASC Senior College and University Commission

September 30, 2021

AZUSA PACIFIC
UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REPORT CERTIFICATION FORM

To: WASC Senior College and University Commission

Re: Spring 2022 Reaffirmation Visit

From: Paul W. Ferguson, Ph.D., DABT
Azusa Pacific University
901 E. Alosta Avenue
Azusa, CA 91702

This report is submitted in support of our institution's accreditation review.

I affirm the accuracy of the information presented and the institution's intention to comply fully with WSCUC's Standards and policies.

Signed: _____
Chief Executive Officer

Name: ___Paul W. Ferguson_____

Title: ____President_____

Date: ____September 30, 2021_____

Azusa Pacific University Institutional Report

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Institutional Context

Azusa Pacific University (APU) was founded in 1899 by six women and men with a vision to create a school dedicated to teaching and training missionaries for Christian service. Now, 120 years later, APU continues its mission of creating a community of disciples and scholars who seek to advance the work of God in the world through academic excellence in liberal arts and professional programs of higher education that encourage students to develop a Christian perspective of truth and life. (CFR 1.1)

As of fall 2021, APU offered 67 bachelor's degrees (61 traditional degrees and 7 "professional undergraduate" degrees, with 2 degrees shared), 47 master's degrees, 3 post-master's degrees, 18 certificates, 8 credentials, and 9 doctoral degrees at the university's main campus in Azusa, seven Southern California regional locations (see Appendix 1.01 - APU Regional Location Summary), and online. The university holds accreditation from the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) as well as 16 other specialized accreditations and memberships, as seen in Appendix 1.02 - Accrediting Bodies for APU Programs.

APU is a community that reflects its location in the heart of Southern California. Just 26 miles east of Los Angeles—one of the most diverse cities in the country—Azusa Pacific welcomes students from many cultures and backgrounds in an environment that strives to see each individual as a reflection of God's image, love, and boundless creativity. From this perspective, the university works to create an inclusive environment in which all students, staff, faculty, and administrators thrive. (CFR 1.4)

Bringing more than 30 years of experience in higher education, APU welcomed its 17th president, Paul W. Ferguson, Ph.D., DABT, in June 2019. One of the president's first initiatives was to engage the entire APU community in strategic planning for the future, resulting in a comprehensive plan found in *Appendix 1.03 - Renewal, Strengthening Our Capacity for Cultivating Christ-Centered Scholars and Leaders* (Renewal). *Renewal* is anticipated to bring significant, positive change to APU and is described in greater detail later in this component and throughout the report. After a successful, although brief, tenure at APU, President Ferguson announced his retirement, effective December 18, 2021. Thus, APU will be seeking its next leader during the 2021-22 academic year (see pg. 8 for more information).

Response to Previous Commission Actions

In February 2013, the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) review team and reaffirmed the accreditation of Azusa Pacific University for nine years. The university was commended for its success in strategic planning (CFRs 4.1-4.3), its identity as a national doctoral university (CFRs 1.1 and 1.3), and the standard the university had established for faith integration at religiously affiliated institutions. (CFRs 2.8 and 2.9)

The Commission also recognized two areas for ongoing attention and development: continued financial stabilization (CFR 3.4) and consistent use of assessment results across programs (no CFR provided). As requested by the Commission, APU addressed these areas in a 2015 Interim Report which was accepted by the Commission. In a letter dated March 21, 2016, APU was commended for its improved assessment practices that more consistently closed the loop across programs and was encouraged to continue to find ways to develop and educate faculty on their role with assessment. To date, APU continues to find innovative and manageable ways for program faculty to collect and analyze data for effective decision-making (see components 4 and 6). Also noted in the March 21 Commission letter, however, was an ongoing concern about APU's financial equilibrium. A Progress Report and series of updates were requested in 2018 and 2019, which APU provided. While the Commission acknowledged APU's progress and commended its transparency, financial stabilization, along with board governance, continue as themes for APU to address in this self-study.

Financial Stabilization

In spring 2018, APU experienced an unexpected and significant downturn in net tuition. Areas of deficient internal and management controls were identified as the primary causal factors for the financial challenge, exacerbated by an unexpected and significant downturn in net tuition, due to erroneous assumptions regarding employee attrition and an execution of the discounting strategy in excess of what was budgeted. These issues, combined with demands for cash to complete various construction projects, led to a significant budget deficit for 2018-19. In addition, in

summer 2018, the CFO was on bereavement leave and the president was on medical leave. In their absence, it was discovered that financial records were not up to the standard expected of the university. The board of trustees (board) appointed the provost as the point leader for day-to-day operations of the university as APU entered the 2018-19 academic year. Additionally, the board appointed and paid a board member to work full-time on campus in a "board liaison" capacity with APU administration for six months pending the hire of the new president. The intent was to create more streamlined communication with and access to the board, but WSCUC rightly noted in a March 20, 2019, letter that such an arrangement should be for the short term, returning to typical board governance relationships as soon as possible. (CFR 3.9)

In order to address the unexpected shortfall and regain financial stability, APU engaged in a number of ambitious actions, found in Appendix 1.04 - Actions Taken to Address APU Budget Shortfall. With exceptional cost management (hiring freeze, centralized expense approval) and sacrifice by the APU community (freezing employer contribution to 403(b), savings through vacation pay, furloughs, salary reductions, expenditure/budget cuts), the university was able to eliminate its deficit and implement new budgeting processes and expense controls to prevent future downturns. Notable finance and business strategy leadership was demonstrated in the remarkable FY20 end-of-year success, achieving a budget surplus of $7.6M and meeting covenant obligations in liquidity ($11.9M over the required $60M) and debt as measured by the Debt Service Coverage Ratio (1.56 DSCR over the required 1.2 DSCR). The ongoing advancements APU has made in the area of financial stabilization are presented in more detail in component 7. (CFR 3.4)

Board Governance

In 2019, WSCUC recognized board governance as one of the four themes to be addressed when APU was intending to utilize a Thematic Pathways Report (TPR) format. Even though APU is no longer pursuing the TPR, given the interest expressed by WSCUC in several written communications, as well as APU's desire to have an effective working relationship with the board, where agreed-upon appropriate roles are better understood, documented, and respected through implementation guidelines, this report will focus on the significant progress made in this area to date, as well as APU's response to continuing challenges natural to any well-functioning board-administration relationship.

The impetus for WSCUC's concern understandably resulted from the board's efforts to settle into a healthy governance role after the board's bookended incidents of 2018 and 2019: admittedly insufficient oversight precipitating the financial challenges in 2018, followed immediately by sustained involvement in the day-to-day management by a paid board member in 2019. (CFR 3.9) In the section above, a brief description was provided of the financial challenges that surfaced in 2018. During this challenging time, APU kept WSCUC fully informed of the issues and any implemented organizational changes. (CFR 1.8)

WSCUC acknowledged that APU had challenges with management controls and with insufficient monitoring by the board and with presidential accountability. (CFR 3.6) In a written communication, WSCUC rightfully encouraged APU to keep the "hands on" management of the board to a minimum and to restore normal high-level board roles as soon as possible:

> *"While this kind of greater involvement in the daily operations of an institution are warranted in the short term, a restoration after financial sustainability has been regained to a normal high level Board role will need to take place."*

APU recognized and agreed with WSCUC's admonitions and endeavored to mold its board-administration roles and relationships after best governance practices including those identified in key WSCUC's policies, including the WSCUC Governing Board Policy and accompanying Implementation Guide. Specifically, APU is committed to demonstrating that the board has returned, in the words of WSCUC's Governing Board Policy, to its role of providing "oversight in its designated areas of responsibility, especially financial and major policy-making matters, but is not involved in the day-to-day operations, management, or decision-making, which are delegated to the president and through the president to the administration and faculty." (CFR 3.9)

The WSCUC requirement of the board to move back to a proper governance role is a work in progress. The line between governance and management is one that well-functioning organizations must constantly tend through open and candid dialogue, collaboration, and good faith dispute resolution mechanisms. APU leans into a set of governance principles (loyalty, care, and confidentiality) that help guide these efforts, including the board's fiduciary duties to act only in the best interests of the corporation, acknowledgment of and deference to the experience and expertise of paid, full-time university leadership, and the collective and diverse breadth of experience of trustees who render decisions for APU only as a body and never as individual trustees. (CFR 3.9)

APU is presently being intentional about implementing the board education and control mechanisms needed to attentively monitor the governance role of the board. For example, administration has used the WSCUC policies mentioned above to help advise the board in directing changes within their structure and internal policies to ensure, consistent with its legal and fiduciary authority, the board exercises appropriate authority over institutional integrity, policies, and ongoing operations. Appendix 1.05 - Summary of Board Discussions and Actions provides a chronological review of significant board discussions and actions that have led to improved functioning, which included the development of a board policy manual (Appendix 1.06 - APU Board of Trustees Manual; note: linked documents cannot be accessed but will be provided upon request). Likewise, demonstrating its great capacity as a learning body, the board no longer has an on-campus presence and is committed to not reinstituting the "board liaison" role during the upcoming presidential transition (see pg. 8). (CFR 3.9)

In May 2021, Tom Miller was unanimously voted by the board to serve as the next board chair. Mr. Miller has been a real estate investment/development executive and long-standing member of the board who recognizes the necessary and balanced partnership that the board and administration must have in order to effectively and efficiently serve the institution. Mr. Miller appreciates that the board's primary role is in selecting and supporting the president, and that it is otherwise limited to establishing university mission and setting university policy, as informed by administration's

professional expertise in higher education. Mr. Miller has been actively engaging with the president during fall 2021, not only to enhance understanding of the day-to-day management of the university for a healthy transition to an anticipated interim president, but also to strengthen the board reporting structures through committee chairs and, ultimately, the executive committee of the board to ensure that the board acts as a collective body and speaks with one voice within the appropriate limits of influence and authority. In regards to the presidential transition, he has clearly acknowledged the importance of shared governance by engaging with the President's Cabinet and the campus community for appropriate input during this time of orientation and introduction. (CFR 3.9)

In addition to attentively monitoring its governance role, the board recognized that the diversity of the board members did not accurately reflect the APU community or provide all the necessary skill sets for appropriate decision-making. As a result, the board has increased the ethnic diversity of its members from 10.5% in 2019 to the current 28.5% to better reflect the diversity of the APU population. In addition, the board has increased representation of members with expertise in higher education, technology, and science and medicine in order to make sure that appropriate areas of competence are reflected to fulfill the responsibilities to the institution. (CFR 3.9)

The board conducts a yearly review of the president/chief executive officer. In addition, they perform an internal yearly self-evaluation. They have recently updated the APU Trustee Evaluation, found in Appendix 1.07 to clearly reflect the board's responsibilities as outlined in the WSCUC Board Governing Policy (Note: some linked documents may be inaccessible; they can be provided if needed).

Significant Changes Since APU's Last Reaffirmation

In addition to working diligently on the areas identified by the Commission, APU has undergone numerous changes since its last reaffirmation visit, most at its own initiation, but some in response to circumstances thrust upon it.

Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

In the spirit of the institutional values of Christ and Community as articulated in APU's Four Cornerstones (Christ, Scholarship, Community, Service), APU remains committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusive excellence throughout and at all levels of the university. Overall, since 2012, significant gains have been made and will be amplified as it relates to an increasingly diverse student demography, important organizational changes, increasing the cultural competence of faculty and staff, and advancing the university's new strategic vision (*Renewal*) which prioritizes DEI. (CFR 1.4) See Appendix 1.08 - DEI Divisional Annual Report for an overview of the work accomplished by the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Division in 2020-21.

Increased Diversity in Student Body
A current and forecasted institutional strength at APU is the growing diversity (e.g., ethnically, culturally, socioeconomically, etc.) reflected in the student body at all levels of the institution. Appendix 1.09 - APU Disaggregated Student Enrollment shows a growing number of students of color, including substantive growth in students who identify as Hispanic or Latinx. Overall, student demographics position APU as both a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) and a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), according to the Department of Education. APU is also recognized by the Department of

Education as an Asian American, Native American, Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) as the institution serves an undergraduate population that is low income (at least 50% receiving Title IV needs-based assistance) and in which Asian American, Native American, and/or Pacific Islander students constitute at least 10% of undergraduate full-time equivalent students.

The last pronounced demographic shift between 2013-20 was specific to the increase of first-generation college students at the undergraduate level. In 2013, 28.70% of first-year students identified as first generation college students which increased to 31.40% in 2015. The representation of first-generation college students in first-year students peaked in 2016 reaching 46%. See First Generation Student Enrollment Trends Dashboard.

Organizational Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Historically at APU, there have been countless faculty, staff, and students who championed and expressed the value of diversity through teaching, research, service, and other means within their sphere of influence; however, there was an absence of senior/administrative leadership providing a consistent institutional focus on centralizing and advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion strategically, operationally, and practically. In 2015, APU hired its first vice president/chief diversity officer (VP/CDO) reporting to the provost and serving on the President's Cabinet. The inaugural VP/CDO was expected to oversee university-wide diversity initiatives, provide strategic, collaborative leadership, and facilitate supervision of APU's diversity units including the Student Center for Reconciliation and Diversity (SCRD) and the Center for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellence (CDEIE). In 2019, under the leadership of President Ferguson, the role was repositioned, reporting directly to the president, thus providing an elevated emphasis on DEI at an institutional level and enabling strategic engagement and collaboration with senior leaders, board members, and other university leaders across the institution. (CFR 1.4)

In partnership with administration, formal councils and committees within APU's shared governance structure are also committed to advancing diversity and inclusion. The Faculty Senate, through the Diversity Council, affirms and values the nature of diversity and promotes the establishment and further support of university education policies, practices, and programs related to the understanding and appreciation of diversity from a biblical viewpoint. It represents the academic arena and extended community of the university in matters pertaining to diversity and community demographic balance. Additionally, APU's Staff Council has established a diversity committee committed to supporting diversity and inclusion efforts within the staff ranks. Each governing body brings a nuanced perspective to integrating diversity and inclusion as distinctives at APU through policy, practice, and programming. (CFR 3.10)

Faculty and Staff Development to Promote Cultural Engagement and Competency

In an effort to bolster diversity awareness and cultural competency within faculty and staff, decentralized, multi-pronged forms of faculty and staff development are facilitated to equip employees with perspectives and skills to effectively engage APU's diverse demography of students and colleagues, as identified in Appendix 1.10 - Faculty and Staff Development to Promote Cultural Engagement and Competency. All of the referenced initiatives are designed to

support the institutional value of diversity by leveraging faculty and staff development opportunities that enhance the cultural consciousness and competency to enhance academic and social engagement and meaningful service rendered within APU's diverse community. (CFR 3.3)

Next Steps: University Strategic Priorities with DEI

Despite significant progress over the years, APU has opportunities for growth in this area. To support the *Renewal* Grand Initiative of becoming a [*Thriving University of Choice*](#), strategic action items have been identified to further advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) operationally and practically throughout the institution (See [Appendix 1.11 - *Renewal* Outcomes and Action Items by Grand Initiatives](#) and [Appendix 1.12 - *Renewal* Implementation Plan by Year](#)). To address the DEI strategic action items, a diverse cross section of APU faculty, staff, and students participating in *Renewal* working groups are developing recommendations and a tentative timeline to outline actionable steps that can be taken to strategically pursue and accomplish referenced outcomes (See [Appendix 1.13 - *Renewal* Working Groups Initial Recommendations](#)). (CFRs 1.4 and 3.10) The implementation process will be iteratively and progressively spanned over the next five to six years with data-oriented milestones to assess gains.

Leadership Transitions and Structural Reorganization

In 2018, APU's long-time president announced his retirement. Before retirement, the president had several extended absences, and interim leadership was selected from the existing campus leaders. Additionally, the board took a more active role in the daily operations of the university with the intent of lending support and helping to manage the financial challenges noted earlier in this section. The combination of interim campus leadership and "board liaison" involvement helped to maintain APU operations but strained the board-faculty relationship, expanded the board's role into operations beyond its experience, and resulted in minimal forward momentum. (CFR 3.6)

In April 2019, Dr. Paul Ferguson was named the incoming president of the university. During the first year of this new presidency, a different model of collaborative university leadership was established. Senior university leadership was restructured into a more diverse, high functioning [President's Cabinet](#). The President's Cabinet (Cabinet) and the Office of the President were reconfigured to optimize decision-making, improve budget planning and management, and promote collaboration and communication with all campus constituencies. This new 14-member team defined 2019-20 divisional goals for which each Cabinet member was evaluated in an annual performance review (found in [Appendix 1.14 - President's Cabinet Performance Review](#)). This leadership change process included strategic personnel changes in former executive leadership, as well as the elevation of new individuals to the Cabinet. In addition to new presidential leadership, other new leaders were selected to this Cabinet, including a new provost, vice president for business strategy/chief financial officer (CFO), vice president of human resources, chief of staff, vice president for university integrity/general counsel, and vice president for strategic planning and mission integration. [Appendix 1.15 - University Annual Report of Progress](#) reflects the contributions of this new leadership team. (CFR 3.7) Notably, the President's Cabinet was highly tested and effectively navigated the impacts of COVID-19 during FY20 and FY21 by complete conversion to Canvas-based course delivery, telework transition for the majority of the 2,400-person workforce, care and nurturing of 10,000 transitioned students, and managed balanced budgets. See page 9 for a more detailed discussion of COVID-19 impacts.

Building on the university's legacy and looking toward the future, President Ferguson initiated an engaging, collaborative strategic planning process to successfully guide APU in the next 5-10 years, anchored in the university's mission of cultivating a vibrant culture of God First, Christ-centered academic excellence. (CFR 4.6) *Renewal* offers a blueprint for change and growth, positioning APU well for the future, and is discussed in detail later in this component (see *Appendix 1.03 - Renewal, Strengthening Our Capacity for Cultivating Christ-Centered Scholars and Leaders*).

Part of *Renewal* called for realignment and right-sizing of the institution. During the last 20 years, APU has grown and prospered as a major academic institution. However, consistent with recent national downward trends in traditional undergraduate enrollment and economic pressures catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic, APU focused on re-balancing its revenue and expenditures through institutional right-sizing and realignment. Integral to *Renewal*, and in light of the shift in the student base from traditional undergraduate to graduate and professional students, it was essential for all areas of the university to undergo a right-sizing initiative. In order to accomplish this task, leadership in each area was tasked with evaluating their area with a zero-based budgeting model, determining the necessary expenses for function in light of strategic plan objectives, reducing and shifting personnel as needed, and applying advanced practices such as automation and technology improvements. Although right-sizing and realignment are embedded in *Renewal*, the timing of the shifts was also influenced by the pandemic and the need to right-size units for both financial and functional reasons. The realignment process was well on its way at the time this report was submitted, but more changes will be forthcoming. (CFR 4.7)

After establishing new leadership and organizational structures, restoring fiscal stability with an increased Moody's rating from negative to stable, improved community collaborations, leading the development and launch of *Renewal*, and successfully navigating the impacts of COVID, President Ferguson announced his retirement, effective December 18, 2021. This significant leadership transition comes at an opportune time for APU to continue to build upon recent success and momentum and has seen an enhanced engagement between the APU community, President's Cabinet, and the board. The APU community trusts that the next president will emerge to lead the faculty, staff, and students in fulfillment of its mission. The board will coordinate the search for a new president and expect the successful candidate to begin her or his role in June 2022. The board has indicated its intention to name an interim leader, most likely an internal candidate, to fill the gap from mid-December until the arrival of the new president. Additionally, the board has expressed total support of the continuation of *Renewal*. (CFR 3.9)

Academic Realignment

Since its last reaffirmation visit, APU has undergone a shift in its enrollment portfolio with a significant downturn in undergraduate enrollment but growth in both professional and graduate student enrollment (see this enrollment dashboard). As such, APU has changed its curricular offerings to address the change in student profile. Notably, five professional pathways for bachelor's degrees and seven minors were added to curricular offerings for adult students. In addition, 18 new master's degree programs and one new doctoral program were also created since 2013, ranging in fields as diverse as English, Rehabilitation and Movement Science, Organizational Psychology, Criminal Justice, and Biotechnology. New offerings at the various regional locations have also been added, including master's degree

programs in Marriage and Family Therapy, Music Industry, User Experience Design, and Business Administration, as well as undergraduate programs in Criminal Justice, Digital Media and Communication, Psychology, Business Administration, and Nursing. (CFR 2.1)

Academic realignment has also occurred most recently as part of the structural reorganization described above. The Office of the Provost underwent significant shifts in its organizational structure, resulting in functioning that was more organized, coherent, and centralized. All academic systems (e.g., Canvas, Interfolio, CourseLeaf, Redrock, Campus Labs, and others) were centralized and connected to provide more holistic and like-services across student- and faculty-facing assistance and tracking platforms. All budgeting was centrally assessed and is currently undergoing rightsizing. Waste has been eliminated in overlapping functions and needs in both administrative personnel and operational expenses. Overall, an additional $6.6M, in addition to the $8M already cut from the budget, is in the process of being removed from operational expenses to contribute to fiscal sustainability. (CFR 3.4)

In addition to the realignment of the Office of the Provost, the schools/colleges are also undergoing a strategic reorganization. With faculty and administrative input, new schools/colleges will be designed to minimize overhead, strengthen operational connections to the Office of the Provost, and clarify roles and responsibilities. (CFR 3.7) While organizational efforts are ongoing, initial efforts have resulted in a university-wide, transparent process characterized by open collaboration among faculty, staff, administrators, and students.

COVID-19

As with every other institution of higher education, spring 2020 brought a new set of challenges with the onset of COVID-19 that continued through summer 2021. The April 2020 presidential inauguration and launch of the strategic plan was delayed; the entire community engaged in significant changes in practice, most notably the LMS-based (Canvas) or remote delivery of education to students and working from home; and concerns over potential low enrollment resulted in another round of fiscal belt tightening. However, APU engaged in a collaborative, well-organized mobilization of resources to address the challenges of COVID-19, which can be found in Appendix 1.16 - APU's Management of COVID.

What APU Learned from COVID-19

APU conducted a survey following the spring of 2020 in order to determine COVID-19 impacts on faculty, staff, and students. The results, found in Appendix 1.17 - COVID-19 Impacts on Faculty, Staff, and Students During Spring 2020, revealed unexpected surprises in the transition to remote learning/work, including but not limited to satisfaction with decreased commute and increased flexibility in time management, student independence, and creativity in teaching approaches. Responses revealed 90% of participants were satisfied with decisions made by the university in the transition to remote learning, and 75% of participants were satisfied with the university support provided in the transition to remote learning and work. Lecture, didactic, and independent learning courses were determined to translate easily to remote learning, while courses requiring hands-on and experiential learning required increased creativity. The survey results revealed that while students, in particular traditional undergraduate students, preferred

face-to-face instruction, great appreciation was expressed for remote learning to maintain educational continuity. In addition, students expressed appreciation for the efforts put forth by faculty to maintain a consistent learning experience, including but not limited to their adaptability, availability, patience, support, and communication.

The survey provided valuable insight to improve the remote learning/working experiences as continued semesters were necessitated by the pandemic. Several points of feedback were provided regarding university communication. In order to enhance engagement, community connection, and opportunities to provide input, during fall 2020, multiple Town Halls and Presidential Roundtables were held for faculty, staff, and students. In addition, the survey emphasized the advancements in faculty training, classroom technology, and centralized communication described in Appendix 1.16 - APU's Management of COVID.

Renewal: APU's Strategic Plan for a Preferred Future

Process for Developing Renewal

As indicated above, following his hire in June 2019, President Paul Ferguson recommended and was supported by the APU board in the development of a comprehensive, integrated strategic plan to successfully guide the institution over the next 5-10 years. The president co-chaired, with then-senior advisor to the president, a 31-member Strategic Planning Leadership Team (SPLT) (Appendix 1.18 - APU Strategic Planning Leadership Team Membership Listing). Drawing upon diverse perspectives and skills, the SPLT met regularly between August 2019 and March 2020 and inspired rich dialog and interaction around APU's future. Thought leaders and subject-matter experts from different academic disciplines, co-curricular and student support systems, campus locations, and lengths of service gave voice to the university's present and future challenges, opportunities, and vision. A new crowdsourcing platform, ThoughtExchange, was used to solicit response and engagement with the APU community around themes and issues connected to the strategic planning process. All schools and major divisions were represented, as were faculty, staff, students, alumni, administration, and members of the board. The strategic planning process fostered open and rigorous engagement between the leadership team and various constituencies. (CFR 4.6)

The Strategic Planning Leadership Team identified five major themes to guide APU in identifying the challenges facing Christian higher education. (CFR 4.7) After review and feedback from various working groups, senior leadership, faculty senate, and staff council, the strategic plan (*Renewal*) (Appendix 1.03 - *Renewal*, Strengthening Our Capacity for Cultivating Christ-Centered Scholars and Leaders) was approved by the board in March 2020 with Five Grand Initiatives that captured the anticipated impact of the plan and organized specific, strategic recommendations, tactics, desired outcomes, and responsible university leadership for the plan's implementation and assessment (Appendix 1.11 - *Renewal* Outcomes and Action Items by Grand Initiatives).

The official launch of *Renewal* was originally scheduled as the center-piece celebration at the close of a week-long series of events (March 30-April 5, 2020) celebrating APU and the inauguration of Dr. Ferguson as the 17th president. Due to COVID-19 and the Los Angeles County stay-at-home order, all inauguration activities and the launch of *Renewal* were cancelled. During the summer months, the president formed a *Renewal* Review Team to take a fresh look at the not-yet-launched strategic plan in light of the significant health, economic, and social issues impacting

the higher education landscape not present during the strategic planning process. In essence, the key question for the team to consider was, "If, and how, has COVID-19 and emerging social issues altered the scope and content of *Renewal*?" This review team consisted of the SPLT chairs and selected members of the President's Cabinet and the board of trustees. Assessment of the financial, academic, strategic, and implementation timeframe was reviewed, affirmed, and revised in light of the shifted environment. Following some slight revisions to funding plans, timeline, and a new three-phased approach to implementation, the official launch of *Renewal* occurred as a YouTube premiere event on September 17, 2020, accompanied by a dedicated webpage with the full plan, summary text, and video vignettes. (CFR 4.6)

Implementation Plans for Renewal

As indicated in *Renewal*, the implementation of more than 85 separate action items (see Appendix 1.12 - *Renewal* Implementation Plan by Year) will follow a three-phase approach: Refocus (2020-21), Rebuild (2021-22), and Renew (2022-27). The timeline and implementation of these action items will be assessed annually. In order to fully address all of the action items within the plan, full engagement of the APU community will be necessary for shared success. (CFR 4.6) The implementation process for *Renewal* is represented in Appendix 1.19 - *Renewal* Implementation Visual.

Implementing *Renewal* will be the primary responsibility of members of the President's Cabinet as part of their annual goals and performance assessments. (CFR 3.6) Each action item will be directly managed by a lead vice president, often with the engagement of other key vice presidents and working groups formed from the APU community. The vice president for strategic planning and mission integration will oversee the process and will form the *Renewal* Enhancement Team to provide overall input and assessment to implementation. *Renewal* Working Groups (working groups) of faculty, staff, and students were established in early 2021 (Appendix 1.20 - *Renewal* Working Groups Roster), and members began to work earnestly to address the action items associated with their group, with many groups meeting weekly. Each group was also free to seek the wisdom and guidance of associated faculty or staff councils, experts in the field, and other outside resources to answer relevant questions as part of their assessment. While many groups were still in the initial data gathering stages at the time of report submission, others had made some initial recommendations (See Appendix 1.13 - *Renewal* Working Groups Initial Recommendations), many of which align with components in this report and will be noted appropriately. The work of *Renewal* is expected to energize employees and guide APU's future, despite the shifts in leadership.

APU's Contribution to the Public Good

Service to others is part of the ethos at APU, a reflection of two (Community, Service) of the Four Cornerstones (Christ, Scholarship, Community, Service) from which APU operates. Below are a few examples of how APU attempts to contribute to the public good.

Carnegie Classification - Community Engaged Status

Originally granted the classification in 2010, APU was 1 of 119 institutions to receive the 2020 Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement. This prestigious distinction recognizes universities with a high level of commitment to community service and service learning (See component 3 for a more detailed discussion of

service-learning). Community engagement at APU is demonstrated through the cooperative and collaborative partnership between university administration, faculty, staff, and students with local, regional, national, and global communities for the sharing of knowledge and resources in the context of mutuality and reciprocity. APU's engagement strategies reflect our Christian ethos and aim to equip students, faculty, and staff to responsibly and respectfully engage diverse communities. Community engagement is deeply embedded in the university's mission, identity, strategy, and culture and is woven throughout curricular and co-curricular opportunities for students, faculty pedagogy and scholarship, civic engagement, grant-funded programs, diversity initiatives, and student retention and success efforts.

Positive Impact on the Local Community

Azusa Pacific's approach to community engagement underscores the university's commitment to education and desire to give back to the community. The university intentionally builds long-term relationships with school districts through memorandums of understanding, creates pathways for prospective students, and offers educational service opportunities that benefit partners. The university joins with churches, community stakeholders, nonprofits, and small businesses to enhance quality of life for our neighbors and the APU community through ministry and service. To this end, the university actively participates in All in for Azusa, chambers of commerce in Azusa and Glendora, and the San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership, among other agencies committed to educational access and equity, economic vitality, and community health and vitality.

In these aforementioned relationships, town-and-gown matters frequently addressed include construction, housing, planning, safety, and transportation. Current engagement includes quarterly meetings with city of Azusa staff to provide updates, as well as collaborate and foster synergy and service on the Housing Element Advisory Committee and first-ever Pedestrian Master Plan Advisory Committee, two key initiatives intended to increase available housing across incomes, enhance the walkability of the city, and improve the health of those who live, work, and play in Azusa. Since moving to the San Gabriel Valley in 1947, Azusa Pacific University has partnered with the city of Azusa to support a community that inspires us all—one with quality education programs accessible to all ages, safe streets, and revitalized spaces where people can interact.

College Headed and Mighty Proud (C.H.A.M.P.) Program

 For nearly three decades, APU students in the School of Education have impacted the lives of more than 13,000 elementary school students in the Azusa Unified School District through the College Headed and Mighty Proud (C.H.A.M.P.) program. See component 3 for a more detailed description of the C.H.A.M.P. program.

Student Service Requirement as a Pathway to Contributing to the Public Good

In the spirit of APU's founding as a training school for Christian workers, a unique aspect of the APU student experience reflects dedication to the Cornerstone of "Service" for the public good. Understanding that a global perspective and service to one's local community are significant contributors to student (and community) thriving, we believe that creating opportunities for students to serve others is integral to a holistic Christian education. Practically, we require all traditional undergraduate students to fulfill 15 service credits (i.e., hours) per semester.

Students are encouraged to serve in ways meaningful to them and their vocation, but opportunities to serve also are often coordinated by the Center for Student Action (CSA). For example, during the 2018-19 academic year, the CSA coordinated six, week-long service projects in Mexico with 596 student participants; 961 students serving in local ministries; and 29 national and international short-term (approximately 4-6 weeks) summer "Action Team" trips with 241 participants. Although many of the service opportunities were interrupted by the pandemic, the CSA was still able to coordinate 7 "virtual" service opportunities for students with external partners including Neighborhood Homework House, CommunityHousing Works, and the Al Wooten Jr. Youth Center, among others. The CSA also coordinates our Azusa Scholars program, which creates scholarships and leadership opportunities for student-residents from the city of Azusa to attend APU and give back to their community. This past academic year 35 students were enrolled in the Azusa Scholars program.

Preparation and Organization of the Report

In light of the unexpected delays associated with COVID-19, the resignation of the provost and Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO), as well as other significant leadership transitions, APU requested, and WSCUC granted, a delay of one semester for the reaffirmation visit. Additionally, upon the advice of its WSCUC liaison and after consultation with the provost and president, APU also determined that a comprehensive approach, rather than a Thematic Pathway Review (TPR) approach, would better serve the institution, giving new leadership a better overview of APU and addressing issues of educational effectiveness more substantively. Fortunately, much of the work that had been started, as well as the efforts behind *Renewal*, all led to a manageable transition from a TPR report to a comprehensive report.

Report Preparation

After a short delay due to the resignation of the ALO and COVID-19, the university re-focused its efforts on generating its institutional report and preparing for the spring 2022 visit. The WSCUC Steering Committee (Steering Committee), consisting of faculty, staff, and administrators, reconvened in fall 2020 with renewed energy and enthusiasm, meeting regularly to build a report framework, form writing groups, solicit content from the *Renewal* working groups, and review written submissions. Due to COVID-19, the Steering Committee did all of its work under the county-mandated "safer at home" guidelines. While it was difficult not being in a room together physically, the committee was still able to engage in active, robust discussions, and to work collaboratively across all elements of the university.

Involvement of the APU Community

In addition to consultation for report writing, various constituents, including the president, provost, Faculty Senate, academic deans, select staff, President's Cabinet, and board members were invited to review the document and to provide informed feedback on the contents of the report. However, the majority of the APU community was invited to provide input into the reaffirmation process through the strategic planning activities that began with the Strategic Planning Leadership Team in 2019-2020, continued in the 2020-2021 year through the *Renewal* working groups and presidential roundtables, and moves toward implementation even as this report is being written. The Five Grand Initiatives of *Renewal*, as well as the action items that are organized within (see Appendix 1.11 - *Renewal*

Outcomes and Action Items by Grand Initiative), align well with the WSCUC components and CFRs. In fact, most of the strategic plan has the overarching goals of educational effectiveness, an improved student learning experience, a thriving working environment, and sufficient educational resources, all important elements of reaffirmation. As such, many faculty and staff were invited to participate in presidential forums or as part of a *Renewal* working group where specific recommendations were made for advancing APU's educational effectiveness (see Appendix 1.13 - *Renewal Working Groups Initial Recommendations*). However, the implementation of the recommendations and subsequent collection of evidence for effectiveness will continue beyond the submission of the report and even beyond the reaffirmation visit itself.
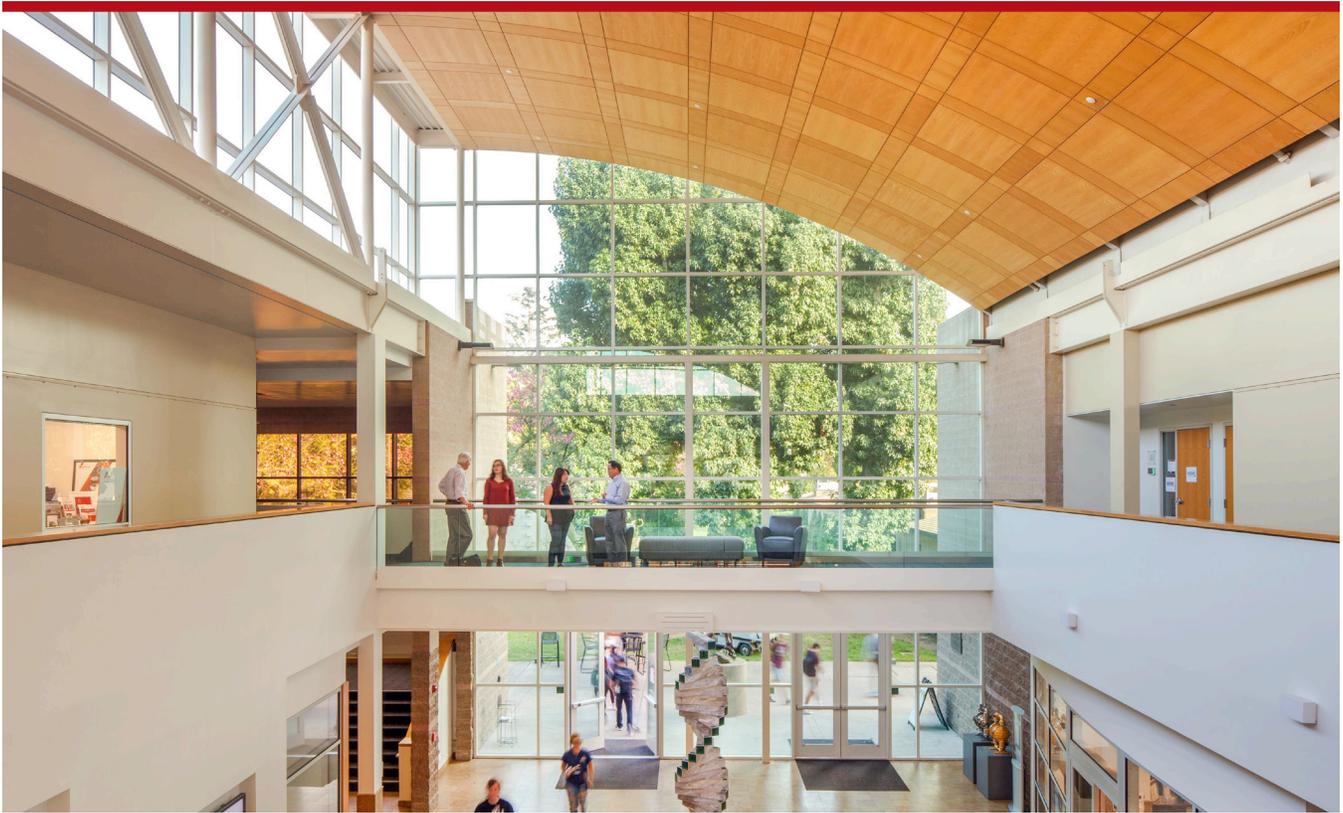
Component 2: Review Under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements

Review Under the Standards

A comprehensive review of the institution in relation to Appendix 2.01 - Compliance with WSCUC Standards Worksheet was initiated in the 2018-2019 year, with a deeper dive extending into the 2020-2021 academic year. The initiation of this review in the early stages of the reaffirmation process afforded key personnel and their departments an opportunity to ensure alignment with the Standards, and if needed, provided the impetus to implement policy and practice changes. Those involved in directing various aspects of the completion of the Compliance with WSCUC Standards Worksheet and the federal regulations forms included specific Steering Committee members with expertise in a specific topic and staff members in the Office of Curricular Support (OCS), the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA), and the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (CTLA), with oversight by the ALO.

Reflections on Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

APU Strengths

APU is clear about and committed to its mission and purpose. APU's *What We Believe* website (also available in hard copy) presents a variety of identity documents that highlight the guiding purpose of the institution - to develop

Christ-centered scholars and leaders. The Four Cornerstones: Christ, Scholarship, Community, and Service are embedded into the policies and programs, supporting these values in faculty/staff recruitment and commitment and student training. (CFR 1.1)

APU is recognized by the Department of Education as a Minority Serving Institution, Hispanic Serving Institution, and an Asian American, Native American, and Pacific Islander Serving Institution. APU's [Center for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellenc](#)e (CDEIE) supports faculty, staff, and administration in the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of the university by facilitating diversity initiatives, services, and resources (see [Appendix 1.10 - Faculty and Staff Development to Promote Cultural Engagement and Competency](#)). The [Student Center for Reconciliation and Diversity](#) promotes equity-minded engagement and development of our student population by facilitating services and programs including but not limited to: VOICES, a space for students to engage in critical conversations pertaining to race, culture, equity, and justice; sponsorship of ethnic organizations; and development of the Men of Color Success Initiative. The [Office of Women's Development](#) empowers and equips women to be agents of change in leadership, ministry, and gender equity through programs, weekly discussions, and collaborative ventures across campus designed to contribute to the education and wellness of women in the APU community. Since the last accreditation visit, student affairs has piloted a program called "Tapestry," with the mission of "enhancing our Christ-centered community by creating a safe and engaging space where all students, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer persons are treated with respect, justice, grace, and understanding" through weekly, student-led gatherings. (CFR 1.4)

APU Areas of Improvement
Renewal, APU's strategic plan, has identified several strategies for growth in defining institutional purposes and ensuring educational objectives, including but not limited to: a need to reevaluate the mission and identity statements in order to ensure that they reflect the purpose of the university amidst changing culture and times; (CFR 1.1) developing enhanced systems for intervention and support (e.g., academic success coaches) and increasing retention and graduation rates with no significant racial gaps; (CFR 1.2) reviewing curricular and co-curricular programs from an equity lens, with increased hiring and retention of diverse faculty and students to reflect the diversity of the student body, and assessment and revision of campus images from a diversity lens; (CFR 1.4) and streamlining grievance processes for all stakeholders and greater input into decisions at the program or staff level that carry out the decisions. (CFR 1.7)

Reflections on Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

APU Strengths
APU programs are rigorous and innovative, providing students with experiential learning opportunities that prepare them for lifelong work. (CFR 2.2) Through annual assessment and program review, student competency on the institutional learning outcomes, program learning outcomes, general education outcomes, and WSCUC Core Competencies is assessed regularly with appropriate accountability for programs to ensure that student learning is occurring at appropriate levels (see [Appendix 2.02 - Assessment and Program Review Materials for All APU](#)

Programs). (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, and 2.7) Designated by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education as an R2: Doctoral university-High research activity, APU provides services and resources through the Office of Research and Grants for faculty and student research and appropriate rewards for faculty scholarship, embedding performance in the faculty evaluation system, and honoring multiple forms of scholarship, including the scholarship of teaching and learning. (CFR 2.8) APU's co-curricular programming is aligned with the academic goals of the institution, with an emphasis on student thriving and an integrated curriculum that promotes personal and spiritual development. (CFR 2.11).

APU Areas for Improvement

APU has experienced significant leadership transition in the area of General Education (GE), resulting in gaps in the assessment of GE outcomes, as well as program management. As part of *Renewal*, the GE curriculum and its subsequent assessment will be re-evaluated, as will the leadership and collaboration with faculty councils and committees. (CFR 2.2a). Despite its commitment to student success (see component 5), APU needs to improve in the collection, analysis, and distribution of disaggregated data, thus allowing offices and personnel the ability to identify and resource underserved students. Additionally, as APU looks to strengthen its data and reporting across programs and campuses, it will be essential to incorporate research regarding the success of students at our regional locations. Collecting the relevant data is an important dimension; at the same time, it will be critical for our teams to pose further questions about the experience of students whose primary instructional location is outside of Azusa. (CFR 2.10)

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

APU Strengths

Through the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (CTLA) and the Center for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellence, APU provides exceptional new faculty orientation and faculty (full-time and adjunct) development offerings that enable faculty to become effective course designers, teachers, and evaluators of student performance, committed to incorporating inclusive pedagogy from a faith-based perspective (note: in summer 2021 CTLA underwent a significant reorganization, with several offices relocated under different supervisors. As such, the effectiveness of APU's faculty development efforts will need to be re-evaluated). (CFR 3.3)

Faculty are evaluated on their performance based on a faculty-designed, multi-source feedback system that incorporates peer review. (CFR 3.2) The Faculty Senate and its corresponding councils and committees provide effective academic leadership and interact collaboratively with the administration on shared goals. (CFR 3.10)

APU Areas for Improvement

While achieving financial stability despite challenging times, APU's budgeting process is still undergoing significant revision with the goal of streamlining and accurately identifying resources that align with the strategic priorities of the institution and reducing redundancies in spending. New budgeting software, as well as year-over-year zero-based budgeting techniques have been implemented. In addition, significant training for budget managers and more centralized and transparent budgeting efforts across the institution have begun. (CFR 3.4) The leadership structure of

APU has improved under its new president; however, a number of personnel in leadership positions are new to their role or serving in an interim capacity. With four interim deans, one interim and two unfilled associate provost positions, a new provost, and a soon-to-be new president, it will be important for APU to solidify its academic leadership so that it can enact the work of *Renewal*. (CFR 3.8)

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

APU Strengths

APU's academic quality assurance processes are exceptional. New programs and courses are designed with faculty oversight, assisted by the Office of Curricular Support. (CFR 4.1) Faculty are expected to assess student learning annually, with a robust, periodic program review process that aligns with professional accreditation (when applicable) (CFRs 2.7 and 4.4) and must demonstrate that students learn comparably regardless of location or modality (CFRs 4.1 and 4.4). Additionally, co-curricular programs engage in an equally robust quality assurance process. (CFRs 2.11 and 4.3) The creation, launch, and eventual implementation of *Renewal* has epitomized the inclusion of multiple constituencies to assess the institution's strategic position and priorities. (CFR 4.6)

APU Areas for Improvement

Despite many robust systems, APU needs significant improvement in its institutional research and data management capacity (see component 6), which is a major emphasis in *Renewal*. There is a great need to improve the integration of information across the institution by building out a data warehouse and applying analytical tools to mine the data. There is also a great need to increase the number of dedicated personnel in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) to improve data management and meet the demands for data reporting and analysis for both external agencies and internal decision-making. Additionally, APU could benefit from a more systematic approach to the use of data in its decision-making (including financial decisions), relying less on anecdotal evidence and more on internal and external data sources. (CFR 4.2)

Federal Compliance Regulations

The Federal Compliance Regulation forms can be found in the Appendices and as follows: Credit Hour and Program Length Review Form, Marketing and Recruitment Review Form, Student Complaints Review Form, and Transfer Credit Review Form. Appendix 2.03 - Key Findings and Interventions Related to WSCUC Federal Regulations represents a sample of key findings and interventions initiated to recalibrate institutional policies and practices in alignment with the compliance with federal regulations. Other changes as a result of institutional reflection can be found throughout the report.

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

APU offers degrees at the Bachelor, Master, and Doctoral levels within its eight schools and colleges. The Bachelor degrees are divided between 67 traditional undergraduate programs at the main campus in Azusa and seven professional programs taught at the Azusa campus and at seven regional locations/sites (see Appendix 1.01 - APU Regional Location Summary) throughout Southern California. Master's degrees are offered in 46 different fields on main campus and regional campuses/sites. Doctoral degrees are offered in nine different fields on the main campus and at the Los Angeles and Monrovia locations. In addition to these degree programs, APU offers 60 undergraduate minors and 17 certificates, eight credentials, and one fellowship.

Elements of an APU Degree that Embody Meaning, Quality, and Integrity

There are a number of aspects about an APU degree that give it meaning and quality. (CFR 2.2) In addition to the excellent content that is delivered by highly qualified faculty through every program at APU, students are exposed to numerous educational experiences that prepare them to engage the world.

APU Institutional Learning Outcomes

APU's Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs), referred to as the 4Cs, are reflected in all degree and co-curricular programs at APU. Every program maps to and assesses the ILOs (see component 4 for a discussion of ILO assessment). Developed with the intention of more inclusively capturing the student learning experience across all levels (undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral), the 4Cs were designed to be broad and relevant for all programs and reflected the desire to prepare students to positively engage the world with character, competence, critical thinking, and community-mindedness. Although the 4Cs are relevant for every program, both academic and co-curricular, they may be so broad as to be less impactful than desired, as will be discussed below. That being said, the 4Cs are one unifying element of an APU degree. (CFR 2.3)

Academic Faith Integration in the Curriculum

Unique to APU's identity as a Christian university, and something that was commended by the Commission in its last review, is the intentional focus on academic faith integration. This commitment is demonstrated in multiple ways. All programs are required to create and assess a faith integration program outcome as part of their curriculum, thus communicating to students APU's commitment to incorporate principles of Christian faith into each and every discipline. (CFR 2.2a) To ensure that students are learning these principles, every program assesses their faith integration outcome(s) as part of program review. (CFR 2.7)

An exemplar of a faith-integrated curriculum is the undergraduate psychology program. The psychology program underwent a 3-year faith integration plan with the goal of more effectively integrating faith integration program learning objectives into core psychology courses and also developing content-specific faith integration lesson plans for each of the undergraduate psychology core courses. A brief overview of the plan is as follows:

- Year 1 consisted of all faculty collectively reading and responding to discipline-specific faith integration articles that the Psychology Faith Integration Committee selected. The purpose of Year 1 was to create a shared language around faith integration that was specific for psychology.

- Year 2 consisted of faculty developing six Faith Integration Program Learning Objectives (FI PLO) that were specific to undergraduate psychology domains (developmental, cognitive, clinical, cultural, and research methods). Once these FI PLO's were developed, faculty then mapped the PLO's onto specific classes where they would be covered and identifying if the FI PLO would be addressed in the specific class at an Introductory, Developing or Advanced Level. This enabled a scaffolded approach where introductory courses laid the foundation of faith integration material that would be consistently developed in more advanced courses.

- Year 3 consisted of faculty developing 2-3 lesson plans for each FI PLO relevant to the specific course. The final product was a shared google drive with folders for each of the core psychology courses with lesson plans and learning objectives specific to each course that was accessible to all faculty and adjuncts.

The Faith Integration Council (FIC) and, specifically, the director of faith integration education and scholarship, works with faculty and departments to create similar curricula for academic programs. Additionally, to continue its

commitment to integration, the *Renewal* working group on Spiritual Formation and Faith Integration is exploring meaningful ways to incorporate principles of Christian faith, as well as spiritual development, into the curriculum. Specifically, their charge was to *"Evaluate current spiritual formation and faith integration strategies to determine efficacy, consistency, and impact at all degree levels and current/future students (2020–21)"* and *"create a renewed and collaborative institutional approach to spiritual formation and faith integration."* Some of their initial recommendations are contained in Appendix 1.13 - *Renewal* Working Groups Initial Recommendations.

Academic Faith Integration in Teaching

In addition to the integration of faith into the curriculum, faculty are expected to demonstrate competence in their ability to integrate Christian principles in their individual teaching and scholarship responsibilities. (CFR 2.8) This is accomplished in the promotion and extended contract process, as well as in classroom assessment. For any faculty member to earn an extended contract and/or rank promotion, faculty must produce a faith integration response paper (FIRP) that is peer-reviewed, using a rubric for assessment (see Appendix 3.01 - Faith Integration Response Paper Rubric Template). A particular score (as determined by the faculty-governed evaluation system) is needed to secure an extended contract and/or rank promotion. With resourcing through the Office of Faith Integration (OFI), faculty have been able to succeed in this requirement, and the OFI staff and Faith Integration Council (FIC) annually review results to ensure continued effectiveness of the assessment process (see Appendix 3.02 - Faith Integration Effectiveness Summary). (CFR 2.4)

A second way in which faculty demonstrate competence in faith integration is by soliciting student feedback through the Individual Development and Educational Assessment (IDEA) feedback tool, which is distributed to students in every course. On the IDEA form, APU has added three unique items related to faith integration to which students respond, and department chairs are expected to review those results and facilitate conversations about student perceptions of faith integration with their faculty as part of their annual performance review. Additionally, programs review their departmental data at the time of program review, and the FIC analyzes the data at the university level (see Appendix 3.03 - Summary of Faith Integration IDEA Scores). (CFR 4.3)

Experiential Learning, Service-Learning, and Study Away

Azusa Pacific University is one of 119 institutions to receive the 2020 Carnegie Foundation Classification for Community Engagement, recognized for the high level of commitment to community engagement and service-learning. APU students contribute approximately 165,000 hours of community service annually, including with community partners such as Azusa Unified School District, Our Neighborhood Homework House, the Department of Children and Family Services, and the Azusa City Library. APU sponsors numerous long-running programs in the city including Azusa Reads, Writes, and Counts, the 8th Grade Majors Fair, and Cougar Pals. Academic programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels have numerous experiential learning opportunities, from First Year Seminar for entering students to internships, service-learning courses, practicums, study away, clinical experiences, and research with faculty. (CFR 2.3) Some of these opportunities are described below.

Service-Learning

Each year, over 3,000 students across academic disciplines participate in the high-impact practice of experiential learning through a variety of academic service-learning courses. (CFR 2.5) For nearly three decades, APU students in the School of Education have impacted the lives of over 13,000 elementary school students in the Azusa Unified School District through the College Headed and Mighty Proud (C.H.A.M.P.) Program. APU undergraduate students in the Diversity in the Classroom (EDLS 405) course study theories, concepts, and barriers related to diverse learners. Through the C.H.A.M.P. partnership these students apply their learning and develop professionally by leading small groups of fourth graders through a curriculum to introduce college to the students, working through topics such as majors and careers, financial aid, and college admission. The program includes a visit to APU and a graduation ceremony for parents, teachers, students, and principals to celebrate together. A number of former C.H.A.M.P. participants become students at APU. (CFR 2.5)

During the 2020-2021 academic year, service-learning continued virtually and maintained the reciprocal benefits of student learning and community engagement. An APU student in the fall 2020 C.H.A.M.P. program reflected, "Working with the students was really beneficial for the class, as it helped provide a clear example of cross-cultural experiences like we have talked about in class. I particularly enjoyed how much the students clearly liked talking to someone in college and seeing that it is very attainable." During the virtual C.H.A.M.P. graduation in spring 2021, a fourth grade student speaker enthusiastically announced that participating in C.H.A.M.P. was the highlight of his year of remote learning.

Study Away (Study Abroad)

APU offers a variety of domestic and international semester and short-term study away programs to undergraduate and graduate populations. During the 2017-18 academic year, 555 APU students participating in 49 programs studied away in 35 countries on six continents. Undergraduate majors that lead APU student participation in study away are Nursing, Psychology, Business, Kinesiology, and Communication Studies. Additionally, graduate students in Business, Higher Education, Psychology, Theology, and Nursing frequently participate in short-term, faculty-led programs. (CFR 2.3)

Study away programs are designed through the Center for Global Learning and Engagement (CGLE) and offered for the purpose of student development of APU's 11 global learning objectives in order to graduate students that are prepared to engage and lead in a globalized society. In pre-departure materials, students select global learning objectives they intend to pursue while studying away and then report on growth in post-program materials that are then reported in annual reports (see Appendix 3.04 - CGLE 2018-2019 Annual Report and Appendix 3.05 - CGLE 2019-2020 Annual Report). The global learning objectives most frequently identified by students with significant growth included local and global awareness, communication, self-limitation, cultural inquiry, perspective transformation, and interpersonal engagement. An additional and important outcome related to study away is the finding that approximately 69% of traditional undergraduate students who studied away graduated within four years, and 89% within six years, at APU, well above APU's average 6-year graduation rate of 66% (see Appendix 3.06 - CGLE and Study Abroad Analysis).

Additionally, APU offers a unique re-entry, post-program curriculum (GLBL 425: Integration and Formation Seminar) for traditional undergraduate students that participated in semester study away programs. The curriculum is designed to provide *guided self-reflection*, a critical component of study away experiences, to ensure meaning making and integration of their experience with spiritual, academic, and vocational development to maximize learning. The course frequently ranks in the top two most helpful reentry resources by students, secondary to reuniting with study away cohort members. GLBL 425 offers students the opportunity to articulate and share their learning and worldview development with the APU community through active engagement in the *Study Away Symposium*, a semesterly event that hosts both poster and group presentations. (CFR 2.5)

In addition to semester-long programs, APU faculty create approximately 20 to 30 annual, customized, short-term study away programs (*GO Terms*) for professional and traditional undergraduate, master, and doctoral students in order to contribute to student success through study away pedagogy. These degree-specific programs connect students with faculty and develop student career readiness competencies (see Appendix 3.07 - NACE Career Readiness Competencies) with APU students reporting the highest growth in the competencies of global/intercultural fluency, teamwork/collaboration, critical thinking/problem solving, and professionalism/work ethic as a result of participation in their study away program. (CFRs 2.3-2.5)

General Education Curriculum

APU has a General Education (GE) program rooted in biblical and theological formation and study of the liberal arts and sciences, which cultivates students' skills, understanding, wisdom, and virtue for a life of service and ethical leadership. The program builds on the AAC&U's Essential Learning Outcomes, structured around knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, intellectual and practical skills, personal and social responsibility, and integrative and applied learning. APU's GE program also incorporates biblical, theological, and philosophical formation, both through courses taught in the School of Theology and through scholarly engagement with Christian perspectives throughout the curriculum. (CFR 2.2b)

Highlights of the GE program include a First-Year Seminar, a series of three writing courses, and requirements in the areas of intercultural competence, civic knowledge and engagement, and integrative and applied learning. The First-Year Seminar engages students in critical thinking in the area of their declared major, together with an instructor and other students from that discipline. In addition, the seminar introduces students to key wellness strategies and support services as they transition into college life. The writing sequence builds from a general study of the art and craft of writing to an exploration of genre, evidence, and persuasion, to a culminating experience of writing in the student's chosen discipline. Finally, the intercultural competence, civic knowledge and engagement, and integrative and applied learning requirements prepare students to use the knowledge and skills they develop to make a meaningful difference in society. (CFR 2.2b)

The GE curriculum is guided by 15 General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs) (click on the tab entitled Program Learning Outcomes). GELOs 3-7 are precisely the five WSCUC Core Competencies: critical thinking, written communication, oral communication, information literacy, and quantitative reasoning. The remaining GELOs involve students practicing the Core Competencies and other higher-order thinking skills in a variety of disciplinary contexts.

For example, students learn to "apply scientific vocabulary, data, methods, and/or principles to explain natural or human phenomena" (GELO 1), "evaluate principles and practices of civic engagement and make informed decisions" (GELO 8), and "synthesize and apply learning from multiple contexts" (GELO 12). (CFR 2.2a)

While all students must complete the GE program, there are variations in how this is accomplished, something that will be examined in the future as part of *Renewal*. For example, students in the Honors College complete a 48-unit great works curriculum which serves as an alternative means of satisfying the 15 GELOs, as reflected in a table of equivalency. The Honors curriculum combines weekly plenary lectures with small, discussion-based seminars that explore life's big questions and facilitate close relationships among faculty and fellow students. A 24-unit core, taught in an integrative and interdisciplinary fashion, entails study of select classic works, including the New Testament, that have shaped students' spiritual and intellectual heritage and continue to influence them today. In addition to variations for Honors students, professional undergraduate students have slightly different expectations for completing the GE program, with courses designed for their curriculum as professional students. (CFR 2.2a)

Two websites provide details for students and faculty to navigate and get the most out of the GE courses. The assessment of the GE program is discussed in component four.

Maintaining the Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of APU Degrees Through Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance Through Faculty Participation

The primary mechanism for ensuring programmatic quality and integrity of the degree is the participation of APU's highly qualified faculty. (CFR 2.4) Not only do faculty participate in the curricular design process, but faculty are the key stakeholders in quality assurance. The primary mechanism for this oversight is through Faculty Senate studies councils and their associated curriculum committees. Each program level (undergraduate, professional, masters, doctoral) has an elected body of faculty members to review proposed curricular changes. Additionally, every school/college has formed a school-specific curriculum committee as a review body. In all cases, peer faculty are reviewing the curricular proposals of its peers in order to ensure academic quality (see Appendix 3.08 - Faculty Governance Org Chart). (CFR 2.4)

Additionally, faculty provide quality assurance during program review. Each program submits its program review report to a subcommittee of the studies council called the Program Review Committee (PRC). This team of peers reviews the report and responds to the findings using a rubric, as well as validates and/or revises the findings of the program. The Faculty Senate endorses the findings of the PRC through the approval of minutes (see Appendix 3.09 - Program Review Flow Chart). (CFRs 2.7 and 4.3) See component 6 for a more complete discussion of program review.

Quality Assurance Through Systematic Curricular Review

The process for introducing new curricular offerings or changing existing curricular offerings at APU incorporates faculty oversight throughout. (CFR 4.4) The Office of Curricular Support (OCS) is an academic support office that has developed considerably since the previous re-affirmation visit and provides curricular assistance to entities throughout

campus. Staff members from OCS sit as "ex officio" members of curriculum committees and studies councils and provide guidance for student learning outcome and syllabus development, as well as help to manage the workflow of the curriculum approval process through a suite of products called CourseLeaf. Clear processes are available for all program directors and chairs to create new curriculum or edit the curriculum in their span of care (see Appendix 3.10 - CourseLeaf User Guide: Approving Courses and Programs).

Quality Assurance Through Program Review

All of the programs at APU are comprehensively reviewed on an intermittent cycle, using the faculty-governed program review process (discussed in Appendix 3.11 - Program Review Handbook), facilitated by the director of curricular effectiveness. The program review process is a peer-reviewed system with dean oversight of budgetary implications. Programs undergoing review must identify strengths, areas for growth, and action plans to address gaps in the quality of their programs. This process is the primary mechanism to improve program quality and student learning. (CFR 2.7) See component 6 for a complete description of APU's program review process.

Improving the Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of APU's Degrees: Next Steps

The Integration of Curricular and Co-Curricular

The co-curricular elements that an APU student experiences are housed primarily in the Division of Student Affairs (student affairs). Similar to academic programs, the co-curricular programs also map to the ILOs, engage in student learning assessment, and also undergo periodic program review (see component 6). Since the reorganization of student affairs and hiring of a new vice president of student affairs in 2018, the division has demonstrated a renewed dedication to academic bridging. As described in Appendix 3.12 - An Overview of Co-Curricular Programs at APU, the student affairs division has numerous successful academic partnerships, mostly characterized by co-participation in programs or committees rather than co-creation of an integrated program or event. (CFR 2.11)

The work of the *Renewal* Working Group on Spiritual Formation and Faith Integration represents an excellent next step for the integration of the curricular and co-curricular, as the institution explores ways to meaningfully connect academic faith integration and spiritual development into the curriculum and teaching of academic programs. This work will likely result in a collaborative effort between student affairs and academic programs to create programs and strategies for student growth. Additionally, the *Renewal* Working Group on Curricular and Pedagogical Innovation is also tasked with exploring how curricular and co-curricular initiatives transform student learning. Continued collaboration between academic programs and chapel will also create clearer connections for the students to see how their spiritual and academic development meaningfully align. (CFR 2.11)

Revisioning General Education

Renewal has correctly identified the need to review and reimagine general education in light of the similarities and differences in the three ways students at APU (traditional undergraduate, professional undergraduate, and Honors College) fulfill GE requirements. The sub-committee of the *Renewal* Working Group on Curricular and

Pedagogical Innovation produced a list of recommendations for consideration in order to improve the GE curriculum and realize the strategic plan goals (see Appendix 1.13 - *Renewal* Working Groups Initial Recommendations). While the governance of the GE curriculum resides in the General Education Council (GEC), the working group's initial recommendations also highlight the need to clarify the relationship with the Director of General Education, Undergraduate Studies Council, and the Professional Studies Council.

Rethinking the 4Cs

While the institutional learning outcomes (the 4Cs) have been a part of APU's curriculum "on paper" for eight years, the university has not enthusiastically embraced them. A fall 2013 faculty kickoff launched the new ILOs, with a subsequent spring 2014 faculty development day devoted to broadening its impact. As indicated here and in component 4, all programs actively map to the 4Cs and assess student competence; however, programs do not actively promote them, relying instead on their own program learning outcomes. This self-study process, along with the strategic plan, may very well lead APU to revise or eliminate ILOs, particularly in light of strong programmatic and required GE outcomes and APU's ongoing commitment to the Four Cornerstones (Christ, Community, Scholarship, Service), which have obvious overlap.

Component 4: Educational Quality: Student Learning, Core Competencies, and Standards of Performance at Graduation

To attain a degree at Azusa Pacific University, students must achieve a number of criteria, all communicated in the appropriate student catalog (undergraduate, graduate, and professional) and certified by an academic records specialist. Additionally, students are provided with accurate information related to time to completion in every program. (CFR 2.2)

Student Learning Outcomes as Standards of Performance

In terms of student learning standards, regardless of program or level, all students are expected to demonstrate competence in the institutional learning outcomes (ILOs), called the 4Cs (Competence, Critical Thinking, Character, and Community). (CFR 2.3) In addition to demonstrating Competence and Critical Thinking as part of their academic training, students are expected to develop and display Character through faith integration and spiritual formation activities, as well as serve the local and global Community through ministry hours, service-learning experiences, study abroad, and/or experiential learning such as internships, clinicals, etc. (see component 3). Students are also expected to demonstrate competence in their academic program learning outcomes (PLOs), and at the undergraduate level, the General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs) and WSCUC Core Competencies. (CFRs 2.2b and 2.4)

Program faculty work directly with their dean to determine appropriate standards of performance, and programs with external stakeholders (e.g., clinical sites, professional accreditation) work with those stakeholders to ensure that the program outcomes meet professional standards. Additionally, it is the responsibility of program faculty to map their PLOs to the ILOs and, at the undergraduate level, map PLOs to appropriate GELOs and WSCUC Core Competencies. (CFR 2.4) As discussed in component 3, the 15 GELOs incorporate WSCUC Core Competencies and are assessed regularly through the General Education curriculum, but academic programs are also expected to facilitate student accomplishment of relevant GELOs and Core Competencies through programmatic assessment. (CFRs 2.4 and 2.6)

Mapping Learning Outcomes to Ensure Alignment

The manner in which most programs ensure the curriculum addresses important learning standards for graduation is to map their curriculum to the various learning outcomes either through an in-house assessment Google sheet (see component 6) or through an assessment software (Taskstream). The director of curricular effectiveness is responsible for providing support for assessment protocols and also provides oversight to the program review process, thus providing resourcing to both systems of curricular continuous improvement. Curriculum maps, multi-year assessment plans, annual assessment results, and program review materials can be found in Appendix 2.02 - Assessment and Program Review Materials for all APU Programs.

Learning Outcomes Assessment to Promote Educational Quality

In addition to ensuring that the program curriculum is mapped to other outcome measures, each program measures whether students are achieving outcomes at an appropriate level and reports their findings in the assessment Google sheet or in Taskstream. Appendix 2.02 - Assessment and Program Review Materials for all APU Programs links to all of the program's assessment plans and findings. (CFR 2.4)

Assessing Academic Program Learning Outcomes

To ensure students are able to achieve program standards of performance, every program evaluates student learning data on an annual basis. While the manner in which annual assessment takes place varies, faculty are actively involved in the assessment process. (CFR 2.4) For example, some departments have assessment committees that work collaboratively to review findings; others use individual faculty or staff assigned to a particular outcome associated with a course; still others meet as an entire department at an end-of-year "assessment party" so that all faculty are involved. Each program identifies the best student product to determine student accomplishment of their program learning outcomes (PLOs). Programs may develop their own assessment schedules (some more rigorous because of professional accreditation), but programs must assess all of their PLOs at least once in an assessment cycle prior to program review. Each program identifies in their assessment Google sheet the schedule of assessment, the evidence collected to assess an outcome, the appropriate benchmarks for student competence, and the findings of the assessment. In many cases, programs are guided by professional accreditation when setting benchmarks. Once conclusions about student performance have been drawn in the assessment Google sheet, the member of the University Assessment Committee (Assessment Committee) associated with each program (typically a dean or

associate dean) provides feedback to each program about its conclusions about student learning, as well as helping to identify gaps in performance based on school/college standards, professional accreditation standards, or discipline standards. (CFR 4.3)

When a student learning gap is identified as part of this annual process or from program review (discussed in component 6), changes to curriculum are often made. For example, the M.A. in English program recently discovered through their program review process that they needed more direct measures for evaluating their second PLO and added a new course to their annual assessment process: "We recommend further that ENGL 500, The Christian Imagination, may be the better course to assess relative to PLO #2, as this course asks students to 'refine their own convictions about the relationship between literature and faith and begin articulating their own sense of vocation as writers, readers, scholars, critics, and teachers.'" Some other notable examples of change as a result of gaps in student performance include:

- A redesign of curriculum within the Division of Teacher Education in APU's School of Education, in response to perceived low graduation rates.

- Implementation of a new testing system, courses and guidelines in the School of Nursing's Bachelor of Science in Nursing program (Kaplan Inc.) to improve NCLEX-RN® pass rates among graduates.

- Inclusion of new course material about case conceptualization (PPSY 701 and 701A) and report writing (PPSY 775) in the Doctor of Clinical Psychology (PsyD) program in response to feedback from on-site evaluators and student data patterns.

For other examples of closing the loop on student learning, see Appendix 4.01 - Exemplars from Assessment Worksheet Reporting or for more options, Appendix 2.02 - Assessment and Program Review Materials for all APU Programs; after opening a program's annual assessment Google worksheet, click on the tab entitled annual assessment at the bottom of the program's worksheet.

Assessing General Education Outcomes and WSCUC Core Competencies

As indicated in component 3, APU's General Education (GE) curriculum is guided by 15 General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs) (click on the tab entitled Program Learning Outcomes). GELOs 3-7 are precisely the five WSCUC Core Competencies. Written communication and information literacy are the focus of the three-course writing sequence, while oral communication and quantitative reasoning each have a dedicated GE course requirement. Several different GE requirements target critical thinking; namely, approximately nine weeks of the First-Year Seminar are devoted to critical thinking instruction and practice, and the History, Literature, Writing, and Biblical, Theological, and Philosophical Formation requirements all build upon that foundation. (CFR 2.2b)

Student progress on GELOs (especially the five Core Competencies) is assessed by the General Education Assessment Committee, a subcommittee of the General Education Council (GEC). Due to transitory leadership in this area, the GE assessment plan has gone through multiple stages of development and revision since the new GE program was launched in 2016. However, each WSCUC Core Competency has been assessed in at least two

courses, and critical thinking has been assessed in seven courses (see Appendix 4.02 - Summary of WSCUC Core Competency Assessment in GE Program). Assessment work began in fall 2017, following an assessment protocol (See Appendix 4.03 - GE Assessment Protocol) and multi-year assessment calendar. (CFRs 2.2b and 2.6)

The assessment process was reexamined and modified in fall of 2019 to align with the recertification process for GE courses. (CFR 2.6) This recertification realignment requires all courses to be examined in detail every three to four years and ensures that all course syllabi align to GE benchmarks. Using AAC&U Value Rubrics as guides, rubrics for assessment of syllabi were created by the GE Assessment Committee to establish benchmarks and are evaluated and updated as needed. With both syllabi examination by the GE Curriculum Committee and evaluation of student learning by the GE Assessment Committee, APU's General Education curriculum is regularly evaluated, critiqued, and modified for mission fidelity. For example, based on an assessment of a sample of Writing 2 courses in the summer of 2021 and the failure of a significant number of students to meet the expected benchmark, the GEC will be discussing how to improve collaboration between GEC and the departments who teach Writing 2 courses, and the possibility of rewriting the GE Learning Outcomes pertinent to those courses. For more detailed information regarding the findings from assessment of the APU General Education program, see the GE Assessment Material folder (if needed, hyperlinked material within each report can be provided). While the most recent assessments of GE (and the Core Competencies) have occurred in lower division courses where assessment is more easily accomplished, it is the intention of the GE Assessment Committee and the GE Council to evaluate and assess all GE Learning Outcomes, including those housed in upper division courses that primarily reside in areas of the program, in order to see how student learning may develop as students progress through their academic career. However, given the re-examination of the GE curriculum to take place through *Renewal*, and the recent hire of a new GE Director at the time this report was submitted, it is likely that further delays will occur. (CFR 2.2a)

Assessing Student Learning at the Institutional Level

In addition to assessing its program learning outcomes, every program is expected to assess student learning across the 4Cs (as applicable to the program) and report that learning in both the annual Google assessment sheet, as well as in program review. Student learning data are examined in the aggregate by the University Assessment Committee (Assessment Committee), reinstituted in response to faculty feedback. Consisting of faculty, staff, and/or dean representation from academic and co-curricular units, the Assessment Committee members were initially responsible for assessment activities in their units; however, the committee was recently tasked with examining student learning data at the institutional level to ensure that APU students are making adequate progress toward achievement of the 4Cs, the WSCUC Core Competencies, and other appropriate student performance indicators. Once again, with changes in leadership at the level of provost and ALO, much of the work to be done will begin in fall 2021, thus putting APU behind in its desire to share and utilize learning data for meaningful decision-making. Additionally, the lack of University-level benchmarks for ILOs, as well as the variety of ways in which each program chooses to assess them, has contributed to a delay in this important work. (CFRs 1.2, 4.3, and 4.4)

Assessing Student Learning in the Co-Curricular Domain

To contribute to student learning in the co-curricular domain, student affairs has developed nine division-wide student learning outcomes (SLOs) that drive current programming and services for student success to graduation (for a list of SLOs, please refer to page 4 of Appendix 4.04 - 2020-21 Student Affairs Year End Report). The SLO's are organized by "pillar," with all student affairs offices reporting on assessment of Engagement (SLOs 1-4), Wellness (SLOs 5-6), and Spiritual Formation (SLOs 7-9) on a once-every-three-years cycle. These SLOs are intentionally aligned with and mapped to the institutional learning outcomes (4Cs) to further reinforce and provide opportunities to apply in-class learning to students' broader campus experience and beyond into their surrounding communities. (CFR 2.11)

The University Counseling Center (UCC) provides a prime example of the use of assessment to shape the programming and services within student affairs. In 2015-16, all (then) student life offices went through the process of program review, utilizing an in-house document created in partnership with the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and based loosely on Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) standards. The mission of the UCC is to promote wellness through counseling and outreach services to the APU community. Through the process of program review, it was noted by center staff and external reviewers that the UCC was not adequately resourced to give sufficient attention to outreach, and that additional staff to oversee this area would bolster these efforts. Additionally, a need for greater social media presence was noted. Further feedback from one reviewer also recommended "student involvement in strategic planning and creation/modification/dissemination of learning outcomes." Additional assessment through student participation in the National College Health Assessment (NCHA) in the fall of 2017 (N=637) showed that 24% of traditional undergraduates sought counseling at the UCC during their academic career, aligning with other universities nationally (20%). Students also reported a desire for the university to provide them with information on stress reduction (77%), relationship difficulties (60%), and how to help others in distress (76%).

In response to these findings, in 2018 the UCC received approval to convert an open psychologist position to a full-time outreach coordinator. This new staff member was able to expand outreach services to students in two primary ways. First, to address students' desired learning, a series of workshops entitled "Cougars Care" was developed to address areas noted in the NCHA. Students who attended at least four workshops out of six in the series received a certificate of completion. In addition, in partnership with the undergraduate psychology department, students were able to receive research credit. During the past academic year, 408 students participated in Cougars Care. Assessment of the Cougars Care curriculum can be found in Appendix 4.05 - Assessment of Cougar's Care Curriculum and was very favorable and resulted in a presentation at a national conference (Fernandez, N., Eck, B., & Collison, B. [2021]. "Gen Z College Students' Mental Health during a Pandemic: A Preventative Outreach Initiative." Paper presentation to the Christian Association of Psychological Studies).

The second primary effort of the outreach coordinator was to address the need for increased student involvement in dissemination of mental health information and advocacy, mentioned in the 2015-16 program review, through the creation of a peer educator program in partnership with the undergraduate psychology department. Six students were selected as UCC peers during the 2020-21 academic year. In addition to co-planning and delivering the

Cougars Care workshop content, these peers also created a "Wellness Wednesday" Instagram workshop series that received over 2,570 views. Given that this was a pilot program and that the content was delivered over Instagram and viewed asynchronously, UCC is working in the future to better assess the learning that resulted from this program. It has also taken time to identify learning outcomes specifically for the peer educators around mental health awareness and leadership skills that will be assessed in the future. These results will continue to shape the outreach and educational efforts of the UCC as it anticipates the needs of students and welcomes a new cohort of eight peer educators.

Program Review: The Comprehensive Measure of Educational Quality and Student Performance

In addition to the annual assessment of student learning, the program review process (discussed in detail in component 6) provides an even more robust assessment of student performance and an opportunity for changes to educational quality. In Appendix 4.06 - Program Review Template (12th edition), program faculty assess not only student learning, but also graduation and retention rates, evidence of faith integration comprehension, faculty qualifications and accomplishments that contribute to program quality, and successful completion of internships and other applied learning. (CFR 2.7) The use of interactive data dashboards, embedded within each program's template, provides a comprehensive picture of student performance on key indicators and provides direction for programmatic improvement. (CFR 4.4) The expectation for a department to do such a comprehensive examination of their program(s) often leads to curricular and structural changes in order to continually improve quality and performance. For example, the M.S. in Athletic Training program recently wrote in their program review, "In light of the competitor analysis [required for program review] and annual program assessment data, changes to the program have been proposed.... Our program is moving from a regional and task-specific organization of content to a more integrated design that will help develop clinicians. Additionally, we've removed 6 units of research to bolster content required for entry-level clinical practice." Another example is found in the Azusa Pacific Seminary, where large-scale discussions are taking place about converting all 4-unit courses to 3-units. This conversation was prompted by doing the competitor analysis component in their program review and is being actively explored by the APS faculty during the 2021-2022 academic year. Appendix 2.02 - Assessment and Program Review Materials for all APU Programs contains all program review materials for review.

Improving Educational Quality: Next Steps

While student performance data (e.g., retention rates) is collected systematically and is reviewed at the program level, the distribution and use of student learning and performance data for institutional decision-making is an area of growth. (CFR 1.2) The University Assessment Committee has just begun to review ILO data and at this time, there are not any university benchmarks or expectations around ILOs, a deficiency that must be addressed. Additionally, findings from annual assessment and program review tend to stay isolated at the program level and do not inform broader academic discussions or decisions. (CFR 4.3) Assessment work is not prominently celebrated nor rewarded, a fact that has been identified repeatedly by faculty for why they lack enthusiasm around such a foundational task (see component 6). (CFR 2.9) With a new administration in the Office of the Provost, the creation of the University

Assessment Committee, and a new incoming president, APU will need to find ways to incorporate a culture of assessment more prominently into the faculty role, incentivize excellence in the assessment of student performance, and visibly use institutional data in its decision-making protocols.

Going forward, the GE multi-year assessment plan will be updated in alignment with the revision of the GE curriculum called for in *Renewal*. (CFR 2.2b) It will be important for the *Renewal* Working Group on Curricular and Pedagogical Innovation to work in collaboration with the GEC and GE leadership to both strengthen the GE curriculum and to ensure its faithful implementation and assessment in courses offered by departments across campus. Additionally, the collaborative relationship between academic departments and the leadership of GE and the Writing Program should be strengthened and clarified so that all parties are working together to ensure student attainment of GELOs, including, especially, the five WSCUC Core Competencies.

Component 5: Student Success: Student Learning, Retention, and Graduation

Defining Student Success

Azusa Pacific University annually ranks among the nation's top universities by U.S News and World Report. In 2020, APU made several rankings lists, including First-Year Experience (#27) and Social Mobility (#71), as well as Freshman Retention, Highest Proportion of Classes with Fewer than 20 Students, Highest Economic Diversity, and Highest Four-Year Graduation Rate. These ratings demonstrate APU's progress toward supporting student success. Yet, APU acknowledges that significant work still needs to be done in the coordination of success initiatives across divisions and differing student populations. (CFR 2.13)

Azusa Pacific University considers retention, persistence, and graduation rates when considering student success. We provide academic and co-curricular growth opportunities through programs, services, and initiatives that offer students the support needed to holistically succeed during their educational pursuits and beyond. (CFR 2.13) With the goal of becoming a *Thriving University of Choice*, APU currently is evaluating its definition of student success to more clearly align with evidence-based benchmarks across all student populations. Based on research from the Thriving Project, thriving students are intellectually, interpersonally, and psychologically engaged in the learning process, growing and developing in their intellectual and spiritual lives and relationships with others. (see Appendix

5.01 - Thriving: Expanding the Goals of Higher Education and Appendix 5.02 - Thriving Research References).
These attributes are developed in APU students through the collaborative efforts of the Divisions of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Enrollment Management, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

An Overview of Student Retention and Graduation

While not the sole indicator of student success, APU collects and tracks retention and graduation data in order to determine if there are differential levels of success among different student demographics. Data review of first-time freshmen undergraduate cohorts shows that the first-year retention rate is currently at 76.2% for the 2019 cohort, and the most recent six year graduation rate is 66% for the 2014 cohort. While the graduation rate is consistent with recent prior cohorts, the retention rate is 5% below the prior year's cohort and 8% below the mean of the four most recent prior cohorts. Much of this drop is most likely attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic, but this metric will continue to be monitored to ensure that this recent retention drop is not sustained. First year retention rates and six year graduation rates disaggregated by IPEDS race/ethnicity categories show that most racial/ethnic groups perform similarly. However, specific groups are subject to high degrees of fluctuation likely due to smaller numbers of students in these groups. For groups with a minimum of 100 students, the retention rates of Black or African American students have consistently been a few percentage points lower than other racial/ethnic groups, while the retention rates of Asian students have consistently been a few percentage points higher. All student groups demonstrated a drop in retention rates in fall 2020 with the exception of Asian and Nonresident Alien students. In terms of gender, six year graduation rates disaggregated by IPEDS gender categories show that male students consistently have lower graduation rates than female students (see disaggregated retention and graduation rate dashboard). Further study is needed to determine why disparities exist and how they can best be addressed. (CFR 2.10)

Becoming a Thriving University of Choice

As indicated above, creating a thriving environment for students is foundational to student success. In 2018-19, in order to identify areas of strength and challenge in providing a university environment that enhanced undergraduate student thriving and persistence, the provost authorized an analysis of undergraduate student success at APU. Dr. Laurie Schreiner (author of the Thriving Quotient (Appendix 5.03 - Thriving Quotient Items) and lead researcher in the Thriving Project), collected and analyzed data from 15 different student surveys and reports from a variety of university offices. She interviewed 20 staff, faculty, and administrators associated with student success initiatives on campus and conducted four focus groups with students. Dr. Schreiner's Student Success Analysis, found in Appendix 5.04, informed the development of the *Renewal* Grand Initiative of becoming a *Thriving University of Choice*, including providing strategic action items that have been defined for the first two years of the strategic planning process. (CFRs 4.3 and 4.4) (See Appendix 1.11 - *Renewal* Outcomes and Action Items by Grand Initiatives). This analysis also informed the development of the co-curricular 3-pillar model of student success (see pg. 37 and Appendix 3.12 - An Overview of Co-Curricular Programs at APU).

Academic Student Support Services' Contribution to Student Thriving and Success

APU has created robust support programs to support first-generation students, low-income students, and students with disabilities, many of whom require additional academic, economic, and social support services to thrive in post-secondary education. With an average class size of 16, a student-faculty ratio of 12:1, and over 90% of students receiving academic aid, APU is committed to the success of our at-risk underrepresented populations in all educational programs. Our institution has increased cross campus collaborations such as improved advising, TRIO programs, and first generation college student resources put into place to address the needs of a diverse student body. (CFR 2.13)

Academic Success Center

The Academic Success Center (ASC) is committed to offering comprehensive academic services, programming, and resources that support all students in thinking critically, planning accordingly, and thriving academically as they become difference makers at APU. In an effort to address the decline in retention and graduation rates for undergraduate students, ASC has implemented student support initiatives that contribute to overall student persistence. These initiatives include a new advising model for traditional undergraduate students, an Academic Success Launch Program, significant improvements to the First-Year Seminar, and increased support to first generation college students which can be reviewed in detail in Appendix 5.05 - Academic Success Center. (CFR 2.13)

National Survey of Student Engagement

One of the ways APU tracks student success initiatives, particularly as it relates to student engagement, is with the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) from Indiana University which collects information about the undergraduate experience of both first-year and senior students. Currently, APU conducts the NSSE every other spring semester, and the results are analyzed (see Appendix 5.06 - 2019-20 NSSE Summary Report) and shared with the APU community through the provost's newsletter the following fall semester (see Appendix 5.07 - Provost's Newsletter - 10-1-20). Academic affairs and student affairs can then use this data to identify areas of strength and areas for growth. Improving the dissemination of this information to the APU community has been a good first step towards ensuring that this data is utilized to improve student thriving at APU; however, APU needs more intentional processes that utilize the data after it has been disseminated. (CFR 4.3)

Student Affairs' Contribution to Student Thriving and Success

The Division of Student Affairs (student affairs) at APU has based its 3-pillar model of student success on Thriving Project research. This research has provided significant evidence that students who thrive and are successful in college share specific habits and characteristics, including "engaged learning," "academic determination," "positive perspective," "diverse citizenship," and "social connectedness." A recent study of APU freshmen revealed that APU students scored significantly higher on four of these five indices than the national norm. According to Schreiner (Appendix 5.01 Thriving: Expanding the Goals of Higher Education), students that demonstrate engaged learning are those who meaningfully process material, make mental connections, show interest in what needs to be learned,

are focused, attentive, and actively think about and discuss what they are learning. APU is committed to providing students with the opportunity to engage in this kind of intentional application of learning inside and outside of the classroom in the co-curricular environment. (CFR 2.11)

Pillar 1: Student Engagement

Dr. Schreiner's research (as well as a number of other researchers) concludes that building a psychological sense of community is the strongest predictor of thriving for all students, and that social connectedness is a key aspect of thriving in college.Thus, the Student Engagement pillar, which includes four co-curricular student learning outcomes introduced in component 4, provides a variety of opportunities for students to build meaningful connections with others and contribute to the needs and shared goals of our unique Christian educational community. These include residence life programming and commuter, graduate and professional student opportunities for engagement. A description of these opportunities can be viewed in more detail in Appendix 5.08 - Division of Student Affairs - Pillar 1: Student Engagement.

Pillar 2: Student Wellness

According to research, students who thrive are able to maintain a positive perspective. These are students who have an optimistic way of viewing the world and their future; who take a broader and more long term view of their situation, often reframing failures as temporary setbacks and learning opportunities, and who approach life with a sense of gratitude. Often, a focus on intentionally developing student strengths (including "competency" as well as "character" strengths) can also contribute to this positive perspective and individual thriving. Thus, the Student Wellness pillar, which includes two co-curricular learning outcomes introduced in component 4, provides Christ-centered wellness services, programs, and educational opportunities that empower students and the APU community to thrive physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually. Several examples, which include accessibility and disability resources and the university counseling center programming, are described in Appendix 5.09 - Division of Student Affairs - Pillar 2: Student Wellness.

Pillar 3: Spiritual Formation

Deeply embedded in the mission of APU is our desire as a community of disciples and scholars to encourage our students to "develop a Christian perspective of truth and life." Dr. Schreiner's research supports spirituality as a major pathway for thriving in college. Further, spirituality is a major pathway to thriving specifically for students of color – twice as important as for dominant culture students. As a HSI/AAPI serving institution, this presents unique opportunities to create environments and experiences that draw from a variety of Christian traditions. Thus, the Spiritual Formation pillar, which includes three co-curricular student learning goals introduced in component 4, contributes to students' spiritual development by providing opportunities to participate in corporate worship, local and global service, Christian formation, and spiritual care, further described in Appendix 5.10 - Division of Student Affairs - Pillar 3: Spiritual Formation.

Next Steps for Student Success

APU is aware that there are disparities between our students of color and white students in retention and graduation rates (see disaggregated retention and graduation rate dashboard). APU has struggled to add the additional support programs needed to support the growing and diverse needs of our student populations. Implementation of new programs such as TRIO programs and GEN1 Scholars Programs are contributing to the resourcing needs; however, continued assessment and implementation of new interventions and support are needed. (CFR 2.13) As an institution APU has identified the need for more disaggregated students' success data, as well as predictive analytics, that will assist in evaluating additional student population specific needs. (CFR 2.10)

Additionally, APU has identified an inequity in student support provided to our professional students, who study at our regional locations and online but not in Azusa, and our graduate students. A program evaluation from the undergraduate psychology department at APU (Appendix 5.11 - Program Evaluation - Professional Student Experience) identified recommendations to improve student success based on the student experiences of those enrolled in our regional campuses. Key recommendations were to engage in success coaching, strategic communication of available resources, and connection to the main campus. The implementation of the Graduate and Professional Student Engagement office has initiated support. APU's telehealth offers students 24/7, no cost medical and counseling for conditions that are safe and can be accurately diagnosed and treated online. The Academic Success Center has provided support calls and tutoring services. However, further assessment and evaluation of needs for our professional and graduate programs is being conducted, and it will be essential to incorporate research regarding the success of students at our regional locations. Collecting the relevant data is an important dimension; at the same time, it will be critical for our teams to pose further questions about the experience of students whose primary instructional location is outside of Azusa.

Through *Renewal* there is a working group focused on Student Success and Retention with the first goals for year one of the seven year strategic plan implementation focused on reviewing the data and research of underserved student populations at APU and identifying interventions and support resources needed. This strategic planning working group has identified the students in the graduate and professional student population as an underserved student population in need of additional support resources. The evaluation and recommendations for what needs to be implemented is still forthcoming, although initial recommendations from the working group can be found in Appendix 1.13 - *Renewal* Working Groups Initial Recommendations. (CFR 2.13)

Component 6: Quality Assurance and Improvement: Program Review; Assessment; Use of Data and Evidence

Azusa Pacific University has many systems and processes for collecting data. Faculty evaluation and course evaluation data are collected through highly effective, external software platforms to facilitate decisions about faculty contracts. The Learning Management System (Canvas) has the capability to collect robust student data for retention and student success initiatives. Austen and Delaware data have been utilized for decisions about program viability. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) has a regular calendar of surveys (see Appendix 6.01 - National Survey Annual Cycle Planning) to collect student engagement, student satisfaction, student thriving, and campus climate data. While the collection of data is a strength of APU, the systematic use of data for decision-making, as well as the need to better integrate data across differing definitions and systems, are areas of growth. (CFR 4.3)

Quality Assurance Processes

In its CPR visit APU was commended for its policies, structures, and procedures around quality assurance, namely its systems of annual assessment and program review, as well as the creation of CTLA. However, at the EER visit and in the subsequent March 11, 2013 Commission Action Letter, the Commission (via the recommendation of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) evaluation team) indicated that the ***use*** (emphasis added) of programmatic assessment data appeared to be variable. "Some units had made great strides, most units reported some progress, and a few units appeared to continue to struggle." The lack of consistency across the university raised some questions regarding the clear institutionalization of programmatic assessment and suggested that faculty participation might be linked to additional compensation. (no CFR provided) APU was asked to address the issue of inconsistency and the participation of faculty in a 2015 Interim Report, which it did successfully, but we continue to explore methodologies to actively engage faculty. (CFR 2.4)

Assessment of Student Learning

As part of its response and throughout the ensuing years, APU evaluated its assessment of student learning practice and strengthened its feedback and accountability system. An audit of assessment plans was conducted, and deans were notified of program participation levels so that they could support their faculty toward a more active participation in assessment processes. Prior to the EER, accountability and feedback on faculty assessment activities was provided by a single administrative position (director of curricular effectiveness), with no further input from the schools/colleges. When asked about their variable levels of participation in program assessment, faculty indicated that feedback should come from within the academic realm; thus, APU changed its feedback loop by creating a University Assessment Committee consisting of faculty, deans, and staff to provide feedback, help build more buy-in, and share assessment findings more broadly. (CFR 1.2) Accountability and feedback on assessment activity is now provided by the Assessment Committee member (typically a dean or associate dean) of the school/college rather than the director of curricular effectiveness, hopefully communicating the importance of assessment to the faculty role. Additionally, participation in administrative work (such as assessment and program review) is now an evaluated component of the Faculty Evaluation System (see Appendix 6.02 - Evaluative Rubric for Contract and Promotion Decisions). (CFR 2.9)

An additional strategy to make assessment more engaging, at the request of the department chairs and program directors, was to move to a data collection system that was more collaborative and user-friendly than the data collection software being utilized at the time. A faculty working group created an assessment Google worksheet template (see Appendix 6.03 - Assessment Google Worksheet Template), enabling faculty and deans to work collaboratively on all of the elements of student learning and program assessment in one location, without shuffling documents back and forth or navigating a software interface that was complicated. Faculty are supported by the director of curricular effectiveness, and aggregate data is collected from the worksheets by the OIRA, but the assessment process belongs to the schools/colleges; thus, the university has been able to give assessment "back to the faculty" while still providing necessary data analysis at the various units of analysis without burdening the faculty. (CFR 2.4)

Anecdotal evidence on this fundamental shift has been overwhelmingly positive. For example, Dr. Bryant Matthews, former department chair of the Department of Mathematics indicates:

"The new assessment worksheet has helped our department faculty to collaborate more deeply in the assessment process. Now each faculty member has full visibility into what needs to be assessed in their courses each year, with just a single click. The shared Google Sheet allows us to sit together with our laptops and simultaneously enter, review, and discuss assessment plans, data, and resulting strategies. As we teach courses the next time around, we can easily refer back to what was learned the last time an outcome was assessed in that course. The transparency of the new worksheet also provides strong accountability. Now, if someone has not completed their assigned assessment work, it is readily apparent to everyone in the department. Finally, the ease with which we are able to modify learning outcomes and measures has motivated and enabled us to make some real improvements to our assessment plan."

Dr. Denise Ferguson-Neff, associate dean in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences adds:

"With the new Google Sheets Template, reviewers can easily view the alignment of PLOs, Curriculum Maps, and Multi-Year Assessment Plans and observe how the Assessment Plan is implemented, the data that is gathered, summary of findings, and plan for improvement. This allows Deans to provide clear and actionable recommendations for continual refinement of assessment plans, ensuring the strengthening of curriculum and pedagogy so that our programs deliver on their promise to students."

All assessment Google worksheets can be found in Appendix 2.02 - Assessment and Program Review Materials for All APU Programs.

Academic Program Review

Another approach to promoting active, consistent participation in programmatic assessment was to re-evaluate program review. The primary purpose of program review at APU has always been to ensure academic and co-curricular program quality and student success. (CFR 2.7) Thus, the program review process was designed by closely following the guidelines published in Appendix 6.04 - WSCUC Resource Guide for "Good Practices" in Academic Program Review.

APU's academic program review process is robust and well-defined. All programs are scheduled for program review (see Appendix 6.05 - Program Review Calendar) based on a 5 to 10-year cycle or, most recently as a result of an assessment of program review effectiveness, in alignment with professional accreditation schedules. The program review process is described in Appendix 3.11 - APU Program Review Handbook and on the program review website, and every program (regardless of modality or professional accreditation status) participates in program review, as do stand alone minors and co-curricular programs. (CFR 2.7)

As described in the handbook, each program submits responses to a new and improved structured program review template, using data to guide its conclusions and findings (see Appendix 4.06 - Program Review Template 12th edition). As part of the improved process, data is provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

(OIRA) via data dashboards embedded within the template, thus giving programs direct access to the data they need to reach data-driven decisions about program quality. (CFR 4.1) Once the program review is written, it is reviewed, using a rubric (Appendix 6.06 - Program Review Committee Evaluation Rubric) and response form (Appendix 6.07 - Program Review Committee and Dean Response Form), by a committee of peer faculty called the Program Review Committee (PRC), who are outside the program but within the same level (bachelor's, master's, doctoral) as the program itself. Non-accredited programs are also required to utilize a reviewer external to the institution who submits a comprehensive report (Appendix 6.08 - External Reviewer Report) and rubric (Appendix 6.09 - External Reviewer Evaluation Rubric) that is appended as part of the program review materials and considered by the PRC. The PRC provides an analysis of strengths, areas of growth, and recommendations for consideration. Once the PRC completes its work, the report is returned to the dean who provides his/her own response on the same form (Appendix 6.07 - Program Review Committee and Dean Response Form) and then meets with program faculty to review the results, identify needed resources, and agree to action plans for programmatic improvement. Requests for resources beyond that budgeted annually by the dean are taken to the provost for consideration and, when possible, are included as part of the university budget planning process (see Appendix 3.09 - Program Review Flowchart).

An additional improvement that has been made based on an assessment of the program review process relates to how programs with professional accreditation engage APU's program review. Specifically, programs with professional accreditation have an opportunity to be pre-vetted to avoid duplication of effort in data collection and writing. The pre-vetting process requires programs to identify in a pre-vetting form (Appendix 6.10 - Pre-Vetting Worksheet) which elements of APU's program review are sufficiently addressed in the professional accreditation process, which is then verified by the PRC. Any elements that are not sufficiently addressed by professional accreditation reports must be written and reviewed internally through the APU peer-review process. In these instances, professional accreditation teams serve as the external reviewer, which is required for all programs. (CFR 4.5) In addition to completing appropriate sections of the APU program review template, professionally accredited programs must submit the findings letter from their professional accreditor's site visit and a written response as to the action steps that will be taken to address any areas of concern. This process parallels that used by non-accredited programs and has been gratefully received by the impacted programs.

Responses from academic departments in their program reviews have been fruitful. Many programs, such as those mentioned in component 4, have stated that they have or will implement curricular changes based on data uncovered from their program review or re-accreditation processes. Others have found the process to lead to changes that moved beyond just the curriculum. For example, within the School of Business and Management,

"a recent program review indicated that there was a need to improve our interaction with alumni and external partnerships. Steps were taken to establish stronger connections to alumni and employers. Career fairs were created to provide student access to employers for internship and job opportunities. Student organizations were created to provide student access to mentoring and experiential learning opportunities. The improved interaction with alumni and external partnerships resulted in market feedback that was utilized to improve the quality of our programs."

Still others have embraced the opportunity to take an in-depth look into their programs; as Dr. John Ragsdale, interim dean of Azusa Pacific Seminary, stated,

> *"[I]t is clear that this program review of our seminary programs could not have come at a better time*
> *as we seek to use data to answer key questions about the future of Azusa Pacific Seminary as we*
> *work to raise our FTE from 229 to 300 in the next seven years"*
> (APS Program Review 2020-2021, pg 2).

See Appendix 6.11 - Examples of Continuous Improvement from Program Review for more examples of changes made based on program review. (CFR 4.4)

Additionally, as part of program review, every program identifies trends from its annual assessment data to show areas of success and areas of improvement. While there are challenges coordinating program reviews with external accreditors, or training new faculty on how to engage in the process, overall faculty involvement is highly encouraging.

Co-Curricular Program Review

Since the last visit, the student affairs program review process was introduced and developed in collaboration with the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (CTLA). Utilizing the CAS standards, as well as models from other universities, a Student Life Program Review Handbook was developed (Appendix 6.12 - Student Life Program Review Handbook and Template Edition 3) and piloted with several student affairs offices. After two subsequent years of rotating office participation, leadership in student affairs decided that all student affairs offices would participate in program review together on a five year cycle to improve engagement with the process. (CFR 2.11)

In 2015-16 all student affairs offices participated in program review and shared the results within the division and with CTLA at a gathering in the spring of 2016. See Appendix 2.02 - Assessment and Program Review Materials for All APU Programs (beginning on page 11). The program review process provided important guidance to each office with regard to resource allocation, revealed gaps in assessment of student learning and success, and ultimately informed the restructuring process and transition to the Division of Student Affairs in 2018. See Appendix 3.12 - An Overview of Co-Curricular Programs at APU for a discussion of restructuring and co-curricular learning outcomes. The plan at this point is to move to a seven year cycle in alignment with academic program review requirements, with the next division-wide review to occur in 2022-23. (CFR 2.11)

Using Institutional Data for Informed Decision-Making

Institutional data is generally coordinated by the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (OIRA). Data requests are tracked on a data inquiries spreadsheet that is monitored, updated, and linked out by the director of the OIRA (see Appendix 6.13 - OIRA Data Requests Spreadsheet). The OIRA currently operates by pulling data from the student information system, customer relationship management system, learning management system, and other existing databases across the institution. This information is aggregated in spreadsheets for reporting and analysis. The OIRA plays an integral role in the assessment of student learning and in program review, as staff in OIRA help to maintain and collect aggregate data from the annual assessment Google worksheets, as well as provide technical

assistance for this task. Additionally, OIRA is key in constructing the data dashboards found in the program review template, a significant improvement over past practices that required department faculty to ask for data or, worse, to generate their own data tables. (CFR 4.2)

APU has a robust collection of data (although it is not centrally stored in a data warehouse as would be preferred) from nationally-normed instruments such as the NSSE (see component 5), Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), Thriving Quotient, National College Health Assessment survey, and UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) surveys, as well as a number of key in-house surveys (e.g., Student Government Association Survey, Chapel Survey, program review alumni survey) it uses to inform practice. While APU is not lacking in data, it is needing a more robust institutional ethos of data-driven decision-making with systems and processes to use the data for decisions and continuous improvement. (CFRs 4.2 and 4.3) That being said, below are some examples of data-driven decision-making.

Diversity Climate Study

During the 2015-16 academic year, APU completed a climate study, utilizing data from UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) to inform several of its initiatives. A mixed methods collaborative design was used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data to identify areas of strength and gap in order to strengthen the institution's diversity efforts and climate. In addition to leveraging existing data from HERI's national surveys, in-depth individual interviews and focus groups were facilitated to acquire qualitative data from select board members, administrators, faculty, staff, and students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. (CFRs 4.3 and 4.5)

Findings from the data analysis revealed five thematic interrelated opportunities for action to establish a premise to enhance diversity and inclusion as institutional values. The themed areas of opportunity were as follows: (1) improve responses to incidents of bias, discrimination, and harrasment, (2) create space for authentic engagement and diversity, (3) enrich diversity skills and knowledge, (4) address inequities in distribution of resources and power, and (5) bridge diverse communities. After receiving HERI findings, university-wide forums were facilitated to communicate a summative report of findings which were shared by the VP/CDO. Secondly, a Diversity Collaboration Committee (DCC) was established, consisting of diverse faculty and staff leaders across multiple divisions, student representation from Student Government Association (SGA), and graduate student leadership representatives. From 2016-2020, DCC members met once per month during the academic year to identify and implement actionable diversity initiatives addressing the five thematic areas derived from the climate study (see Appendix 6.14 - APU Climate Study Themes and DCC Actionable Items (2016-2020)). Initial responses to the data-informed climate study included but were not limited to implementing Diversity Strategic Plans across university schools and departments (see Appendix 6.15 - Diversity Strategic Plan Templates), instituting a formal bias incident reporting system, hiring a Title IX Coordinator and further promoting the Title IX process, expanding student Ethnic Organization infrastructure and resourcing, integrating diversity curricular elements reflected in General Education, along with other initiatives. Much of the strategic work continues and has more recently dovetailed into *Renewal* processes to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion institutionally. (CFR 1.4)

Program Viability Decisions

In some cases the difficult decision must be made that a program is no longer viable. Because the stakes of closing a program are very high, APU uses a data-driven approach toward determining the viability of its programs. Beginning in 2014, the provost contracted with the Austen Group to develop comparative data analysis inter- and intra-institutionally to move toward calculation of metrics generally used for program viability (see Appendix 6.16 - Austen Curriculum and Cost Analysis Report Guide). Progress was made in developing standard calculations of costs of program operations (including overhead) versus revenue, and programs at risk of continued viability were identified. Implementation of next steps occurred in some schools where programs were given a fixed period (typically 1-3 years) to show progress in rebalancing income/expense ratios. In the same time period (2015-2018), the provost contracted with the Higher Education Consortia through the University of Delaware to align programs with CIP codes and conduct a cost study for comparability with peers (Delaware data). These were good starts in benchmarking APU's terms and definitions to align with other data sets to improve comparisons. (CFR 4.4)

As part of *Renewal*, academic affairs has been tasked with routinely collecting, analyzing, reporting, and using program data in decision-making processes ranging from program growth to program demise, based on market conditions and program delivery. With new leadership in OIRA and the 2021 launch of a new program viability data model, more detailed and robust data and analyses are available for informed decision-making regarding the status of existing programs, and it is poised to aid in the review process of proposals for new program launches. In addition, focus group meetings between enrollment management, the business office, and the Office of the Provost have begun to more coherently and concretely share these data points, along with more qualitative data points, across vice presidential areas. (CFR 4.3)

Data to Inform *Renewal* Initiatives

In addition to the use of numerous data points to make decisions about program quality and viability, APU has recently developed a more refined use of data for decisions that impact the institution through the launch of *Renewal* and the subsequent use of representative working groups to assess and operationalize the *Renewal* action items (see Appendix 1.12 - *Renewal* Implementation Plan by Year). During this process, working groups have identified individual data needs connected to everything from administrative units distribution across campus to assessment of 'D', 'F', and withdrawal rates in General Education coursework. Data is then shared across groups and embedded in the recommendations that will move from the working groups to the lead vice presidents. As the work of *Renewal* continues into the phase where recommendations are prioritized, the use of data will continue to inform those decisions. (CFR 4.3)

Using Data for Co-Curricular Initiatives

In the co-curricular setting, the Division of Student Affairs regularly utilizes data from nationally normed assessment tools to inform programmatic and resource planning decisions. Examples of instruments used in the past five years include the National College Health Assessment and the ACUHO/I-EBI Housing and Residence Life Assessment. The NCHA in particular has been useful to our Alcohol and Other Drugs Task Force in targeting specific substances

for student education efforts (i.e., marijuana, vaping) and in documenting and following campus utilization rates. In addition, several internal surveys are regularly administered to students to better understand student engagement (annual SGA survey) and spiritual formation (biannual Chapel survey). Finally, the student affairs directors and leadership team invited Dr. Laurie Schreiner to present the results of the APU thriving research and assessment (see Appendix 5.04 - Student Success Analysis) to help inform strategic planning and student learning processes related to our recent realignment as a division (see Appendix 3.12 - An Overview of Co-Curricular Programs at APU). Admittedly, while data is collected on a routine basis, improvement is needed in "closing the loop" by using the data to implement changes that are then assessed for effectiveness. (CFR 4.6)

Next Steps for Data-Informed Decision-Making

Making Assessment More Meaningful

APU has well-defined and robust assessment systems in place. Faculty feedback has resulted in improvements to both the annual assessment data collection (by virtue of the creation of the assessment Google sheet), as well as the program review process (better templates, pre-vetting for accredited programs). The assessment of GELOs is still emerging, but systems are in place.The program review template provides numerous data sources to program faculty and deans for their consideration of program quality. Co-curricular outcomes exist and are assessed through program review to ensure student learning and success. (CFRs 2.7 and 2.11)

Like many institutions, despite well-defined systems, faculty are not universally enthusiastic about participating in the assessment of student learning. When faculty were asked about their reluctance to fully participate in assessment and program review, most responded that they didn't have time, that they had professional accreditation to make determinations about student learning and program quality, or that they didn't see a strong commitment from the administration. In fact, when each school was asked in a survey about the biggest obstacles to conducting assessment, almost every response related to a perceived lack of impact for the program, as well as a lack of incentive to do excellent work. Additionally, the demands of external professional accreditation were significant enough to deter participation in any internal process, a finding that APU addressed when updating its program review process. Notably, while faculty have indicated that the move to the assessment Google sheet has improved collaboration amongst themselves, there remains a perception that assessment has no discernible impact beyond minor curricular change on the program or its faculty. To date, APU has been challenged to meaningfully engage some deans or to use program review data to inform budgetary decisions because the budgeting process does not align with the program review process in an institution of its size. Some of this disconnect can be remedied by more consistent, timely, and meaningful interaction between the deans and the program faculty. Finding ways for academic affairs to reward and incentivize assessment participation would facilitate better quality engagement by the faculty in this foundational task. Additionally, using student learning and performance data at an institutional level for decision-making would be a significant advancement for APU. (CFRs 4.1-4.4)

Improving Institutional Research Capacity and Data Integration

APU has expanded its footprint in higher education to include graduate and professional programs at seven different regional centers and online. However, the capacity to manage data has not kept pace with the university's expansion. Current practices consist of a siloed approach to data collection and management with very limited analysis. This compartmentalization of data has made it difficult to identify factors that are important to student success and program viability. (CFR 4.2)

Currently, student data is collected across multiple software platforms. For example, data on prospective students, applicants, and admitted students are collected through a customer relationship management platform from Salesforce. However, after enrolling in the institution, student data is collected through a student information system module from PeopleSoft. In addition, student engagement data is collected through the learning management system (Canvas from Instructure) but also through spreadsheets managed by many student support services. There is potential for additional engagement data to be sourced from website navigation and mobile app use. As such, there is a great need to improve the integration of information across the institution by building out a data warehouse and applying analytical tools to mine the data.

In addition to better infrastructure, there is also a great need to increase the number of dedicated personnel in the OIRA to improve data management and meet the demands for data reporting and analysis for both external agencies and internal decision-making. Currently, there are only two full-time staff positions dedicated to carrying out all OIRA functions, and the director position was vacated just prior to submitting this report, necessitating a search at a less than ideal time. *Renewal*'s Grand Initiative of becoming a "Recognized Leader in Technology and Data Management" calls for the building out of an integrated data warehouse and accompanying office with personnel equipped to provide necessary institutional research support including fielding data reports and surveys and providing data visualizations and analytics to assist institutional decision making. (CFR 4.2)

Improved Systematic Use of Data for Institutional Decisions

In response to the need to improve data-driven decision-making and as first steps in fulfilling the Grand Initiative of becoming a "Recognized Leader in Technology and Data Management" a data and technology working group was convened in the spring of 2021 and completed recommendations for new policies, structure, and processes for data management, governance, and security (Appendix 1.13 - *Renewal* Working Groups Initial Recommendations). These recommendations included a data strategy policy that incorporates eight guiding principles and six foundational goals of all data efforts at APU. The goals are for APU data to be visible, accessible, understandable, trustworthy, interoperable, and secure. As part of this final goal, the working group proposed a new data security policy with four levels of data access, ranging from publicly available information to highly sensitive and regulated information.

As part of a newly proposed Office of Data Management and Institutional Research, the analytical capabilities of the university will become vastly expanded. Data that currently only exists in silos throughout the university will be imported into a centralized data warehouse overseen by data architects and developers who can maximize the efficiency of data delivery for institutional needs. The new office structure will also include a data analytics team led by

the newly appointed director of data analytics, a data scientist and recent recipient of the Distinguished SAS Educator Award which "recognizes an educator who has made significant contributions to advancing analytics education and preparing students for careers in analytics and data science." In addition to the proposed centralized data warehouse and data analytics team, the new structure will also have dedicated data liaisons that will be assigned across all functional areas of the institution. This team of liaisons will consist of trusted data personnel who will address the needs of specific functional areas while also benefiting from centralized vision and coordination of institutional data. (CFR 4.2)

Finally, the data and technology working group made recommendations for new processes involving data governance. This includes the formation of two new governing bodies: 1) the Executive Data Governance Committee (EDGC), and 2) the Data Governance Committee (DGC). The EDGC will consist of trusted leaders representing all functional areas of the institution. They will be tasked with approving the work of the DGC including the certification of institutional data definitions, queries, and dashboards. The DGC will consist of a broad range of data specialists from across the university and will carry out the agenda of the EDGC through the use of small teams dedicated to specific tasks.

Component 7: Sustainability: Financial Viability; Preparing for the Changing Higher Education Environment

Current Status as a Viable, Sustainable Organization

Similar to most of our peers, APU's financial model has experienced added stress due to the changing landscape of higher education and the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in addition to the impact of these broader environmental pressures, as discussed in component 1, APU experienced a significant financial challenge in 2018-19 which saw an unexpected $15.1M operational deficit and failure to meet Debt Service Covenant Ratio and cash on hand requirements attached to a 2015 series of bonds. Areas of deficient internal and management controls were identified as the primary causal factors for the financial challenge, exacerbated by an unexpected and significant downturn in net tuition, due to erroneous assumptions regarding employee attrition and an execution of the discounting strategy in excess of what was budgeted, and a demand for cash to complete various construction projects. While the costly undergraduate discounting strategy of 2015-18 has since been rectified, APU has experienced student enrollment volatility, with a notable downturn in traditional undergraduate student enrollment and large graduating classes since 2016. This has been offset in part by growth in both non-traditional age undergraduate students and graduate students (Appendix 7.01 - Student Enrollment Trends). While APU's budget remains too dependent on tuition, the diversification of this tuition revenue across student populations is a strength and hedge against future volatility for

APU, as noted by several releases from Moody's ([Appendix 7.02 - Rating Action - Moody's Revises Azusa Pacific University, CA-Outlook to Stable-Affirms Ba1 - 25Nov19](#); [Appendix 7.03 - Moody's Credit Opinion - Azusa Pacific University, CA - 26Nov19](#); [Appendix 7.04 - Moody's Issuer Comment - Azusa Pacific University, CA - 08Dec20](#)). (CFR 3.4)

Since August 2018, the university administration and the board has implemented intentional and far-reaching strategies to restore short-term financial stability and pursue long-term financial sustainability. Examples of such measures include, but are not limited to, the hiring of new executive leaders (president, CFO, provost, and vice president for human resources); a new, flatter divisional reporting structure for the institution; a reorganized business office; aggressive expense controls, including elimination of the football program, pausing employer 403(b) match and cost of living increases; enhanced financial planning, budgeting, and forecasting processes and new software such as Adaptive Insights and Concur; a right-sizing realignment project to reduce and reallocate employee headcount and associated operational expenditures; strong advancement fundraising; and a re-evaluation of the university-owned real estate and facilities portfolio (see [Appendix 7.05 - List of Financial Strategies and Decisions August 2018-June 2021](#)). (CFR 3.4)

In essence, over the last three financial years the APU community has been collectively involved in a transparent institutional process to recalibrate and restructure the financial model. The administration has utilized email communications, intranet web pages, employee meetings, faculty governance, staff council, working groups, and reporting mechanisms to engage the community. Significant progress has been made in the reduction and reallocation of expenditures, as well as broadening revenue streams, culminating in a balanced budget for FY22 (see [Appendix 7.06 - APU Financials (June 2018-June 2021)](#)). APU is in a much stronger financial position to face the changing landscape of higher education and has done a lot of the hard budget structure and culture work other institutions are only now beginning post-pandemic. (CFR 3.4)

Ensuring Long-term Financial Sustainability

Renewal's Strategic Priorities

APU's path to long-term financial sustainability is articulated through its Strategic Plan for 2020-27 (*Renewal*) ([Appendix 1.03 - *Renewal*, Strengthening Our Capacity for Cultivating Christ-Centered Scholars and Leaders](#)). Launched in September 2020, *Renewal* was formed through a collaborative institutional process of evaluating the future landscape and considering APU's strengths and opportunities. [Five Grand Initiatives](#) form the structure of APU's preferred future, of which one is [Becoming a Sustainable Financial Enterprise](#). This Grand Initiative lays out 15 action items to guide the institution through significant right-sizing and reorganization of resources in 2020-21 (see [Appendix 1.11 - *Renewal* Outcomes and Action Items by Grand Initiatives](#)); reallocation of existing and new resources to strategic long-term priorities in 2021-22; and significant growth in the Endowment (from $92M to $142M) and on-going continuous improvement process in multi-year planning, budgeting, and reporting processes in 2022-27. The board (through Financial Affairs and Investment committees), administration, faculty, and staff are collaboratively engaged in key strategic recommendations to fund the $125M in estimated investment outlined in *Renewal* through fundraising ($53M) or internal, extramural, and/or new financing ($72M). (CFR 3.4)

Over the last three years APU has worked diligently to implement more structured financial policies and practices across all areas of the institution. These policies have been primarily focused on expense management and include a contract management policy, stronger approval processes on purchase requisitions, and position management. Moving forward, leadership is focused on continuing to provide clarity on revenue forecasting. While the vice president for business strategy/CFO (CFO) and vice president of enrollment management have been working in close partnership in regards to enrollment forecasting, the Business Office is now developing policies and procedures around all "other" revenue accounts, including auxiliary services, student fees, etc. This will ultimately be combined with the new Strategic Enrollment Plan (in development) to create a sound three-to-five-year financial forecast. Lastly, the APU community has shown that it is able to pivot and control expenses in the face of challenges (e.g., COVID-19), allowing the CFO to have confidence in the financial stability of APU, regardless of whatever challenges lay ahead. There is regular communication with the 250+ individuals (e.g., vice presidents, deans, department chairs, directors, etc.) who manage a budget for their individual units, offices or departments, including quarterly budget manager meetings, which allows the Financial Planning & Analysis team to provide updates and answer questions from the budget managers.

Financial Allocations and Institutional Priorities

Now that APU has its first comprehensive strategic plan in more than twenty years, *Renewal* serves as a strategic lens through which decisions are made around resource allocation. The process of allocating and prioritizing financial resources into a university budget is guided by the CFO in close alignment with the president and provost and with input from university budget managers and members of the President's Cabinet. For FY22, the institutional timeline and roles were set out by the Division of Finance & Business Strategy in the Budget Planner (see Appendix 7.07 - Budget Planner). The CFO, president, provost, and vice president of enrollment management use a variety of tools and methodologies to assess anticipated enrollment and nontuition revenues, along with spending and investment needs, to refine the budget assumptions and parameters to ensure adequate resources are directed to support the mission of the institution. The Business Office used a blended methodology for the FY22 budget building process, including zero based budgeting practices for all payroll lines, incremental budgeting for the majority of operational accounts, and re-evaluation of where certain expenditures were recorded and housing them under the vice president who is responsible for those items. The Financial Affairs Committee of the board gives feedback to the CFO and president, through presentation and discussion, culminating in the presentation/approval of the budget by the full board, typically in their May meeting.

In reviewing the resource allocation, the CFO and president were adamant that the student experience should not be negatively impacted, beyond which was critical for the financial stability of the university. This provided the baseline for how to determine which areas would face budget reductions and which areas may see a resource allocation increase. As the provost continues to develop the academic organization structure and focuses on which programs will be launched in the future, the provost took the responsibility to allocate resources across the academy. In the Division of Student Affairs, there was a reduction in resources overall, but it was primarily focused on consolidating functions in order to streamline student services, without taking away student experiences and development.

Moving out of the COVID-19 pandemic and focusing on FY23 and beyond, the president, CFO and vice president for human resources are focused on employee development and compensation. (CFR 3.3) The faculty, staff, and administration at APU have been incredibly gracious through the challenges of 2018 and 2020 by sacrificing cost of living increases and retirement contributions. However, this is unsustainable in order to retain the best faculty and staff. Therefore, the CFO and vice president of human resources are partnering together to develop a comprehensive total rewards compensation package. This package will be focused on how to compensate employees for their work and to provide incentives for outstanding performance. Additionally, APU wants to ensure that employees have access to a robust benefits package. (CFR 3.2)

Preparing for the Fundamental Changes Facing Higher Education

APU has engaged in significant self reflection and learning around its financial model and the fundamental changes facing higher education since the last WSCUC visit. Faced with a higher education sector in a state of systemic disruption and inadequate internal systems and processes, APU has experienced sizable financial disruption. However, it is clear that staff, faculty, administration, and the board have responded in such a way that difficult questions have been asked, challenging decisions made, and strong progress achieved. Moving from a $15.1M operational deficit in June 2018 to a $4M operational surplus in just twelve months is only part of the story of shared learning and ownership. In the past three years, the financial systems, policies, processes, and accountability mechanisms have significantly matured, along with a broader and clearer understanding by the wider APU community as to the elements of the financial model most impacted by the disruption in higher education. (CFR 4.6)

Through the recent process of developing and launching *Renewal*, APU's vision for the future is to advance as a university of impactful Christian scholars and leaders characterized by best practices of the highest quality. *Renewal* provides a blueprint for a university-wide commitment to promote and sustain academic excellence for highly diverse constituencies at all degree levels. With the successful implementation of *Renewal*, there are nine key areas of anticipated impact on institutional operations and mission. This consensus-based vision, which motivates APU to address future higher education trends while committing to intensive self-reflection for improvement, will enhance APU's academic stature. APU will provide stellar academic and professional opportunities, but more importantly, model how a major national university can continue to be Christian in a "post-Christian" society. We believe that by cultivating a more innovative institution and promoting the Kingdom and common good, APU will become the nation's premier Christian university with a diverse group of students, faculty, and staff known as engaged citizens of character and virtue, and thoughtful scholars and leaders in their disciplines, sharing the truth and love of Christ. (CFR 4.7)

Component 9: Conclusion: Reflection and Plans for Improvement

The self-study process has been both challenging and rewarding for APU. With unexpected shifts in leadership, financial challenges, downturns in undergraduate enrollment, and the pandemic, APU has had to adapt in ways that were difficult but that highlighted the dedication and commitment of the APU community. Our resilience in the face of multiple challenges has been a great source of pride and evidence of APU's commitment to student success.

Because *Renewal* has emerged at the conclusion of our self-study timeline, we have a lot of optimism for APU's future. *Renewal* will focus and prioritize our efforts and resources and will help to address the areas of growth that were identified in this report. The alignment between *Renewal*'s strategic recommendations and our self-identified areas for growth will produce the synergy needed to move forward productively. Staying the course with *Renewal* will be critical in the next few years; thus, the board has created a Strategic Oversight Committee to provide oversight of the President and Cabinet as to the implementation of the institutional strategic plan as well as being a source of strategic advice and counsel. Additionally, the hiring of the next president is a key event in our immediate future.

Linked List of Documents Referenced in the Report

Appendix 1.01 - APU Regional Location Summary

Appendix 1.02 - Accrediting Bodies for APU Programs

Appendix 1.03 - *Renewal*, Strengthening Our Capacity for Cultivating Christ-Centered Scholars and Leaders

Appendix 1.04 - Actions Taken by APU to Address Budget Shortfall

Appendix 1.05 - Summary of Board Discussions and Actions

Appendix 1.06 - APU Board of Trustees Manual

Appendix 1.07 - APU Trustee Evaluation

Appendix 1.08 - DEI Divisional Annual Report

Appendix 1.09 - APU Disaggregated Student Enrollment

Appendix 1.10 - Faculty and Staff Development to Promote Cultural Engagement and Competency

Appendix 1.10a - Expanding the Cultural Capacity of APU Faculty

Appendix 1.11 - *Renewal* Outcomes and Action Items by Grand Initiatives

Appendix 1.12 - *Renewal* Implementation Plan by Year

Appendix 1.13 - *Renewal* Working Groups Initial Recommendations

Appendix 1.14 - President's Cabinet Performance Review

Appendix 1.15 - University Annual Report of Progress

Appendix 1.16 - APU's Management of COVID

Appendix 1.16a - ADR Faculty Resource Guide

Appendix 1.16b - 2020 CTLA Summer Institute - Evaluation Summary

Appendix 1.16c - Course Evaluation Data (IDEA Scores) Fall 2019 - Spring 2021

Appendix 1.16d - Accomplishments in Medical Management of COVID-19

Appendix 1.17 - COVID-19 Impacts on Faculty, Staff, and Students During Spring 2020

Appendix 1.18 - APU Strategic Planning Leadership Team Membership Listing

Appendix 1.19 - *Renewal* Implementation Visual