

REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM
For Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Sonoma State University
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The Team evaluated the institution under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC).

The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

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OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

Sonoma State University (SSU) is one of the 23 campuses of the California State University (CSU) system. It was established by the California State Legislature in 1960 as Sonoma State College and in 1961 opened its doors to over 250 upper-division students. University status was granted in 1978, and at that time the institution assumed its current name. The institution is governed by the CSU Board of Trustees and located in the planned community of Rohnert Park, CA. This body adopts rules, regulations, and policies for all 23 CSU campuses, including SSU. Campuses, however, have appropriate latitude to develop their own campus specific rules, regulations, and policies, and the authority to do so is delegated by the Board of Trustees to campus presidents.

Like most other CSU campuses, SSU has a regional focus and offers a range of baccalaureate degrees and a limited number of master's degrees. The institution is currently comprised of six academic schools--Arts and Humanities, Business and Economics, Education, Extended and International Education, Social Sciences, and Science and Technology. Through these schools, SSU offers 46 baccalaureate majors, 47 minors, 15 master's degrees, nine credential programs, and nine certificate programs. The institution serves over 9,000 students and has experienced steady enrollment growth, with the exception of a slight decline in 2016. In 2017, SSU was recognized as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) by the U.S. Department of Education, reflecting a demographic trend in California and an increasing focus on student diversity as an institutional priority.

Although the institution is offering an increasing number of online and blended courses, it does not currently offer any completely online degree programs. Most courses are delivered on the Rohnert Park campus, but the institution also offers a degree completion program in Liberal Studies at Napa Valley College in Napa, Solano Community College in Vallejo, and Mendocino College in Ukiah. Beginning in fall 2018, SSU will offer an undergraduate degree completion program in Business Administration at College of Marin in Kentfield. Consistent with WSCUC expectations, a visit was made to one of these sites as part of the current reaffirmation of accreditation review.

SSU is undergoing a significant period of leadership change, including the hiring of the first new president in almost a quarter of a century, Dr. Judy Sakaki. The team observed widespread enthusiasm and hope related to the new initiatives she has articulated and begun to implement. The success of these initiatives will be critical for SSU to respond to ongoing WSCUC concerns related to the assessment of student learning and academic programs. Although SSU has made some progress in these areas, the team noted significant gaps that remain since its last accreditation review in 2010.

The Institutional Report prepared by SSU was adequate but showed the signs of having been drafted during a period of major institutional transition. However, SSU responded positively to team requests for documents and information, and the campus visit was well organized and responsive to the team's lines of inquiry.

Importantly, the SSU Institutional Report addressed all required components. The report shows that the institution is well aware of previous Commission actions (**Component 1**), and meets federal compliance standards (**Component 2**). The institution is engaged in Meaning, Quality, and Integrity work around its undergraduate and graduate degrees (**Component 3**) and core competencies (**Component 4**). The institution has strengthened its practices in collection, analysis, and use of data to improve retention and graduation (**Component 5**), and it has recently enacted policy and procedures around program review to insure data-driven decision making for quality assurance and improvement (**Component 6**).

In addition, the report demonstrated that the institution is well aware that it is undergoing extensive internal change in a time of great external change in higher education, its system, and its region. Through its report and visit, the institution aptly emphasized that strategic planning and budgeting will be key to its sustainability and continued financial viability (**Component 7**). The institutional report and visit showed that the institution has the context it needs to begin this important planning. The optional essay identified a number of relevant avenues for focus, ranging from theme such as social justice and liberal arts to enhancing high impact practices and interdisciplinary professional programs (**Component 8**).

More importantly, the visit showed that these themes and practices were not just placed in for reporting purposes, but are being woven into institution-wide vision and value statements (**Component 9**).

The team noted the institution's enthusiasm for reflection and change. The team also found that the identified lines of inquiry as well as its commendations and recommendations crossed all nine components. Therefore, the team organized the Evaluation of Institutional Essays around the four standards to eliminate duplication or repetition of common themes and to provide clear and concise examples to aid future reflection, planning, and paths to improvement based on the findings from the report and visit.

The team visit was made shortly after the campus had been closed for several days due to devastating fires in the region. Many members of the campus community lost their homes, and all were affected by dislocation and loss. Nonetheless, the institution elected to go forward with the scheduled campus visit, and managed the process with grace and professionalism. The team was impressed by the community spirit and resilience exhibited throughout the institution during this difficult period.

EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ESSAYS

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

SSU's stated mission is appropriate for a four-year public comprehensive regional university. The mission includes preparing students for lifelong learning and providing them with a broad cultural perspective, for appreciation of intellectual and aesthetic achievements, and for the pursuit of careers in a changing world as leaders and active citizens. (**CFR 1.1**).

The WSCUC Commission's letter to SSU following its last EER Team Report asked that the institution's identity and mission be articulated further "for internal and external constituents, including students and faculty and within the broader community" (March 11, 2010, p.2) (**CFRs 1.1, 1.2, 4.1, 4.2**). As the only university in California that is a member of the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC), SSU has embraced the core of its mission and recognized the importance of connecting to other institutions

committed to high quality public liberal arts education in a student-centered, residential environment. Under the leadership of its new president, Judy Sakaki, the institution recently renewed conversations about its public liberal arts focus and has begun to articulate its commitments to the public good, with a particular emphasis on themes such as diversity, sustainability, social justice, and community engagement. The Seawolf Commitment is one result of these efforts (<http://web.sonoma.edu/seawolfcommitment/>). The pledge, developed during a 2014-15 institution-wide initiative, includes individual commitment to the highest ethical standards reflected in integrity, respect, excellence, and responsibility. The Seawolf Commitment is now integrated into first year and transfer student orientation programs. Students in first and second year learning communities referred to the Seawolf Commitment, stating how the pledge's behavioral expectations influenced interpersonal relationships and improved academic focus. An even more recent example of SSU identity is the NomaCares program introduced following the wild fires of October 2017. The team saw a strong commitment to these values during its visit.

In response to the question, 'How is a SSU student/graduate unique?', a faculty member responded, "The upcoming strategic planning will help us be more authentic about who a SSU student/graduate is." The new administration was very clear that a new strategic planning initiative is soon to begin. Faculty and staff stated they were hopeful about and looking forward to the process. While there is a tangible sense of pride in the community and broad commitment to a set of values, the team noted that the institution has not yet clearly linked these commitments and values to the meaning and quality of its undergraduate degrees. For example, the institution has yet to develop institutional learning outcomes (ILOs), though it has committed to do so during the current academic year. The ability of the institution to refocus some of the energy and enthusiasm for defining the student experience through the meaning and quality of its degrees will be crucial to this effort to succeed. Even more crucial will be insuring that these discussions encompass more than just the undergraduate on-campus student learning experience. For example, the team found that graduate degrees and completion degrees were not yet systematically integrated into overall identity, meaning, quality, and integrity

discussions (CFRs 1.1, 1.2, 2.2, 4.1, 4.2). The danger is that these programs will then not be included into strategic planning and budgeting discussions.

The team found that retention and graduation data made publically available through the CSU Graduation Initiative 2025 have become part of the conversation about meaning and quality of degrees. In addition, data on high impact practices such as the first and second year learning communities, Seawolf Scholars, and EOP have been used to identify strengths and needed improvements (CFR 1.2, 4.2). Data show that the institution is successful in nearly all aspects of retention and graduation as compared to their CSU colleagues, and that the institution is aware of where work is still needed to close gaps for specific populations. On the other hand, student learning data are not systematically analyzed, and have yet to be integrated into institution-wide conversations. While it is clear that discussions are many and inclusive, it is also clear that opportunities and challenges must be fed back into further discussions and ultimately to planning (CFR 1.4). For example, the institution has expressed a strong desire for a more diverse campus community. There appears to be much interest in diversity as a goal in general, but there is not a clear consensus on, or plan for, achieving diversity goals. Opportunities in the form of a large grant made possible by the institution's newly granted Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) status, and CSU student success funds have bolstered student and faculty recruitment efforts, but it was clear that students, faculty, and staff desired more communication and intentionality to understand diversity priorities in order to strategically seek grants and allocate resources related to institutional diversity efforts.

The team also notes the need to ensure that recent institutional-wide conversations are articulated into clear statements and plans, and then communicated back out to stakeholders. In open sessions, students were able to articulate the social justice element of the institution's mission and point to recent events (like demonstrations over the repeal of DACA) that appeared to enact a genuine concern for issues of social justice. At the same time, at least some students sensed a disconnect between the way the institution talked about these issues and what the institution actually did.

Students articulated concerns over lack of faculty and staff diversity. They also were concerned that, at times, the small population of certain underrepresented groups, such as black women, frustrated efforts to form affinity groups or student-led organizations. Students expressed interest in expanded training on how to bring diversity into the classroom and respectfully discuss related issues. It appears to be the case that students are engaged in issues of diversity, inclusion and social justice, but are interested in additional opportunities to learn about social justice in the classroom and ways to publicly enact that commitment.

The team found that faculty and staff are interested in, and engaged with, issues of diversity, both among the composition of the student body and within their own ranks. Many staff members are able to point to particular programs or events that they feel help recruit, engage, and retain students from historically underrepresented groups. They are rightly proud of such accomplishments. They acknowledge, however, that there is more to be done, particularly as the demographics of the institution and its region change. Both faculty and staff seemed to be unclear about what next steps follow the institution being designated a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).

The team found that SSU exhibits integrity and transparency in its operations and communications (CFR 1.6, 1.7, 1.8). During the team visit, SSU quickly responded to requests for additional meetings, information, and documents. Information was easily found on SSU's website to complete federal compliance forms. In addition, the institution makes its accreditation history as well as past reports and actions available to the public on its website (<http://web.sonoma.edu/aa/ap/accred/>).

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

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

Evidence from a review of the SSU catalog and from interviews with faculty and administrators shows that programs are appropriate in content and that there are sufficient and qualified faculty (CFR 2.1).

The institution has recently adopted a template for describing each program’s meaning, quality, and integrity of degree (MQID; SSU Institutional Report, p.14; Appendix 3.1; CFRs 2.1, 2.2). The template also includes prompts to describe how each degree represents SSU distinctiveness, and provide evidence of students’ competencies based on mapping of assessments with program and institutional outcomes (CFRs 2.2, 2.3, 2.4). The need to strengthen assessment activities is not a new theme for SSU.

The institution’s last EER Team Report (2009) noted “the depth and breadth of assessments from one department to another are uneven and suggests that SSU continue its efforts to improve its assessment activities” (2009, p. 23). The current SSU Institutional Report indicates that not all programs have measurable learning outcomes (p. 18), and that there is a need to “support all programs to work toward developing direct measures of assessment...” (p. 13). Interviews with faculty and administrators confirmed this finding. The team found that current development of learning outcomes ranges from programs with no learning outcomes, to programs with outcomes that were aspirational in nature, to some programs with clearly articulated measurable learning outcomes.

The team found areas of strength in assessment practices. High quality assessment of core competencies in the General Education (GE) program is evident (CFRs 2.2, 2.3, 2.6, 4.1). Analytic rubrics, which identify learning outcomes and levels of development for meeting outcomes, are used to assess particular competencies. Aggregated data are shown for particular groups of students. While the SSU Institutional Report (p. 21) noted the need to engage in further general education assessment by determining a “value-added” measure of student growth, the team suggests that the current model of assessment in the GE program is well developed enough to be used as a model for faculty in other programs where learning outcomes need to be developed and/or assessment of outcomes strengthened. The team was also encouraged by a new sense of optimism and enthusiasm toward assessment and program review. A Program Review Policy (Policy 2006-1, 2017) was recently approved (CFR 2.3). The team recommends close adherence to the policy for all programs in order to close the assessment loop within and across programs (CFRs 1.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7).

The ASPIRE committee is an example of a group of faculty leaders working collaboratively to bring together assessment expertise across schools and disciplines (CFR 2.4). It came about as a group of likeminded faculty recognized:

- the need for a more consistent approach to program review that considers a common assessment vocabulary, examples of what specific assessment tasks might look like in different disciplines, clear roles and responsibilities for School Assessment Coordinators, and ways assessment results can be fed back into programs to improve student learning and success;
- the need to equip faculty for robust assessment through professional development, hallway conversations, one-on-one consultations, engaging internal assessment expertise, linking teaching and learning with assessment through curriculum mapping; and
- the need to connect faculty with support for program review from Reporting and Analytics, the Office of Academic Programs, and the Faculty Center.

Additionally, the team heard descriptions of good practice in co-curricular program review during other interviews. Student affairs staff described an example of gathering and analyzing data that compared changes in student learning with and without tutoring. The findings were shared with student government representatives who saw the difference tutoring made in student learning, and subsequently put a ballot initiative forward to students for a three-dollar student fee to support tutoring (CFR 2.5).

The ballot passed thereby extending the amount of tutoring available. Additional examples of good practice in program review came from faculty in programs that have regional or national accreditation (CFRs 2.1, 2.2, 2.6). The team commends those academic programs and service areas that have implemented best practices in the assessment of student learning and program effectiveness.

The team visit also illuminated several challenges to assessment. Faculty stated that barriers to assessment included a culture that in the past that did not place high value on program review. Insufficient resources for assessment and a general lack of adherence to existing program review policy were also

mentioned as barriers. The team also heard cynicism on the part of some faculty about the value of program review. In the past, some members of the faculty have felt that program review was simply busy work because little or no attention was given to completed program reviews. Comments from faculty included, “Why bother [with program review] if no one reads it?” and “[in the past] We’ve handed it in [a program review] and never heard anything about it.”

For all programs throughout the institution, the team recommends clear statements of measurable learning outcomes, an assessment plan that identifies where the outcomes are being assessed in the curriculum, and close adherence to Program Review Policy 2006-1, as revised in 2016-17. (CFRs 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.1, 4.3).

The academic senate and school assessment coordinators plan to work together to develop ILOs in the spring of 2017 (SSU Institutional Report, 2017, p. 13). Work on ILOs is currently on hold until the strategic planning process begins. Both faculty and administrators expect ILOs to be an outcome of upcoming strategic planning (CFRs 1.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.7, 2.12). The team notes that it will be equally important for SSU to use program level assessment results to inform institutional planning across programs and as part of CSU system-wide success initiatives.

The team found that much of the identity and what it means to be an SSU student/graduate has been focused on the undergraduate student. Faculty and staff expressed a desire to extend these discussions to graduate education to explore where these programs and their students fit into overall educational objectives. Both graduate faculty and the Interim Dean of Graduate Studies expressed the need for greater support of graduate programs by appointing a graduate dean. A recent SWOT analysis conducted by the Graduate Studies Subcommittee identified several opportunities to grow more robust graduate programs and the need to distinguish more clearly the relationship between graduate programs and the School of Extended and International Education (CFR 2.2b).

The team also heard concerns that assessment strengths and results at the program level were not always making their way into support planning around CSU system-wide initiatives such as Graduation Initiative

2025 and the recent executive orders on general education and remediation (CFR 4.4, 4.6). Faculty and staff expressed frustration that the pace of institutional change coupled with the urgency to address system mandates has meant that successful programs and partnerships are not making it into key academic planning conversations. As a result, a disconnect remains.

Data show that SSU has been successful in graduating students in a timely manner, but there is a need for the institution to use findings from review of all programs to inform academic planning budgeting. Some faculty members have expressed a fear that the institution will shift funding away from some programs to bolster less successful programs.

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has demonstrated sufficient evidence of compliance with Standard 2.

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

SSU welcomed a new president in 2016 after nearly a quarter century, Dr. Judy Sakaki. President Sakaki is a CSU graduate and has had an extensive career in Student Affairs in the University of California system (CFR 3.8). Under her guidance, the entire cabinet has been turned over in the last 13 months, and a new energy and focus appears to be emerging from their earnest efforts. The leadership team is in beginning stages of a strategic planning process for fiscal year 2018 that will include the use of new budgeting software to align resources with identified strategic priorities. Under the leadership of the new vice president of administration and finance, Joyce Lopes, the institution has embarked on a strategic planning and budgetary alignment process that will be new for the institution in this upcoming budget and planning cycle. Lopes is a 35-year veteran of higher education, with the last five years spent in the same role at Humboldt State University (CFR3.8). Throughout the review process, the team experienced honesty, candor, and transparency in the leadership of the institution and commend them for their honest self-reflection (CFR 3.6).

The new president has also recently reorganized the cabinet to align with best practices in higher education and traditional structures at other California State Universities. This new structure will better serve the broad constituents of the campus community and provide clear lines of leadership, organizational structure, and operational processes (CFR 3.7). The institution has a strong and active academic senate that plays a critical and central role in academic leadership. As an example, the provost and senate chair are co-chairing the upcoming strategic planning committee. (CFR 3.10). The provost recognizes the importance of investing in the professional development of faculty and staff and recently greatly increased the percentage of funding for these efforts. (CFR 3.3)

As part of the team's review, the audited financials for the last three fiscal years were reviewed which showed clean audits and increases to net assets (net income) in each period. The most recent annual Statement of Revenue, Expenses, and Change in Net Position, for the period ending June 30, 2017, was also reviewed and also showed an increase in net assets (CFR 3.4). The Green Music Center made significant financial improvements in the last fiscal year under new leadership. Opportunities exist for new and expanded sponsorships to enhance financial diversification of this important institutional and community asset.

The Green Music Center provides a compelling example of changes that are being made at SSU to better apply resources to ensure quality and sustainability. Programming has been diversified to align with the musical tastes of broader segments of the campus and local community and also to enhance its revenue-generating potential. Importantly, the current administration has made important commitments to more fully integrate the Green Music Center into the everyday life of the campus and to deepen its academic connections and relevance for student life and learning. The team saw evidence that this is already occurring and past faculty concerns that the Center was draining resources from the core campus mission have begun to dissipate.

As part of visit, the team toured the main campus as well as one satellite location. The facilities appeared modern, well maintained, attractive, and well suited for the mission of the institution (CFR 3.5).

One highlight was the large library in the center of campus that has reconfigured space to include a high tech “maker space” with multiple 3D printers and other technology to accommodate over 20 students at a time.

The team found that SSU had a record of strategic planning, but not a culture of strategic planning and budgeting. Historically, SSU has conducted strategic planning in 10-year cycles with a reaffirmation review after 5 years. One faculty member stated that the previous administration, “didn’t believe in planning.” Goals set by previous administrations were described as vague and over-arching themes without specific action items, assigned responsibility, or budgetary alignment. Annual budgeting was done incrementally with increases or decreases being applied pro rata to departments without regard to strategic direction.

Beginning with the upcoming fiscal year (2019), the institution is engaging in a new five-year strategic planning process that will define the identity and distinctiveness of the institution and identify specific strategic objectives to be accomplished in the upcoming fiscal year. Following the new strategic planning process, a refined budgeting process will take place that will align institutional resources with the newly identified strategic priorities. The institution is also moving toward a five-year, long-range budgeting model to include creation of appropriate reserves. The Academic Planning and Resources Committee (APARC) and the President’s Budget Advisory Committee will play important roles in this new collaborative process. (CFR 3.7)

In addition to institutional strategic planning and resource alignment, the team noted several areas of importance that seemed to lack a coherent vision and goals. For example, some IT resources have recently been realigned to better support teaching and student success, but the institution has not yet systematically considered the future role it wishes technology to play in these areas or how technology resources can best be leveraged to support the institutional mission and vision. Similarly, although there appears to be widespread commitment to diversity, the institution has not yet articulated a clear set of diversity priorities and goals. Both areas are in need of focused visioning and planning. (CFR 3.7)

During the visit, the team noted that SSU was forthcoming about on-going challenges to planning and budgeting as a public institution in California. One example is that the overall cost of living near the main

campus was observed as a significant challenge in the recruitment and retention of faculty, staff, and students. This will no doubt be even more difficult in the near future following the Sonoma Complex fire, which reduced housing stock in the area and increased the burden on rental housing that was unaffected. SSU is actively exploring how it can be part of the solution to this challenge and engage more closely with the community as it heals and rebuilds. (CFR 3.7)

The Team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has demonstrated sufficient evidence of compliance with Standard 3.

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

Previous WSCUC visits uncovered weaknesses in core quality assurance practices. For example, not all academic programs had student learning outcomes, a necessary first step for meaningful assessment of student learning, and academic program review seemed to be only loosely linked to assessment or other planning processes. As noted in standard 2, the institution appears to have found a renewed interest in quality assurance practices: at the time of the visit in fall 2017 there were some concrete, if still limited and incomplete, achievements observed. In terms of assessment, a group of faculty and staff from across the institution has been brought together to assess the WSCUC core competencies and school-level assessment coordinators have been organized in the Assisting Schools and Programs with Inquiry, Review, and Evaluation (ASPIRE) committee to provide leadership on assessment. Program review guidelines have also recently been updated. Conversations with faculty indicated some level of frustration that earlier rounds of program review efforts appeared not to have been taken seriously by the administration. Interest in program review and planning and budgeting processes among new leadership are, in this light, encouraging.

Student affairs units appeared to be more engaged in assessment and while there are examples of successfully closing the loop (for example the tutoring program secured additional funding based on a positive evaluation), this work does not appear to be particularly well coordinated across the division.

A permanent vice president of student affairs should encourage these efforts and develop, or refine, policies for assessment in the newly reorganized division of student affairs that recognize these important activities

(CFR 4.1).

Institutional research capacities appear adequate and the institution has recently added additional staff in Reporting and Analytics (i.e.: institutional research).

Reporting and Analytics staff has a clear and forward-looking vision of how they can and should fit into the institution. The head of this unit articulates a compelling vision of meeting stakeholder needs for information through providing access to timely data and developing tools, such as dashboards, so that faculty, staff, and others can analyze data on their own terms. Reporting and Analytics is reevaluating what kind of data it provides to units going through program review and how it can better support units engaging in program review

(CFR 4.2).

Given the uneven nature of assessment and related activities in the past, it is not clear what kinds of data were used to guide institutional planning processes. Indeed, several members of the institution shared anecdotal evidence that previous leadership allocated resources in ways that seemed capricious. As an example, graduate programs appear to have been started in a haphazard manner and in ways that do not immediately seem to contribute to the overall institutional mission in a coherent way.

Another example is that the team saw evidence of planning for degrees and services at off-campus sites, but that planning had yet to be integrated into larger planning discussions. The team found the approved sites to be small (one or two programs), well-resourced operations offered at community college partner sites. The students felt well supported by the main campus and achieved similar graduation rates to and slightly better learning outcomes achievement than their main campus counterparts. The team found that planning for these sites happens in the program, the school of social science, school of extended education, the school of business and economics, and student affairs.

How these sites fit into the larger planning conversations was not clear. Moving forward, the institution appears to have a desire to engage in more systematic collection and examination of evidence and to use that evidence to support decision-making processes. These aspirations are to be applauded and, at the same time, leaders in these areas should be mindful of where and how they might involve and engage a greater share of stakeholders. Pockets of good practices should also be encouraged, expanded, and linked to larger understandings of mission and values. Student affairs units appear to have developed and implemented assessment and evaluation practices that are useful to them. These should be further encouraged and linked into coherent assessment policies (CFR 4.3).

Program learning outcomes should be developed and assessed in all programs. While there are good examples in some programs, other programs appear not to be assessing student learning in any way. For example, assessment appears to be strong in the Nursing and Education programs. There are some good practices assessing institution-level outcomes. The group that worked to assess core competencies brought together faculty and staff from across the institution, identified and collected direct evidence of student learning aligned with core competencies, developed and applied rubrics. These are all in line with best practices in assessment. While efforts to close the loop should be extended going forward, this group, as noted above, can serve as a concrete example that good quality assessment work is possible, and is indeed already happening, at SSU.

The institution is encouraged to think about ways to provide professional development for faculty around assessment, for example through the ASPIRE committee or the Faculty Center. Another strategy might be to highlight good examples of assessment already happening across the institution, such as portfolios in the Hutchins program and working to meet ABET standards in Engineering, and ask those involved in this work to lead conversations on developing and implementing assessment plans elsewhere in the institution. On the student affairs side, there are good examples of programs identifying outcomes for their students and using good quality evidence to monitor success at meeting those objectives.

For example, student housing uses a nationally benchmarked survey to monitor student satisfaction with campus housing. These practices should be encouraged to nurture a culture of assessment so that it is seen as adding value and not only as an administrative burden (CFR 4.4, 4.5).

As the institution moves to implement new budgeting processes and a new strategic plan, attention should be paid to ensure that these efforts are informed by findings from program review. There is a need to strengthen linkages between assessment, program review, and budgeting. Identifying effective ways to assess student learning is an important component of strategic planning and responding to recent executive orders related to student placement in math and English and the structure of general education programs (CFR 4.6, 4.7).

The team’s finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has demonstrated sufficient evidence of compliance with Standard 4.

FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TEAM REVIEW

Under new leadership, SSU is experiencing a period of renewal and focus on institutional identity and distinctiveness, student learning and success, planning and accountability, and commitment to its region. The team witnessed enthusiasm for these changes across various campus constituencies. For the most part, the team’s commendations are related to the many new initiatives that the campus has embraced but that without exception are only partially underway.

The unfinished status of these same initiatives informed many of the team’s recommendations. SSU has a palpable appetite for meaningful institutional change. Its challenge now is to move forward in a consultative and collaborative fashion with these change initiatives by building on the successes of the past even as it forges positive new directions.

The team commends:

A strong sense of community at SSU as reflected in

- connecting students to services,
- personalized recruitment,
- the rollout of the NomaCares program following the fires.

The ASPIRE committee for its collaborative efforts to bring together assessment expertise across schools and colleges.

Those academic programs and service areas that have implemented best practices in the assessment of student learning and program effectiveness.

Tangible results in integrating the Green Music Center into the campus and community and for leveraging this resource to advance the public liberal arts mission of the institution.

The commitment to an institution-wide strategic planning process and to the alignment financial resources with the identified strategic priorities.

Realignment of IT resources to better support the instructional mission of the institution.

Robust first- and second-year experience programs and other high impact practices.

President Judy Sakaki for fostering a climate of collaboration and stakeholder engagement.

The academic senate for its willingness to actively work with new SSU leadership for the benefit of students and the advancement of the institution's mission.

The team recommends:

Every degree program has measurable learning outcomes and an assessment plan that identifies where the outcomes are being assessed in the curriculum.

Close adherence to the recently approved Program Review Policy 2006-1.

<http://web.sonoma.edu/uaffairs/policies/programreview.htm#wasc>

Fully implementing a comprehensive strategic planning process that identifies measurable goals and aligns financial resources with those goals.

Effective utilization of newly implemented data tools (like the CSU data dashboards) to enhance student learning and success.

Development of an IT strategic plan to improve the student experience and advance the mission and vision of the institution.

Creation of a comprehensive diversity plan.

Articulation of what it means to be a SSU undergraduate or graduate student.

CREDIT HOUR AND PROGRAM LENGTH REVIEW FORM

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate.)
Policy on credit hour	Is this policy easily accessible? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Where is the policy located? http://www.sonoma.edu/sites/www/files/2017-2018_SSUcatalog_web.pdf
	Comments:
Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour	Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution adhere to this procedure? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:
Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses <i>Please review at least 1-2 from each degree level.</i>	How many syllabi were reviewed? 8
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? Traditional, hybrid
	What degree level(s)? undergraduate, graduate
	What discipline(s)? Communications, Education, Kinesiology, English, Physics
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:
Sample syllabi or equivalent for other kinds of courses that do not meet for the prescribed hours (e.g., internships, labs, clinical, independent study, accelerated)	How many syllabi were reviewed? 1
	What kinds of courses? Intern Seminar
	What degree level(s)? undergraduate
	What discipline(s)? Education
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:
Sample program information (catalog, website, or other program materials)	How many programs were reviewed? 1
	What kinds of programs were reviewed? traditional
	What degree level(s)? undergraduate
	What discipline(s)? business administration, accounting concentration
	Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: Courses reviewed are in compliance with policy and consistent with requirements of traditional 4-year business/accounting undergraduate degree requirements at other institutions.

MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution’s recruiting and admissions practices.

Material Reviewed	Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.
**Federal regulations	Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Comments:
Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Comments: The institution provides information about the typical length of time to degree indirectly through graduation rate data
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable?
	Comments: The CSU provides system wide information on pay scale and debt level of its graduates, which I believe meets the requirement that the institution provides applicable information about graduate employment

*§602.16(a)(1)(vii)

**Section 487 (a) (20) of the Higher Education Act (HEA) prohibits Title IV eligible institutions from providing incentive compensation to employees or third-party entities for their success in securing student enrollments.

Incentive compensation includes commissions, bonus payments, merit salary adjustments, and promotion decisions based solely on success in enrolling students. These regulations do not apply to the recruitment of international students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive Federal financial aid.

Review Completed By: Dorothy Leland
 Date: 10/30/17

STUDENT COMPLAINTS REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's student complaints policies, procedures, and records.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Policy on student complaints	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, Is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Where? Policy is available online, with references/links to policy in relevant sections of general catalog and other university websites.
	Comments: Policy spells out standing, timeline and documents required to submit grievance. Associated forms encourage students to seek, and document, opportunities to resolve grievance through informal means.
Process(es)/ procedure	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, please describe briefly: SSU follows Cal State system-wide guidance (EO 1063) regarding student complaints but has developed additional details at the local level. Campus has refined policies over recent years, for example selecting resolution committee members to serve for multi-year terms and providing training and development opportunities.
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Comments: Yes. Campus has offices with clear and specific charges for dealing with student complaints.
Records	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where? Office of Student Conduct mains records in electronic and physical formats.
	Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, please describe briefly: Institution summarizes number and general type of student complaints annually and circulates to relevant parties (i.e.: senior leadership, senate, student leadership).
	Comments:

*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Complaints and Third-Party

Comment Policy. Review Completed By: Gary Coyne

TRANSFER CREDIT POLICY REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulations*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices accordingly.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Transfer Credit Policy(s)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Is the policy publically available? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where? http://web.sonoma.edu/registration/records/ttc.html
	Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? X YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: Students can make use of the ASSIST website http://www.assist.org/web-assist/welcome.html to view articulation agreements and determine transfer credits for specific 2 yr and 4 yr colleges and universities in California. Students can also work with Admissions and Records to determine transfer credit for institutions outside the ASSIST group.

*§602.24(e): Transfer of credit policies. The accrediting agency must confirm, as part of its review for renewal of accreditation, that the institution has transfer of credit policies that--

- (1) Are publicly disclosed in accordance with 668.43(a)(11); and
- (2) Include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Transfer of Credit Policy.

Review Completed By: Amy Wallace

Date: 10/25/2017

Institution: Sonoma State University
Type of Visit: Accreditation Review
Name of reviewer/s: Amy Wallace
Date/s of review: 10/26/2017

1. Site Name and Address

Solano Community College – Vallejo Campus
545 Columbus Parkway
Vallejo, CA 94591

2. Background Information (number of programs offered at this site; degree levels; FTE of faculty and enrollment; brief history at this site; designation as a branch campus standalone location, or satellite location by WSCUC)

The site was approved in March 2007 to offer a BA in Liberal Studies. One completion degree is offered (same at all sites, but degrees vary), BA in Liberal Studies. This is the only degree program that has ever been offered at this site. Current enrollment is 35 FTE, and usually .5 FTEF per semester.

3. Nature of the Review (material examined and persons/committees interviewed)

Met with Administration from both SSU and Solano Community College. The meeting also included a Faculty teaching in the Liberal Studies program. The group provided materials such as the MOU with Solano Community College, history of the relationship between the two institutions, data on students and graduates, and future plans to improve offerings and services to students. The meeting participants were easily able to provide answers to all questions listed in the WSCUC Off-Campus Locations Review Form, and provide contacts for any needed follow-up. In addition, the team member met with 15-20 students for 30 minutes. Students provided additional details to support overall institutional findings on Lines of Inquiry and compliance with WSCUC Standards. Topics included:

What made you choose SSU?

What did it mean to be a SSU student/graduate?

How do you feel SSU is supporting your needs as an off-campus student? What could SSU do better to support your needs as an off-campus student?

How do you feel your experience/learning is similar or different to on-campus student?

Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	Follow-up Required (identify the issues)
<p><i>For a recently approved site.</i> Has the institution followed up on the recommendations from the substantive change committee that approved this new site?</p>	N/A	
<p><i>Fit with Mission.</i> How does the institution conceive of this and other off-campus sites relative to its mission, operations, and administrative structure? How is the site planned and operationalized? (CFRs 1.2, 3.1, 3.5, 4.1)</p>	<p>The BA in Liberal Studies fits nicely with the SSU mission and COPLAC identity. Operationally the program is overseen by School of Extended Education in curricular and faculty partnership with the School of Social Science. The MOU with Solano Community College supports transfer, academic counseling, and on-site student services.</p> <p>There is also designated student services, and very helpful and proactive academic counselor and support specialist at SSU main campus.</p>	<p>School of Extended Education would like to strengthen its curricular partnership with arts and humanities and natural sciences. Considering an advisory group that pulls from all three core areas: arts and humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences in the future.</p>
<p><i>Connection to the Institution.</i> How visible and deep is the presence of the institution at the off-campus site? In what ways does the institution integrate off-campus students into the life and culture of the institution? (CFRs 1.2, 2.10)</p>	<p>Uses mostly regular tenured SSU faculty or long-term adjunct faculty to teach classes for the program both on and off campus. Provides an orientation for students about both culture, rigor, expectations, and curriculum at the off-site location. Encourages students to attend commencement on campus. Has a chapter for honor society for Liberal Studies.</p>	
<p><i>Quality of the Learning Site.</i> How does the physical environment foster learning and faculty-student contact? What kind of oversight ensures that the off-campus site is well managed? (CFRs 1.8, 2.1, 2.5, 3.1, 3.5)</p>	<p>Faculty hired by faculty in the discipline via the School of Extended Education. Faculty evaluated by the same SETE progress. Work with specific disciplines to determine classes and recommend faculty.</p>	<p>Liberal Studies degree is housed in a school and not in a department. Sometimes difficult to plan, assess, and make change with both on-site and off-site</p>

<p><i>Student Support Services.</i> What is the site's capacity for providing advising, counseling, library, computing services and other appropriate student services? Or how are these otherwise provided? What do data show about the effectiveness of these services? (CFRs 2.11-2.13, 3.6, 3.7)</p>	<p>As with on-site courses, all courses are offered in Moodle. Access to technology and library resources are available online.</p> <p>Solano Community College provides a librarian, student success specialist, peer and faculty tutors. Solano Community College also provides space for reserve texts and access to a computer lab.</p>	<p>The School of Extended Education is working with the SSU Library and tutoring units to enhance writing center and information literacy services.</p> <p>They are in the pilot phase. With that said, students felt well supported in both these areas since so much can be done online through conferencing software.</p>
<p><i>Faculty.</i> Who teaches the courses, e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct? In what ways does the institution ensure that off-campus faculty is involved in the academic oversight of the programs at this site? How do these faculty members participate in curriculum development and assessment of student learning? (CFRs 2.4, 3.1-3.4, 4.6)</p>	<p>Use mostly regular tenured SSU faculty or long-term adjunct faculty to teach classes for the program both on and off campus. 4-5 courses are taught each semester and are split between the SCC and NVC sites. Courses are taught in addition to regular schedule for additional pay.</p> <p>Faculty members participate in curriculum development and assessment of student learning via the Liberal Studies program, since they teach on the main campus as well as at off-site locations.</p>	
<p><i>Curriculum and Delivery.</i> Who designs the programs and courses at this site? How are they approved and evaluated? Are the programs and courses comparable in content, outcomes and quality to those on the main campus? (CFR 2.1-2.3, 4.6)</p>	<p>All curriculum for the Liberal Studies program was designed by faculty and passed the SSU academic senate. Any changes must be initiated by discipline faculty and go through the required school and senate procedures.</p>	

<p><i>Retention and Graduation.</i> What data on retention and graduation are collected on students enrolled at this off-campus site? What do these data show? What disparities are evident? Are rates comparable to programs at the main campus? If any concerns exist, how are these being addressed? (CFRs 2.6, 2.10)</p>	<p>All retention and graduation data is collected by the School of Extended Education via the institutions PeopleSoft System. The program first produced graduations in 2014. The graduation rate for Solano students is 56.4%. This rate is comparable to the overall institution transfer graduation rate, but too few have graduated to disaggregate this data to any useful degree. Data is shared back to faculty in the School of Social Sciences. Has allowed them to fix scheduling hurdles and develop a degree completion pathway that includes classes taken at both the SCC and NVC sites. Students also receive frequent check-ins from the assigned academic counselor.</p>	
<p><i>Student Learning.</i> How does the institution assess student learning at off-campus sites? Is this process comparable to that used on the main campus? What are the results of student learning assessment? How do these compare with learning results from the main campus? (CFRs 2.6, 4.6, 4.7)</p>	<p>Learning data is gathered through the capstone course, and is comparable to programs on- campus and at other sites. Faculty have found since students take the same courses together that it allows for a community feel and more engaged students. Students at SCC and NVC more quickly move to synthesis, initiate productive in class dialogues, and work together as teams than their on-campus peers. Faculty find work is more interdisciplinary and more likely to exceed synthesis outcomes.</p>	
<p><i>Quality ASSurance Processes:</i> How are the institution’s quality aSSurance processes designed or modified to cover off-campus sites? What evidence is provided that off-campus programs and courses are educationally effective? (CFRs 4.4-4.8)</p>	<p>SCC is tracking student success and assessing learning outcomes. Analysis is being fed back to the degree program and School of Extended Education planning processes. MOU has been modified, services expanded, course offering expanded, and clear pathways with proactive counseling. Students feeling very supportive and heard.</p>	