

## **Background**

Pepperdine University looks forward to celebrating its 75th anniversary at the conclusion of its WASC reaccreditation review in 2012. As the university approaches this anniversary milestone, the reaccreditation process provides the university community with the opportunity to reaffirm its desire to be a nationally recognized institution whose mission combines the best of the academy with the best of its Christian faith heritage. Pepperdine University pursues the very highest academic standards within a context that both celebrates and extends the spiritual and ethical ideals of the Christian faith and maintains ties with the churches of Christ.

The university was founded in 1937 by George Pepperdine, a businessman who established the Western Auto Supply Company and was a lifelong member of the churches of Christ. For its first 30 years, Pepperdine was a small, mostly undergraduate Christian college located in downtown Los Angeles. Graduate and professional schools were added in 1970, allowing university status to be achieved. In 1972, the university opened its newly constructed Malibu campus.

Pepperdine University is now an independent, medium-sized university enrolling approximately 7600 students in five colleges and schools. Seaver College, the School of Law, and the School of Public Policy are located on the university's main campus in Malibu. The Graduate School of Education and Psychology and the Graziadio School of Business and Management are headquartered off-campus at Pepperdine's West Los Angeles regional center. The graduate programs of these two schools are offered also at a second regional center in Irvine, four off-campus sites located within 25 miles of the main campus or regional center, and four off-campus sites located beyond the 25-mile radius. In addition to leasing these facilities in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area, Pepperdine owns five facilities and rents one overseas, as well as owns a building in Washington, D.C. where Seaver College undergraduates take courses. A Campus Classification Scheme is attached.

In addition to regional accreditation through the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Pepperdine has received specialized accreditation through the following organizations: American Bar Association (which recently awarded our law school membership in the Order of the Coif), American Dietetic Association, American Psychological Association, Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, and the National Association of Schools of Music. Pepperdine has recently received renewal of the National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I certification.

## **Strengths**

Pepperdine strengths related to capacity and educational effectiveness include university's mission, people, locations, and culture.

**AN HISTORICALLY STRONG AFFILIATION WITH THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST**

Pepperdine's respect for its religious heritage is fundamental to the mission. First, the university draws from a Christian tradition that celebrates the life of the mind. The values of intellectual inquiry present in the Churches of Christ are lived out in the academic culture. Second, by maintaining and continually strengthening formal ties with the Churches of Christ, Pepperdine is able to maintain an institutional identity, uncharacteristic of many higher education institutions that have loosened their church affiliation. Finally, by celebrating its Christian commitment, Pepperdine is able to pursue the intellectual integration of faith and learning and the development of the students' spirituality. Given the increasing importance of higher education's role in helping students pursue their life purpose and their spiritual center - as evidenced by the work of the Spirituality in Higher Education initiative at UCLA and our own Lilly Endowment research and data collection on faith, identity, and life-purpose formation, dating back to 2002, we are more certain than ever that our mission is worthy. Evidence of our own interest in the integration of faith and learning is provided via a recent publication by two of our faculty: Thompson, D. & Miller-Perrin, C. (2008). Vocational discernment and action: An exploratory study of male and female university professors. *Review of Religious Research*, 50(1), 97-119, which is attached as "Vocational Discernment" at the end of this section. Thus, our church affiliation provides us with significant capacity to focus on a single, vibrant mission: ***"Pepperdine University is a Christian university committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and Christian values, where students are strengthened for lives of purpose, service, and leadership"***.

#### THE QUALITY OF OUR STUDENTS AND FACULTY

Pepperdine's undergraduate program, for example, attracts approximately 7500 applications each year, vying for 750 spots in the entering class. This entering class brings an average SAT score of 1240 and a high school GPA of 3.65 with 45% of these students coming from the top 10% of their graduating class. Pepperdine is pleased to have faculty who are highly committed to both teaching and scholarly research. These faculty hail from such schools as Chicago, Notre Dame, UCLA, UC Berkeley, Penn, Harvard, RAND Graduate School, Michigan State, Arizona, Washington State, USC, NYU, Claremont Graduate University, and Stanford. Current evidence of faculty commitment to both teaching and research can be seen in our own Dr. Stephen Davis, recipient of the Robert Foster Cherry Award from Baylor University. The attachment "Robert Foster Cherry Award" at the end of this section describes his work.

#### LOCATION

Pepperdine's many campus locations provide the capacity for rich academic programming. The main campus located in Malibu is stunningly beautiful and attractive to students for residential study. The urban regional centers and off-campus sites in the greater metropolitan Los Angeles area provide access to Pepperdine professional programs for fully-employed students. In addition, because Pepperdine values study abroad, 60% of the undergraduate students study in international locations all over the world. Newly-established programs in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Lausanne, Switzerland and Shanghai, China complement the long-existing programs in Heidelberg, Germany, Florence, Italy and

London, England. Finally, Pepperdine political science undergraduates enroll in internships in the Washington, D.C. area while residing in our newest location on Pennsylvania Avenue.

### **STRONG CULTURE OF EVIDENCE**

Resulting from a five-year long effort of the office of Educational and Institutional Research, Pepperdine has a well-formed process for building a culture of research (our designation for culture of evidence) about our educational practices. See section A.2 for more details on this process, which has built-in qualities to measure and improve both our capacity and our educational effectiveness.

### **FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

*PEPPERDINE MAINTAINS A BALANCED BUDGET OF APPROXIMATELY \$250M, WITH AN ENDOWMENT OF \$690M, WHICH PAYS OUT APPROXIMATELY \$27M ANNUALLY. WITH ASPIRATIONS FOR A LARGER ENDOWMENT OF \$1BILLION, WITH A PAYOUT THAT WOULD COMPRISE 20% OF THE OPERATING BUDGET, PEPPERDINE IS EMBARKING ON A CAMPAIGN TO RAISE \$500 MILLION FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS AND ENDOWMENT.*

### **Challenges**

The challenges identified below are based on data gathered from our program reviews and our institutional self-review of the 46 CFR's, all of which attend to both capacity and educational effectiveness:

### **ADDRESSING CRITICAL CRITERIA FOR REVIEW**

Based on our self-review assessment, we recognize that there are a number of CFR areas that require our attention. See section A.3 for details.

### **FACULTY RECRUITING AND RETENTION**

While Pepperdine faculty salaries are at the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile compared to national averages reported by the AAUP, attracting excellent faculty to Southern California continues to be a challenge, given the high cost of living. In addition to the more than 120 faculty housing units available on the Malibu campus, as well as a contingent loan program for new faculty, additional measures for providing affordable housing are under investigation.

### **HIGH IMPACT EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Seaver College engages in all five of the high impact activities for optimal learning identified recently by the The National Survey of Student Engagement: learning communities, study abroad, undergraduate research, service learning, and capstone experiences. Our challenge is to increase the percentage of our student body who are able

to participate in some or all of these best practice activities. See the attachment entitled "High Impact Activities NSSE".

### *Alumni Engagement*

We recognize that we have much to learn about increasing the engagement of our roughly 35,000 alumni with their alma mater, evidenced by their low giving rate of 13%. Strategic plans are in place to strengthen ties with our alumni base in order to learn from them how their education has added value to their lives, involve them in ongoing improvement of our academic programs, include them in our strategies to strengthen our career placement network, and to increase their participation in financially supporting our future. The president has launched some aggressive initiatives to address this matter, including forming new chapters, initiating a major service project, and forming a new alumni council. We expect to experience greater involvement with the alumni in the coming years.

### *Financial Resources*

To reduce tuition rate increases to make private higher education more affordable, and to reduce enrollment in our professional programs to enhance quality, increased external funding through fund raising is desirable. A \$500M campaign is planned and has been approved by the Board of Regents.

## **Approach to Identifying and Assessing Student Learning Outcomes**

Pepperdine's program review framework, whose five-year historical development is described in section A.3, is our tool for a) identifying and refining student learning outcomes, b) assessing student learning, and c) bringing about curricular change and improvement in student learning. This review process is applied to all academic programs, co-curricular programs, the university libraries, and information technology. The institutional portfolio, which will be featured in both the capacity and educational effectiveness reviews, will demonstrate our progress in these areas. Each of these entities continually refines its student learning outcomes, gathers evidence of student work, and analyzes this work to determine how to improve student learning, as well as to inform decision-making, planning, and budgeting. The results of our ongoing identification of outcomes and assessment of student learning, disseminated to the University Planning Committee, increasingly serve as foci for institutional improvement.

### *Identifying Student Learning Outcomes*

According to the most recent Educational Effectiveness Inventory (Data Exhibit 6), administered on February 7, 2008, 87% of Pepperdine academic programs have published student-learning outcomes. Many of these outcomes are identified initially more than 10 years, undergoing continuous quality improvement via the ongoing program review process. We are making incremental annual progress on the percent of programs that have published student-learning outcomes, with a goal of have 100% subscription by the time our CPR visit occurs in 2010.

## **Responses to Last Accreditation Visit**

The WASC Commission letter sent to President Benton on March 6, 2001, identified a number of important issues in its recommendations and suggestions.

### *University Planning and Direction*

The visiting team charged Pepperdine with developing an institutional plan that would serve to inform and guide school-level decisions and resource allocation in the context of mission and strategic priorities, and to have the senior administration play a leadership role in the strategic assessment of institutional performance and effectiveness. In response to this recommendation, and to improve the strategic planning process, strategic priorities are established annually by the president in conjunction with the University Planning Committee for the purpose of guiding resource allocation. Also, a university-wide strategic planning process comprising external scan, SWOT analysis, current state assessment, and priority setting began in 2005. The university-wide strategic plan completed by the University Planning Committee in May, 2008, is exhibited in the appendices at the end of this section: "Strategic Plan Draft 2007". Currently, this draft is in revision to reflect the content from president's recent envisioning sessions with donors, as well as the reality of the current financial climate.

### *Integrating Values into Decision Making and Program Development*

The WASC Commission urged the university to articulate the values espoused in the mission statement in meaningful ways so that they can effectively inform decision-making, particularly at the school level. In particular, service learning and global experiences need to be assessed.

Progress has been made in defining and integrating values into decision-making and program development. Faculty candidate finalists for all of the schools are interviewed by the president and provost and hired, in part, because of their commitment to a faith community. Each year, the entering class of tenure-track faculty from all of the schools convenes for a week-long seminar on the integration of faith and learning at one of Pepperdine's overseas locations. The university's Center for Faith and Learning, initially funded by the Lilly Foundation, sponsors this event and also provides ongoing faculty development in this area. During this past academic year, a branding study was conducted to understand better the students' experience of Pepperdine's mission and values. Finally, the provost articulated a response and call to action for the faculty, in the form of a presentation at the 2006 Faculty Conference: Scholars & Witnesses – Defining the Pepperdine Difference. See the attachments at the end of this section for a copy of the presentation. This essay provides the language and the mechanisms for the faculty to think more deeply about what it means to be a Christian university. While clarity regarding Pepperdine's mission and values continues to be a topic of discussion, substantial progress and greater consistency have been achieved since 2000 with the appointment of President, Andy Benton.

Regarding the assessment of service learning, the Volunteer Center oversees service learning and conducts ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of service learning pedagogy. A full report may be found in the attachments. Since the international program experience is central to Pepperdine's undergraduate experience, this program is currently being evaluated within the five-year program review cycle. The overseas program goals and a survey, which is presently being administered and analyzed, can also be found in the appendices at the end of this section.

### *Review of University Bylaws and Statement on Academic Freedom*

The university has revised its bylaws as of June 13, 2006. The changes address the Commission's suggestion that the institution consider language in the bylaws that reflects appropriate distinctions between policy and administration, and that the Articles of Incorporation be examined with regard to institutional mission and purpose. The Board of Regents has changed its bylaws, as reflected in attachment, "University Bylaws".

The provost has worked with the faculty to ensure that academic freedom is embedded in the Rank, Tenure, and Promotion process. The attachment "Academic Freedom" contains a copy of the recently updated Rank, Tenure, and Promotion Policy, which contains Pepperdine's statement on academic freedom.

### *Assessment*

In 2006, the university expanded its institutional research function into a newly created office of Educational and Institutional Research, whose task it is to support and monitor the program review process and the assessment of student learning, with a commitment to complex and on-going assessment across the university, and to produce data in a timely and effective manner for decision-making. This office is charged with responding to the WASC commission's urging that the university identify more clearly its goals in conducting assessments of educational effectiveness, to establish baseline data and, as appropriate, performance indicators, and to utilize its assessment results more systematically to improve learning and feed into institutional decision making, strategic planning, and budgeting.

As a part of the work of the office of Educational and Institutional Research, Pepperdine has developed a comprehensive list of peer and aspirational schools to monitor progress in such areas as faculty salaries, endowment, student selectivity, research budgeting, faculty resources, grant awards, and retention and graduation rates in each of the five schools. See the attachments in this section for our 2008 listing of peer and aspirational schools. In connection with these lists, we use a benchmark dashboard instrument to assist senior leadership as they track Pepperdine's standing with respect to other schools. This dashboard instrument will be featured during the capacity review.

An important internal assessment tool, the Program Review as Research process, is both innovative and widely embraced by faculty. This process, based on a research model for

program review, relies on benchmarks, performance indicators, and systematic assessment. Each program review culminates in a report to the senior administrative University Planning Committee. Our comprehensive program review process, which encompasses student learning outcomes, gathering of student work as evidence, analysis of these findings, and recommendations for improving student learning, is discussed fully in section 3 below, as well as throughout sections B and C.

Pepperdine's digital archiving tool, <https://xythos.pepperdine.edu>, provides a web-based means of facilitating collaboration among faculty on assessment projects as well as disseminating both aggregate and disaggregate findings to the university community.

### *Faculty Strength, Role and Influence in the Institution's Culture*

The role of the faculty has been strengthened in several specific ways since 2000 for the purpose of influencing Pepperdine's overall culture, as recommended by the WASC commission. In 2002, President Benton formed the University Faculty Council (UFC) to create a closer collaboration among the senior administration and faculty leadership across all five schools. Elected faculty leaders from each of the schools meet regularly with the president and provost, functioning as a kind of faculty senate for the entire university. In addition to these face to face meetings, the provost has instituted a periodic of comment and review, in which all faculty members are invited to comment on new policies and procedures affecting them.

The WASC reaccreditation self-study process provides the university with an opportunity to strengthen faculty involvement in building the culture of evidence by placing primary responsibility for program review with the faculty as "principal investigators". In particular, the WASC Commission encouraged Pepperdine to seek better ways to involve faculty in the evaluation and assessment processes of student performance, learning goals, and educational technology. Pepperdine's educational environment across several physical and virtual learning sites calls for a unified faculty upon whom the institution can rely for analysis and perspective. There remains a need to examine the integration of technology across campus units in addition to identifying educational goals for the use of technology and to research the efficacy of technology as an educational practice. The Pepperdine program review process is largely faculty driven. Student performance is measured on many levels: through ongoing assessment in each class, through the university-wide program review process, and through continuous gathering of data from alumni. Since 2007, Pepperdine relies on a standard assessment protocol for assessing its information technology support systems: TechQual. Please see the attachment for the most recent report on this instrument: "Information\_Technology\_Assessment".

### *Off-Campus and Distance Learning Programs*

The WASC Commission requested that the university work with the WASC staff to develop a system for classifying site-based and distance learning programs so that the substantive change review process, where appropriate, can be more clearly aligned with institutional planning. The WASC office of Substantive Change recently recognized Pepperdine's West

Los Angeles and Irvine campuses as regional centers. The campus classification scheme attachment provides an account of Pepperdine's campus topology, while the Off-Campus and Distance Education attachment summarizes all of the programs and their locations.