

REPORT OF THE WSCUC VISITING TEAM

SEEKING ACCREDITATION VISIT 1

For Institutions Seeking Initial Accreditation

Institute of Buddhist Studies

FEBRUARY 28 - MARCH 2, 2017

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The team evaluated the institution under the WSCUC Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective judgment for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission. 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. Once an institution achieves either candidacy or initial accreditation, the team report and Commission Action Letter associated with the review that resulted in the granting of either candidacy or initial accreditation and the team reports and Commission Action Letters of any subsequent reviews will be made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

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SEEKING ACCREDITATION VISIT 1 TEAM REPORT

SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of Institution and Visit

Located in Berkeley, California, the Institute of Buddhist Studies is a small (27 students and 20 faculty), non-profit institution offering three graduate-level degree programs, none of which have been added since the institution was granted eligibility (IBS Letter of Intent Stipulation), and four certificate programs. The Institute was founded in 1949 as the Buddhist Study Center to address the need to train English-speaking Buddhist ministers, and was renamed the Institute of Buddhist Studies in 1966. The IBS mission statement was revised in 2015 to reflect the expanded breadth of the Institute's programs "[t]o provide graduate level education in the full breadth of the Buddhist tradition with specialized education supporting Pure Land and contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies and advancing Jodo Shinshu Buddhist ministry" (IBS catalog p. 5). The Institute currently operates no off-campus sites and conducts its classes in a traditional face-to-face format, although there is discussion about adding online programs in the future.

In 1986 IBS became an affiliate of the Graduate Theological Union and developed an affiliation with Ryukoku University in Kyoto, Japan. IBS was approved to operate by the State of California's Bureau for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education in 1990s. When that agency closed, IBS continued to operate under the oversight of the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE); however, the BPPE notified IBS in August 2016 that the institution's application for re-approval to operate was denied. IBS is being allowed to submit a mitigation package outlining its compliance with California regulations to the Bureau in lieu of a formal hearing. At the time of the visit, a decision from the BPPE was still forthcoming.

IBS is seeking candidacy for initial WASC accreditation after being granted eligibility effective December 8, 2015. The passage of California SB1247 is a primary motivation for IBS pursuing accreditation, but the visit confirmed that the institution also sees the benefit of compliance with accreditation standards as a way to continue their mission to offer a quality education to their students. IBS chose WSCUC as its accreditor because bodies that accredit seminaries are geared toward Christian institutions and are thus not appropriate for a Buddhist studies program.

B. The Institution's Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 Report: Alignment with the Letter of Intent and Quality and Rigor of the Review and Report

The visiting team found the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 Report to be consistent with the Letter of Intent. IBS made efforts to address each of the four areas of concern (Criteria 7, 8, 9 and 11) outlined by the WASCUC Eligibility Review Committee in the 14 December 2015 Eligibility Action Letter which found IBS to have met the "threshold qualifications for Eligibility." Section 3 of the institution's Seeking Accreditation Institutional Report clearly outlined basic steps taken to address these issues, and the institute's response under the standards provided further evidence of their attention to these key areas.

Overall, the team found the report to contain a broad scope of sincere reflections on the institutional changes IBS faces as they seek accreditation. Participation from every level of the IBS leadership and faculty seems to have had appropriate input in and engagement with the accreditation process to date. IBS held a board of trustee retreat on mission, vision and Institutional goals; faculty convened a program review; a leadership team was formed; a

financial review was initiated and completed. These efforts resulted from the reflections of IBS's shortcomings and a desire to address them as they move toward accreditation. A workshop for faculty on the accreditation process ensured faculty participation and led to an Institute-wide understanding of accreditation and what was necessary to achieve it.

Better alignment and consistency among the list of appendices, embedded links and the attached evidence would have been helpful, but otherwise the report was well-organized and clearly written to provide the team in advance of the visit a helpful introduction to the condition of the institution. Each standard and CFR was addressed, supporting documents were embedded and provided as appendices, and discussion of each standard ended with a section on synthesis and reflections that demonstrated the institution's understanding of the significance of their responses. Evidentiary support is somewhat uneven, as the institution is still very much in the early stages of compliance and as yet lacks some of the formalized documents and infrastructures necessary to demonstrate full compliance; however, interviews during the visit indicated that IBS is becoming increasingly aware of the work that will need to be done to continue to build educational effectiveness, support systems of quality improvement, and assure student learning and success.

The report was transparent in its portrayal of the institution's progress towards addressing the concerns of accreditation, and IBS seems aware of issues of compliance. The report appropriately highlighted several of the institution's strengths, but there was little discussion of institutional weaknesses.

The team was impressed at the generally positive attitude towards the process of seeking accreditation exhibited by everyone they talked to during their visit.

C. Response to Issues Raised in the Eligibility Review Committee Letter

The Eligibility Review Committee (ERC) acted to grant eligibility to the IBS and outlined the following recommendations for further attention in its letter of December 14, 2015. The team found each of the recommendations to have been addressed at a basic level, but further analysis and discussion can be found in subsequent sections of this Team Report.

(1) The panel recommends that by the time of SAV 1, the Institution has confirmed its final organizational structure and is able to articulate it in detail.

The Board approved the final organizational structure in January 2016, and it is included in the report. IBS supplied appropriate job descriptions to illustrate the functions for each person except the president. The need for further clarification of the role of the president and other institutional leadership as well as alignment with the board bylaws and the need for an operational manual clarifying the role and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees is discussed further in Section II, Standard 3 of this report.

(2) The panel recommends that by the time of SAV 1, IBS move to audited financial statements.

An audited statement was provided in the report and IBS has met this condition; however institutional reflections on the significance of the financial situation and the need to diversify revenue streams beyond fundraising and endowments remains a concern that is discussed in Section II, Standard 3 of this report.

(3) The panel recommends that by the time of SAV 1, IBS has made significant progress in its formal institutional planning effort to reflect the changes it indicated are currently under review.

The Provost convened a Strategic Planning Committee of the Board and a draft was reviewed at the November 2016 Board meeting with final review to be completed January 2017. IBS submitted the draft report with its study. The content of the plan will be addressed in the appropriate standard review. Although IBS has met the recommendation for progress, additional work to be done is discussed in Section II, Standard 4 of this report.

(4) The panel members note the fact that program review is data-driven, and recommends that the institution continue to move in this commendable direction.

The draft outline of the Program Review Process included collection of many data points, both quantitative and qualitative. Specific information related to program review is discussed in Section II, Standard 2 of this report.

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH WSCUC’S STANDARDS

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes & Ensuring Educational Objectives

The institution defines its purposes and establish the educational objectives aligned with those purposes. The institution has a clear and explicit sense of the essential values and character, its distinctive elements, its place in both the higher education community and society, and its contribution to the public good. It functions with integrity, transparency, and autonomy.

Institutional Purposes

CFR 1.1 *The institution’s formally approved statements of purpose are appropriate for an institution of higher education and clearly define its essential values and character and ways in which it contributes to the public good.*

The current mission statement, revised and approved in May 2015 states that the institutional mission is “[t]o provide graduate level education in the full breadth of the Buddhist tradition with specialized education supporting Pure Land and contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies and advancing Jodo Shinshu Buddhist ministry.” IBS publicizes its mission in the catalog and on the website. Its scope, although overarching in “breadth of Buddhist tradition,” is tempered with the realistic goal of providing specialized education for those seeking to serve through the ministries and, increasingly, service-oriented lay professions including chaplaincy. An understanding of and an eagerness to embrace this statement was exhibited by everyone in the team spoke with students and faculty to senior leadership and the Board of Trustees.

CFR 1.2 *Educational objectives are widely recognized throughout the institution, are consistent with stated purposes, and are demonstrably achieved. The institution regularly generates, evaluates, and makes public data about student achievement, including measures of retention and graduation, and evidence of student learning outcomes.*

IBS’ Vision Statement as indicated in their Strategic Plan reiterates its desire to be a center for graduate-level education in Buddhism in the United States. The vision statement goes on to describe its specialized study, but the team was unable to ascertain specific ways in which IBS plans to achieve this “full breadth of Buddhist tradition” through, for example, alignment among institutional goals, program goals, and clearly articulated course outcomes.

IBS has developed Institutional Learning Objectives (ILOs) and has developed a curricular map for each program that aligns program elements with Program Learning Objectives (PLOs), but does not indicate how these objectives will be met. Success in the program is

largely defined as completion of coursework with a particular grade, and there was little, if any, evidence to indicate the way in which or the degree to which students accomplished the PLOs.

The School Performance Fact Sheet for 2014-15 that was part of the report is a quantitative review of graduation rates, completion times, placement, and salary information. In addition, it addresses the required federal cost and debt information. This data is available as a PDF on the institutional webpage.

Integrity and Transparency

CFR 1.3 *The institution publicly states its commitment to academic freedom for faculty, staff, and students, and acts accordingly. This commitment affirms that those in the academy are free to share their convictions and responsible conclusions with their colleagues and students in their teaching and writing.*

IBS has a published statement of academic freedom in its Faculty Handbook that attests, "Central to the vocation of the Institute and to its faculty and students is inquiry into truth understood both as a communal and an individual undertaking. Faculty members should be free to teach, carry on research, and publish, subject to adequate performance of their academic duties as agreed upon within the Institute." The team confirmed that the institution's commitment to academic freedom does indeed extend across all its programs and encourages faculty and students to explore the full range of Buddhist thought and application in "creative ways that meet contemporary needs" (SAV1 Self-Study 15). To better represent this broader view, the Board of Trustees recently amended the institution's by-laws to include this statement under Article II, section B: "The IBS seeks to nurture a harmony of academic excellence, grounded in critical thinking and academic freedom, with the deepening religious awareness of its students and the greater community."

The team further learned that, as an affiliate of GTU, IBS conforms to the policies and general standards of the consortium, including the GTU statement on academic freedom. IBS acknowledges that there is a need to create an explicit statement addressing academic freedom for students, and they plan to include such a statement in the AY 2017-18 academic catalog.

CFR 1.4 *Consistent with its purposes and character, the institution demonstrates an appropriate response to the increasing diversity and society through its policies, its educational and co-curricular programs, its hiring and admissions criteria, and its administrative and organizational practices.*

IBS has a published diversity statement and non-discrimination policy that clearly expresses the institute's commitment to being a diverse and inclusive community (CFR 1.4). There is diversity in the mix of Anglo and Japanese students and faculty; the male/female balance is fairly even except, perhaps, in administration and on the Board of Trustees. As a graduate school with a small student body and faculty as well as a historical connection to the Japanese American community, IBS is experiencing a demographic shift in its student population that may necessitate adaptation as reliable data are collected, analyzed and responded to. With such a small faculty and student body, more diversity among students and faculty would enrich the learning experience, and the team had a clear sense that such diversity would be welcomed. Through meetings with students and faculty, the team affirmed that the diversity of beliefs in the classroom has been an enriching experience for the current students.

CFR 1.5 *Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, or religious organizations, the institution has education and primary purpose and operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.*

IBS was originally established by the Buddhist Church of America (BCA) and still maintains important ties to the body, but the IBS Bylaws indicate and visiting team was provided

appropriate evidence that the governing Board of Trustees is sufficiently independent of the BCA. The team suggests that IBS continue to monitor the appropriateness of having a Bishop of the BCA serve as the IBS president, even though that is a largely honorific role, given the ability of the president to stand in for the Board of Trustee chairman in his absence (IBS Board of Trustee Bylaws).

The relationship between IBS and the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) was somewhat clarified during the visit. The GTU is in a considerable state of flux at this reporting, and it is somewhat unclear the degree to which IBS will be able to sustain the services currently afforded it by affiliation with the GTU. Although the team report did not seem to indicate full membership as an option, during interviews with the president of the GTU and with leadership at IBS revealed this possibility as a very viable option. As a full member, IBS would have direct representation on GTU's governing boards (the Board of Trustees and Council of Presidents), as well as a seat on the Council of Deans, thus giving IBS a much stronger voice in the common MA program, in which many of the IBS students are enrolled, as well as other operational functions of the GTU consortium.

CFR 1.6 *The institution truthfully represents the academic goals, programs, services, and costs to students and to the larger public. The institution demonstrates that the academic program can be completed in a timely fashion. The Institute treats students fairly and actively through established policies and procedures addressing student conduct, grievances, human subjects in research, disability, and financial matters, including refunds and financial aid.*

IBS truthfully represents to students and the public through its catalog and on its website the institution's fair and equitable policies, timely program completion, and program costs. In these materials, IBS states that it seeks first to understand and then to meet the broader needs of its student body, particularly "ways to better financially support our students" (SAV1 Self-study 16). The main avenue for this effort is collaborative work with one main religious institutional alliance, Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) through targeted student recruitment and specific scholarships.

Policies regarding academic goals, programs, services, and student costs are similarly published; however, current and prospective students might find useful a more prominent presentation of the types of information found in the BPPE or HERI consumer disclosures. Additionally, IBS defers to many of the policies and procedures of the GTU. As IBS grows and seeks federal student aid funds, IBS policies will likely need to be developed, adopted and communicated clearly, independent of the GTU.

CFR 1.7 *The institution exists integrity and transparency in his operations, as demonstrated by the adoption and implementation of appropriate policies and procedures, sound business practices, timely and very responsive to complaints and grievances, and regular evaluation of its performance in these areas. The institution finances are regularly audited by qualified independent auditors.*

The staff (employee) handbook contains a grievance procedure to deal formally with interpersonal workplace conflict in Part V, section B. The 2016-17 Catalog contains a grievance and disciplinary procedure to deal with student related issues on page 86. The team learned from the IBS Dean that there have been no formal complaints from staff, faculty or students that would have been dealt with through the grievance process. Through conversations with staff and faculty, the team learned that, although many of them have multiple responsibilities, they feel supported and are extremely committed to the mission and success of IBS. Additionally, they testified to the positive impact the accreditation process has had on IBS as demonstrated by "tightening of the ship" in ways such as the attention to internal financial controls, the clarification of roles and separation of duties, and the development of more formal policies and procedures.

The institution included its first financial audit as part of its report.

CFR 1.8 *The institution is committed to honest and open communication with the Accrediting Commission; to undertaking the accreditation review process with seriousness and candor; to informing the Commission promptly of any matter that could materially affect the accreditation status of the institution; and to abiding by Commission policies and procedures, including all substantive change policies.*

The team wishes to commend IBS for its open and responsive interactions with WSCUC as well as for the way they have complied with all requests of the Commission, communicated the institution's status appropriately to the public, and maintained a collegial and forthright relationship with WSCUC. The institute had also properly obtained and maintained permission from the Bureau of Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE), Department of Consumer Affairs, to operate as a degree granting institution until August of 2016 when application for re-approval to operate was denied. During the visit, the team received a statement from Dean of IBS stating that in late January 2017, IBS was granted permission to submit a "mitigation packet" to the Bureau to demonstrate IBS's compliance with the requirements. This packet was submitted on February 24, 2017 and a response is expected within two (2) months. IBS has permission to operate during this appeal process (Statement on BPPE Reapplication Process). Approval by the BPPE to continue to operate must be received and maintained throughout the accreditation process.

Summary for Standard 1

The team found all members of the IBS staff, faculty, administration, and leadership well able to articulate the institutions purposes and educational vision. The institution has a clear and explicit sense of who they are, how they wish to distinguish themselves as an institution, and how they contribute to society through the training of Buddhist ministers and lay people committed to serving the public. Relationships with their founding organization, the Buddhist Church of America, and with outside constituents such as the Graduate Theological Union appeared to provide appropriate levels of autonomy and constructive collaboration. Further reflection upon these relationships and formalization of some elements of those relationships would be useful moving forward.

The WSCUC team finds that IBS meets Standard 1 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, understanding that only the Commission is authorized to make the final determination as to whether or not an institution is in compliance with the Standards.

The team found the following CFRs to be sufficient for Initial Accreditation:

CFRs 1.1, 1.4, 1.6, and 1.8

The team found the following CFRs sufficient for Candidacy but needing more development for Initial Accreditation:

CFR 1.2 Indicators of student achievement need to be more clearly articulated in terms of measurable student achievement, better aligned to course material and program and institutional outcomes, and more intentionally communicated to students and to the public.

CFR 1.3 Academic freedom policies need to be included in the catalog and other appropriate publications.

CFR 1.5 Continued consideration and clarification of relationships with the BCA and the GTU would be beneficial.

CFR 1.7 Increased sophistication in business practices including audits as well as review of institutional performance is warranted.

Standard Two: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions

The institution achieves its purposes and attains its educational objectives at the institutional and program level through the core functions of teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, and support for student learning and success. The institution demonstrates that these core functions are performed effectively by evaluating valid and reliable evidence of learning and by supporting the success of every student.

The Institute of Buddhist Studies is at the beginning stages of developing and implementing an educational effectiveness system for the achievement and verification of the achievement of its student learning outcomes. A first set of institutional learning outcomes has been developed. These have begun to be adapted for degree programs and are included, for example, in some sample syllabi. Initial matrices have also been developed to chart where individual outcomes are to be introduced reinforced and assessed in academic programs, but these are not yet comprehensive nor entirely clear. To date, data has not been collected, and IBS is just beginning to determine what data is available for its use through GTU systems and what systems it will need to generate and gather information independently. The systems available at GTU and their ongoing status are subject to question.

The visiting team sought to determine the level of understanding and adoption of the WSCUC educational effectiveness model throughout the institution, and its readiness and ability for continued development of a basic and complete system of assessment. The CFRs of Standard 2 provide an outline for moving through this determination and reaching the team's collective judgment and recommendation.

Teaching and Learning

CFR 2.1 *The institution's educational programs are appropriate in content, standards of performance, rigor, and nomenclature for the degree level awarded, regardless of mode of delivery. They are staffed by sufficient numbers of faculty qualified for the type and level of curriculum offered.*

IBS has a long history as an affiliate member of the Graduate Theological Union, and its Core faculty members teach in the GTU MA and Ph.D. programs in religious studies. This experience provides a solid baseline for the requirements and standards of their own degrees, The Masters of Buddhist Studies (MBS) and the Master of Divinity (MDiv) to meet requirements of ordination and chaplaincy. The programs are well articulated and outlined for prospective students in institutional catalogs and handbooks. The core faculty are well qualified, though four of five hold administrative as well as faculty roles. Adjunct professors and research fellows are also academically qualified and supplement core faculty time and expertise. It seems clear that the core faculty carrying multiple responsibilities, including guiding and making the institutional adjustments to the WSCUC accreditation model with its foundation in educational effectiveness are carrying a heavy load, and that ongoing development of the model will have to be carefully planned and implemented at a moderate and consistent pace.

CFR 2.2 *All degrees—undergraduate and graduate—awarded by the institution are clearly defined in terms of entry-level requirements and levels of student achievement necessary for graduation that represent more than simply an accumulation of courses or credits. The institution has both a coherent philosophy, expressive of its mission, which guides the meaning of its degrees and processes that ensure the quality and integrity of its degrees.*

Admission and degree requirements are clear and well defined, with institutional publications outlining them in consistent forms. Learning outcomes for the various degree programs are not consistently in forms that can be clearly accessed, with terms like "exploration," "engagement" and "develop," knowledge or traditions of thought and practice, instead of "demonstrate" knowledge, or "critically evaluate," or other more

concrete terms that can be assessed as being partially or fully met (Comprehensive Program Review, draft, p. 2). This lack of measurable assessment outcomes raises questions about how the meaning, quality and integrity of degrees can be defined or assessed, and achievement of learning outcomes improved. Similarly, rubrics for evaluation are just now in the development stage at IBS, given, as explained by the Dean of GTU, new assessment practices at the GTU. The sample syllabi IBS provided show that the learning outcomes model has been adopted unevenly by faculty members. The team does not question the quality of learning taking place at IBS, but rather about IBS's ability to adequately assess and document beyond anecdotes the demonstrable outcomes of that learning. Attention will need to be given to ongoing and steady development of understanding across the institution, and among individual professors with regard to the framing and assessing of learning outcomes.

CFR 2.2 (a) is not applicable.

CFR 2.2 (b) *The institution's graduate programs establish clearly stated objectives differentiated from and more advanced than undergraduate programs in terms of admissions, curricula, standards of performance, and student learning outcomes. Graduate programs foster students' active engagement with the literature of the field and create a culture that promotes the importance of scholarship and/or professional practice. Ordinarily, a baccalaureate degree is required for admission to a graduate program.*

CFR 2.3 *The institution's student learning outcomes and standards of performance are clearly stated at the course, program, and, as appropriate, institutional level. These outcomes and standards are reflected in academic programs, policies, and curricula, and are aligned with advisement, library, and information and technology resources, and the wider learning environment.*

IBS has begun to state student learning outcomes and expectations. Outcomes are written into publications, handbooks, and syllabi with some consistency. Matrices have been developed for how and where these outcomes are to be achieved for each program. IBS has taken the development of the WSCUC model of educational effectiveness seriously and that is beginning to transform how the institution approaches its educational purpose. As outlined under CFR 2.1 and 2.2, this work must continue to develop with deeper understanding across the institution, and be more consistently applied and communicated.

CFR 2.4 *The institution's student learning outcomes and standards of performance are developed by faculty and widely shared among faculty, students, staff, and (where appropriate) external stakeholders. The institution's faculty take collective responsibility for establishing appropriate standards of performance and demonstrating through assessment the achievement of these standards.*

The faculty have discussed, developed, and begun to implement the educational effectiveness model. The process is fairly seamless and avoids some of the possible resistance that can come with change because key faculty members hold dual assignments as administrators and professors. The team heard evidence that core and adjunct faculty had frequently and thoughtfully discussed how to develop and assess outcomes. This institutional involvement in the development of student learning outcomes has been translated into modified program and course learning outcomes. Consistent with the written evidence presented in the institutional report, discussions with the faculty confirm that they are at the beginning stages of creating rubrics and consistent ways of assessing the achievement of these outcomes at all levels. This work in progress should continue on a consistent and systematic basis.

Interviews with staff confirmed that they, too, are experiencing changes to the institution through the accreditation process such as sharpening of lines of responsibility, clarity being brought to institutional and departmental policies, and more consistent professional expectations. They receive these changes as very positive developments and are actively engaged in dialogs about relevant policies and expectations.

CFR 2.5 *The institution's academic programs actively involve students in learning, take into account students' prior knowledge of the subject matter, challenge students to meet high standards of performance, offer opportunities for them to practice, generalize, and apply what they have learned, and provide them with appropriate and ongoing feedback about their performance and how it can be improved.*

The design of each academic program includes independent work, a thesis proposal and thesis, and differing kinds of practicum experiences (teaching, speaking, pastoral care, etc.), along with course work with standard expectations for reading, discussion, presentation, and writing. Most courses are delivered seminar-style. Some syllabi indicate smaller amounts of writing, for example, than others. Given the association with GTU, the team assumed adequate levels of graduate work, and discussed how the faculty set expectations for the level of work to be done. Evidence provided in discussion with core and adjunct faculty members indicate a dedicated and highly qualified faculty, with deep engagement with their fields of study consistent with graduate level education; however, there were gaps in the degree to which policies and procedures, such as knowledge of an institutional credit hour policy or the practice of including it on syllabi, are emerging as part of the culture.

Students indicated a consistently high level of satisfaction with both the quality and rigor of the instruction they received. They reported equivalent requirements and rigor of work when taking courses at other GTU institutions. They also consistently offered high praise to the "authenticity" of the faculty, to the care they bring to both their teaching and to students as individuals. Students also appreciate the flexibility they are afforded in crafting their course schedules and developing thesis and project topics to meet their individual professional goals and personal needs.

CFR 2.6 *The institution demonstrates that its graduates consistently achieve its stated learning outcomes and established standards of performance. The institution ensures that its expectations for student learning are embedded in the standards that faculty use to evaluate student work.*

A full and consistent development and application of student learning outcomes is still being developed. Because outcomes are not always stated in terms of measurable student performance, how these outcomes can be assessed is a question that requires further investigation and discussion. Student success, in the forms of graduation and job placement or graduate salary ranges, are available on the IBS website and in the current catalogue. Retention and persistence data is now being gathered. Programs are very small, so IBS has the opportunity to develop their educational effectiveness system in a simple, clear manner while planning for capacity to gather data for a larger student population.

CFR 2.7 *All programs offered by the institution are subject to systematic program review. The program review process includes, but is not limited to, analyses of student achievement of the program's learning outcomes; retention and graduation rates; and, where appropriate, results of licensing examination and placement, and evidence from external constituencies such as employers and professional organizations.*

The Comprehensive Program Review plan being developed includes necessary data and markers such as tracking of grades, student self-evaluations, review of quality of final projects, exit interviews, and alumni surveys. As noted in the institutional report, past work with a small student body in a rather cohesive Buddhist institutional environment across North America has been accomplished in informal and anecdotal ways. It will be the task of IBS to formalize this work, without losing the value of institutional and personal narrative, by identifying and gathering authentic examples of student learning, ongoing academic growth, and professional success. Such data is not yet available. IBS will need to prioritize which data will be most revealing of actual student learning, decide where student success can be consistently ascertained, and identify problems in student achievement so they can then consistently compile, analyze and respond to the information provided. The current plan will need consistent and careful development to ensure efficiency and efficacy.

Scholarship and Creative Activity

CFR 2.8 *The institution clearly defines expectations for research, scholarship, and creative activity for its students and all categories of faculty. The institution actively values and promotes scholarship, creative activity, and curricular and instructional innovation, and their dissemination appropriate to the institution's purposes and character.*

The core faculty demonstrate ongoing, creative and robust scholarship and service to supporting religious institutions, the Institute and scholarly communities. Recently rewritten standards for faculty rank have incorporated language requiring "effective teaching which facilitates learning." And the Dean of the Faculty leads a faculty development program to encourage and assist junior faculty. IBS demonstrates well its commitment to and achievement of significant and creative scholarly work. This culture of scholarly activity is also evident among its students.

CFR 2.9 *The institution recognizes and promotes appropriate linkages among scholarship, teaching, assessment, student learning, and service.*

The faculty evaluation process at IBS is annual rather than following a periodic comprehensive peer review model. It includes standard criteria for teaching, scholarship and service, but has yet to incorporate institutional assessment of student learning. IBS will need to include elements of the WSCUC student learning model into its evaluation system so that faculty rewards recognize new expectations of faculty assignments. IBS should consider whether it should adopt a more comprehensive peer review evaluation system.

Despite this informal culture, however, faculty are actively engaged in research, scholarship and presentation in a way that speaks to the value they place on it as an integral part of the teaching-learning endeavors of the institution. The scholarship records of several of the IBS faculty may be one of the institution's most under-highlighted and under-quantified assets.

CFR 2.10 *The institution demonstrates that students make timely progress toward the completion of their degrees and that an acceptable proportion of students complete their degrees in a timely fashion, given the institution's mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs it offers. The institution collects and analyzes student data, disaggregated by appropriate demographic categories and areas of study. It tracks achievement, satisfaction, and the extent to which the campus climate supports student success. The institution regularly identifies the characteristics of its students; assesses their preparation, needs, and experiences; and uses these data to improve student achievement.*

GTU is currently making final decisions to migrate its student information system to a new platform. It appears that the member schools will need to purchase independent systems or find contract options for those services now being provided through the GTU. Thus, the discussion in the institutional report about using information from the GTU system is no longer current or relevant. Instead IBS will need to determine the extent to which they can cooperatively gather and share data on student demographics and outcomes. Similarly, IBS will need to make the same kinds of decisions regarding an educational effectiveness platform if needed. The IBS report notes that its needs will be specific to its mission and constituency. Every institution must wrestle with how it will respond to its sponsoring institutions and serve the public good.

Already, initial data indicates a balance between male and female students. Other demographics are either not available or are not being gathered. An analysis was not offered on whether the achieved gender diversity is the result of purposeful efforts in recruiting, from constituent demand, or simply reflective of regional interest, for example. IBS will need to put a system in place that will be cost effective, draw as much as it can from its partner institution(s), and provide useful data for its ongoing work with students.

CFR 2.11 *Consistent with its purposes, the institution offers co-curricular programs that are aligned with its academic goals, integrated with academic programs, and designed to support all students' personal and professional development. The institution assesses the effectiveness of its co-curricular programs and uses the results for improvement.*

Co-curricular offerings are modest and in line with the needs of professional graduate students and their schedules. IBS partners with other institutions to provide some basic co-curricular assistance. For example, GTU offers academic writing and other workshops, and the Center for Buddhist Education offers experience in ritual and ceremony. It has also identified potential new positions that would assist students, and additional assessment data may reveal currently unidentified needs. Given that IBS is a graduate institution, it would be appropriate to keep professional needs and student outcome achievement of professional standards in mind as new programs are developed. Full implementation of the learning outcomes model and systematic analysis of student achievement and needs will be a necessary step as any new co-curricular services and opportunities are considered.

Students noted that even though there are not many formal student services, the level of guidance and assistance they receive from professors provides them with resources they need as they pursue their personal and professional goals. They speak consistent praise for the dedication of the faculty and staff.

CFR 2.12 *The institution ensures that all students understand the requirements of their academic programs and receive timely, useful, and complete information and advising about relevant academic requirements.*

The IBS catalog and other publications are complete and clear. The stated faculty to student ratio is 5:1. Advising and planning for students appears to be conducted personally and individually. IBS also works cooperatively with GTU admissions for advising for joint programs. Discussions with faculty and with GTU personnel confirmed that this pattern is well established and effective.

CFR 2.13 *The institution provides academic and other student support services such as tutoring, services for students with disabilities, financial aid counseling, career counseling and placement, residential life, athletics, and other services and programs as appropriate, which meet the needs of the specific types of students that the institution serves and the programs it offers.*

With a small student body, and small staff, most services such as financial aid and career counselling are conducted personally. Faculty members are, however, planning for extracurricular workshops for students on such topics as academic writing or reporting requirements. IBS relies on its association with GTU for work with students with disabilities. It will be the task of future reports and visiting teams to assess whether the results of these beginning efforts have born fruit.

CFR 2.14 *Institutions that serve transfer students provide clear, accurate, and timely information, ensure equitable treatment under academic policies, provide such students access to student services, and ensure that they are not unduly disadvantaged by the transfer process.*

IBS does not generally admit transfer students, but the institution has a clearly stated policy on acceptance of prior course work towards degrees. It also follows the common GTU standards and transfer policy. The institution also has a small exchange program with two other Buddhist institutions (up to 2 students per year at each institution). Needs for transfer policy are minimal and those existing are clearly stated.

Summary for Standard 2

IBS has made significant steps toward the development of an educational effectiveness policy and system. They have initial learning outcomes that would benefit from further

review and development. They are beginning to systematically and initially apply these outcomes to degree programs. They have identified some initial needs for additional data and discussed how it might be gathered. They have put some of the foundations for a more comprehensive system into place, and they are working toward greater development and systematic, intentional data gathering. Understanding of the need and process for the new model is developing throughout the small institution. The IBS commitment to demonstrable student achievement as identified in WSCUC standards and criteria for review is strong, but is not yet consistent across the institution. With its small staff and limited resources, IBS has already achieved much. In the coming years, the institution will need to carefully determine how they can best organize their efforts and resources to gather significant and useful data, demonstrate ongoing improvement, and foster greater student achievement.

The WSCUC team finds that IBS meets Standard 2 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, understanding that only the Commission is authorized to make the final determination as to whether or not an institution is in compliance with the Standards.

The team found the following CFRs to be sufficient for Initial Accreditation:

CFRs 2.5, 2.8, 2.9, 2.11, 2.12 and 2.14

The team found the following CFRs sufficient for Candidacy but needing more development for Initial Accreditation:

CFR 2.1 - Further defined outcomes for degrees with defined standards of performance for students is essential as the institution moves forward to accreditation. Additional consideration of a balance between faculty teaching load, administrative responsibilities, and lines of report is advisable.

CFR 2.2 Initial accreditation will require that levels of achievement for graduation and processes to define and ensure the meaning, quality, and integrity of degrees be more clearly articulated and firmly established.

CFRs 2.3 and 2.4 Student performance upon completion of degrees as well as achievement of student learning outcomes and expectations for student learning at all levels must be better reflected in curricula, in program documents, in assessment policies and procedures, and in advising and in communications with students.

CFR 2.6 Rubrics or other tools for assessing stated levels of student achievement and for providing feedback on student work must be developed.

CFR 2.7 The program review process must be defined, and at least one full program review must be completed for initial accreditation. This review must include evidence of "closing the loop" such as curricular refinements or revisions, budget requests, and other data driven decision-making.

CFR 2.10 Data related to student need, achievement, satisfaction, and timely progress towards degrees must be collected, aggregated, and analyzed for initial accreditation.

CFR 2.13 The institution will need to consider how to address student needs for support in financial aid services and advising as it reevaluates its relationship with the GTU.

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

The institution sustains its operations and supports the achievement of its educational objectives through investments in human, physical, fiscal, technological, and information resources and through an appropriate and effective set of organizational and decision-making structures. These key resources and organizational structures promote the achievement of institutional purposes and educational objectives and create a high-quality environment for learning.

Faculty and Staff

CFR 3.1 *The institution employs faculty and staff with substantial and continuing commitment to the institution. The faculty and staff are sufficient in number, professional qualification, and diversity and to achieve the institution's educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic and co-curricular programs wherever and however delivered.*

The institution provided CVs for core faculty that seemed to indicate a well-qualified staff who were very engaged in the life of the mind as well as the life of IBS. The team confirmed that a high level of faculty and staff commitment and creativity was indeed a strength of the institution. The enthusiasm with which they have embraced the accreditation process and the positive attitude they are taking towards this significant milestone in their institutions development is commendable and particularly important given the small size of the institution and its personnel.

Faculty appear to have appropriate oversight of the curriculum, but their role in shaping academic policy is less clear, particularly considering the overlapping administrative responsibilities. Faculty have demonstrated the level of commitment and engagement necessary to enhance the quality and continued integrity of the academic endeavors of the institution as the institution moves towards initial accreditation.

The team noted that, despite the potential to be a positive guiding influence on IBS's emerging assessment efforts, "assessment and program review for the [joint] MA program is ultimately the responsibility of the GTU's Council of Deans." The institutional report goes on to describe that GTU's Dean's office "solicits feedback from all member schools and affiliates (including IBS)"; however, "IBS has no direct governance role in this process." Conversations related to moving to status as a full member of the GTU could serve IBS well as they seek to address this situation and have more voice in the experience their students have in courses at the GTU schools.

CFR 3.2 *Faculty and staff recruitment, hiring, orientation, workload, incentives, and evaluation practices are aligned with institutional purposes and educational objectives. Evaluation is consistent with best practices in performance appraisal, including multisource feedback and appropriate peer review. Faculty evaluation processes are systematic and are used to improve teaching and learning.*

Policies in various handbooks seem well-developed; however, alignment of these various documents was unclear. IBS recognizes the need for more formalized processes to address workload and future hiring. There does not seem to be a well-developed, or perhaps consistently implemented, process for faculty evaluation, nor is it clear that adjuncts and research fellows are similarly evaluated. Given the ratio of adjuncts to full-time faculty and given the load for administration that core faculty carry, the institution would be well served to explore issues of load and evaluation, and, perhaps, to develop criteria with which to evaluate faculty for their administrative duties distinct from their teaching responsibilities.

The team notes that adding the research fellow role to meet the challenge faced by all doctoral granting institutions to provide experts as dissertation committee members seems to be quite effective.

CFR 3.3 *The institution maintains appropriate and sufficiently supported faculty and staff development activities designed to improve teaching, learning, and assessment of learning outcomes.*

Although the institutional response to this CFR did not clearly address development activities beyond scholarship and research opportunities related to curriculum, interviews with faculty revealed that they are well supported to engage in the research necessary to continue to enhance their professional development and allow them to network effectively in various organizations and with other institutions. Resources for doctoral faculty to pursue such research seem particularly well-developed and are outlined in the various faculty handbooks. The processes for dispersing and securing such funds was not clear, but faculty seem to be reasonably well aware of how to pursue funding for their research endeavors and conference attendance.

Fiscal, Physical, & Informational Resources

CFR 3.4 *The institution is financially stable and has unqualified independent financial audits and resources sufficient to ensure long-term viability. Resource planning and development include realistic budgeting, enrollment management, and diversification of revenue sources. Resource planning is integrated with all other institutional planning. Resources are aligned with educational purposes and objectives.*

The team confirmed that IBS provided an audited financial report for the most recent fiscal year ending March 31, 2016. Previously, financial statements were being "reviewed" by an independent external auditing agency. In the most recent year provided, the auditors expressed an opinion that IBS's financials, which were prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting standards (GAAP), "present fairly, in all material respects" the financial position of the institute. For a small, albeit long-serving institution, IBS has a healthy net asset balance that includes endowed funds managed by the Buddhist Churches of America Endowment Foundation (BCAEF) as outlined in an MOU between BCAEF and IBS dated April 1, 2013. As of January 2017, the BCAEF manages approximately \$9.7MM of restricted and unrestricted funds that were gifted to and earmarked for use only by IBS. Uniquely, these assets are not reflected on IBS's own financial statements, but rather they are noted as held assets of the BCAEF organization. IBS may wish to discuss this practice with their auditor and consider how to appropriately reflect these funds on their own balance sheet. The annual financial disbursement to IBS is determined by BCAEF based on a 3-year average of the net asset balances, currently at 5%. The ownership of these funds was verified by numerous memorandums of understanding provided to the team by IBS for each of the various gifts noting the terms for use of the funds and designating BCAEF as the fund manager. Just over \$8.16MM are permanently restricted gifts, mainly for endowed teaching chairs and ministerial student scholarships. The remaining \$1.5MM consists of unrestricted, board designated funds which are available to IBS in the case of need, upon request to the BCAEF.

In the two most recent years FYE 2015 and FYE 2016, the institute has experienced operating deficits amounting to approximately 19% and 12% of their budget respectively, a concerning trend. IBS has experienced a steady decrease in net tuition and fees revenue beginning in FY 2013 (the earliest year of financials available), and continuing until 2016 when there was a very slight increase over the prior year. The tuition and fee revenue projected for FYE 03/31/2017 is expected to finish 20% under budget. The FY 2017-18 Budget Draft shows that this trend in declining net tuition revenue is expected to continue. The FY 2017-18 budget draft does not reveal nor was the team able to confirm realistic student enrollment projection assumptions. This reality, after multiple years of lower than

expected returns on the endowments, has forced the institution to draw on reserves for operations and has placed significant pressure on IBS to engage in fundraising activities to obtain unrestricted donations for ongoing operations. A strategic plan for these fundraising activities that included fundraising goals was not provided to the team. IBS did not present a clear plan to rectify the tenuous financial situation in which it finds itself. This situation is not sustainable and must be addressed before Standard 3 can be found at a sufficient level for Initial Accreditation.

CFR 3.5 *The institution provides access to information and technology resources sufficient in scope, quality, currency, and kind at physical sites and online, as appropriate, to support its academic offerings and the research and scholarship of its faculty, staff, and students. These information resources, services, and facilities are consistent with the institution's educational objectives and are aligned with student learning outcomes.*

In 1986, IBS became an affiliate of the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) thus providing access for IBS students to the vast library holdings of both GTU and the University of California, Berkeley (GTU-Common Agreement). Additionally, IBS students may take classes and have library privileges at the member schools of GTU. IBS has a main campus located in Berkeley, California, at the Jodo Shinshu Center that houses faculty and administrative offices, and classrooms sufficient to support existing programs. Both the Center for Buddhist Education (CBE) and Ryukoku University, collaborative partners with IBS, have offices in the building. Students have the option to live in housing owned by IBS. All IBS locations are in walking distance to the University of California, Berkeley (SAV1 Self-study 7).

IBS, like other affiliate and member GTU schools, receives several shared services as part of an annual fee paid to GTU. These services include a shared registrar and common student information system access, a shared financial aid office, select management services and full library access. GTU is planning to move away from the currently used shared student information system platform and is deliberating reductions in other shared services. This is of great concern to IBS and other member schools. IBS could be forced to make significant and unexpected resource allocations to compensate for the loss of the shared services. IBS pays an annual "affiliation fee" to GTU that is determined by the number of member and affiliate institutions associated with GTU. The affiliation fee for FYE 2017 is projected to increase by over 20%. The annual fee is expected to stabilize going forward as the related membership numbers stabilize, but this is a situation that will require continued monitoring.

The institute provides its students with information resources consistent with the IBS educational objectives. In fact, the library resources provided to IBS students through the affiliation with GTU, and by extension, the libraries of the University of California, Berkeley, are significant, and enable IBS to help create and maintain a graduate-level academic culture. The GTU Flora Lamson Hewlett Library houses more than 500,000 titles and provides access to important religious studies journals, via both EBSCO and JSTOR, among other online resources. In addition, students have access to the more than two-dozen libraries of University of California, Berkeley, including the C.V. Starr East Asian Library which holds over a million volumes in Asian languages (Self-study 50).

The IBS library holdings, consisting of inherited or acquired books, journals, and rare materials, are managed by a part-time, associate librarian whose current focus is to cull and manage the collection. With access to the vast resources of GTU and UC Berkeley, it is not surprising that growing its own collection has not been a high priority for IBS; however, IBS is currently evaluating future needs relative to its own holdings and is considering all aspects, such as library collection development, physical space, information resources and staffing. Discussions began in fall 2016 and are expected to continue through the duration of the academic year (Self-study 51).

Through their affiliate relationship, IBS has access to use the GTU Moodle system for online and on-campus courses as a means through which to distribute course materials and communicate with students. GTU oversees training and support. IBS offers select online courses through partnership with both GTU and Starr King School for the Ministry. IBS faculty are engaged in preliminary discussions regarding an online certificate program proposal; however, actual implementation would not be for at least two to three years.

Organization Structures and Decision-Making Processes

CFR 3.6 *The institution's leadership, at all levels, is characterized by integrity, high performance, appropriate responsibility, and accountability.*

Although the team is confident that IBS leadership has a strong desire to act in the best interests of the institution, leadership roles as represented in the newly approved organizational chart may reflect some potentially troublesome overlap and confusion in lines of authority, report, and accountability. The newly appointed president of IBS is also a bishop of the BCA, normally an ex-officio member of the IBS Board; but according to the Board bylaws, the IBS president may preside over the board and conduct business in the absence of the Board chair. The team was unable to clarify whether there may be some conflict of interest and perhaps confusion of oversight in this arrangement. There was also some indication that the BCA has final approval over the IBS budget. The absence of a Board of Trustees manual made it difficult to ascertain whether it is the responsibility of the IBS board to set, manage, and approve the budget or if they are under the authority of the BCA in this area. A board manual would help to clarify the responsibilities of this body.

The institution's unconventional use of academic language to designate the provost, not the president, whose title seems largely honorific, as the chief executive officer was confusing, but of more concern to the team was the potential blurring of lines between academic and executive leadership in the small institution. Eventually, a Board of Trustees would be the hiring authority for and the body to evaluate the institution's president, but it would seem having such oversight of the provost would be more appropriate here. Similarly, the provost is a core faculty member whose performance might be evaluated by the academic dean, who in this case reports directly to the provost thus setting up another potential conflict. Processes to ensure accountability and appropriate responsibilities must be clarified to ensure the continued integrity and high performance of leadership at the institution.

CFR 3.7 *The institution's organizational structures and decision-making processes are clear and consistent with its purposes, support effective decision making, and place priority on sustaining institutional capacity and educational effectiveness.*

Similarly, the potential confusion in lines of reporting and accountability among the executive team and the dual responsibilities of faculty for administration and teaching could hamper decision-making processes that are clear and consistent, and which place authority in appropriate places. There appears to be trust among the various members of the leadership team, who have worked together to begin a plan for program review and more rigorous analysis of financial statements, for example, but the team encourages the institution to consider the value of some form of independent faculty governance as well as a way to embed integrity and clear lines of effective decision-making in the structure rather than the individuals in the current roles. Collaborative decision-making across administrative levels could be a strength for the institution, but only if appropriate lines of input and authority are clearly established.

CFR 3.8 *The institution has a full-time chief executive officer and a chief financial officer whose primary or full-time responsibilities are to the institution. In addition, the institution has a sufficient number of other qualified administrators to provide effective educational leadership and management.*

IBS has a Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs who functions as the CEO under the auspices of the Office of the President. The CEO is actually in charge of both educational leadership and organizational management. The team urges IBS to consider the potential for individual and institutional risk as well as the enormous demand this arrangement places on the provost as CEO in this competitive academic environment.

The previous discussion of the dual responsibilities core faculty hold for academics and administration is relevant here. The standard calls for a fulltime CEO and a sufficient number of administrators, and although there is no language to indicate that these roles must be distinct, IBS is urged to consider both the potential burden on these individuals and the potential for competing interests that could come from having such a high proportion of people wearing two or more hats.

The institution has hired a fulltime CFO whose primary responsibilities are to IBS; however, the team was unable to determine the degree to which this position has fully integrated into the leadership team and has the appropriate autonomy to function effectively as a trusted voice on that team.

CFR 3.9 *The institution has an independent governing board or similar authority that, consistent with its legal and fiduciary authority, exercises appropriate oversight over institutional integrity, policies, and ongoing operations, including hiring and evaluating the chief executive officer.*

Board is sufficient in number, well-qualified and seems to be strategically balanced between ministers and lay leaders. All are Shin Buddhists. Considering the desire of the institution to embrace a broader perspective on Buddhism, the institution may want to explore other ways in which perspectives from the wider community might help shape policy and assist IBS in its planning. There does not seem to be a board manual that describes the duties of the Board or its membership requirements and obligations. The distinction between the governance role of the Board and the administration role of the President and the staff is stated in the Bylaws. The creation of an operating manual for the Board of Trustees would help to clarify their role and distinguish management tasks, which may be better handled at the institutional level, from leadership and vision casting responsibilities.

CFR 3.10 *The institution's faculty exercises effective academic leadership and acts consistently to ensure that both academic quality and the institution's educational purposes and character are sustained.*

IBS has various faculty manuals, but none of these seem to address the dual role of faculty who also are administrators and administrators who are also faculty. The manuals present criteria for the various ranks available to faculty, but outlines no clear process by which faculty are evaluated or awarded those ranks. The leadership role of the faculty within the Institution is not explicitly defined, although faculty do clearly appear to have appropriate oversight for the academic endeavors of the institution. Clarification of faculty governance processes in a format appropriate to such a small institution would serve to guide decision-making processes, faculty input, and further discussion as IBS moves toward accreditation.

Summary for Standard 3

Two key issues were of concern to the team: financial stability and clearly defined governance structures, relationships, and procedures. Drawing down reserves to fund regular operating costs is not a sustainable model, nor is heavy reliance on fundraising and donations without a clear, strategic plan for acquisition of such funds. A strategic plan for stabilizing the institution's financial status that includes serious discussion of enrollment strategies is essential. Although the current governing structure seems to be working for the institution with the individuals currently in place, there are no institutionally or procedurally embedded mechanisms that assures all appropriate voices are heard should

IBS experience potential conflict. Blurred lines of report, oversight, and accountability could threaten the collegial way in which the institution is now privileged to operate.

The WSCUC team finds that IBS meets Standard 3 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, understanding that only the Commission is authorized to make the final determination as to whether or not an institution is in compliance with the Standards.

The team found the following CFRs to be sufficient for Initial Accreditation:

CFRs 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.5

The team found the following CFRs sufficient for Candidacy but needing more development for Initial Accreditation:

CFRs 3.6 and 3.7 Clarify organizational structures, lines of report, accountability, and areas of responsibility to assure continued integrity and appropriate independence in the leadership structure.

CFR 3.8 Clarify the responsibilities of and lines of report, input, and accountability for the president, provost, CFO, and faculty administrators. Consider possible conflicts that could result from overlap of responsibilities.

CFR 3.9 Clarify the role and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees in a Board manual or other document to better equip the board to understand and execute its leadership role free from the encumbrance of the day-to-day operations of the institution.

CFR 3.10 Further consider and define the role of those who share teaching and administrative roles, and distinguish processes to evaluate each of those roles.

The following CFR was found not to be sufficient for Candidacy or Initial Accreditation:

CFR 3.4 The institution must find ways to stabilize the financial situation so as to minimize or eliminate the need to draw down reserves. The ability to realistically project enrollment revenues is essential, and the institution is strongly encouraged to investigate sources of revenue beyond the potentially uncertain avenue of fundraising.

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

The institution engages in sustained, evidence-based, and participatory self-reflection about how effectively it is accomplishing its purposes and achieving its educational objectives. The institution considers the changing environment of higher education in envisioning its future. These activities inform both institutional planning and systematic evaluations of educational effectiveness. The results of institutional inquiry, research, and data collection are used to establish priorities, to plan, and to improve quality and effectiveness.

In reviewing IBS's compliance with this standard, the team looked for a comprehensive system of assessment structures and processes, discerning between the portions thereof that have been implemented to date and that have demonstrated tangible results, and those that remain to be further developed and put into practice.

Quality Assurance Processes

CFR 4.1 *The institution employs a deliberate set of quality-assurance processes in both academic and non-academic areas, including new curriculum and program approval processes, periodic program review, assessment of student learning, and other forms of ongoing evaluation. These processes include: collecting, analyzing, and*

interpreting data; tracking learning results over time; using comparative data from external sources; and improving structures, services, processes, curricula, pedagogy, and learning results.

As a partner with GTU, where IBS students are enrolled in the joint MA program, IBS has input into and exposure to a more mature program review process upon which it can base development of its own process for IBS programs. "IBS faculty conducted a program review over the course of the 2015-2016 academic year," which was prior to the October 2016 development of the Comprehensive Program Review (Draft) process. As a result of this process, "both program descriptions were revised and new program learning outcomes drafted." To that end, faculty developed an interconnected set of learning outcomes at the institutional and program levels (curriculum map in catalog, page 9). Assessment rubrics for the institutional and program level outcomes were not available. The syllabi list course level outcomes, but do not include a link to the relevant PLOs. Curricula maps for the three degree programs are included in the 2016-17 catalog under the section "Options for Study" starting on page 6. The quality assurance processes that are normally part of an assessment cycle appear to be at a nascent level and will need to be more fully developed (CFR 4.1). Evidence of student learning beyond grades and self-evaluations does not appear to be systemically collected or and evaluated. Although the draft Comprehensive Program Review (CPR) document demonstrates good potential, the team has confirmed that the CPR has been implemented only to an initial level. Data collection processes are primarily anecdotal and emergent at best, meaning that it does not appear that the needed (reliable and validated) data are available for the assessment and review processes.

Further, IBS describes the assessment efforts for IBS programs as "less systematic," relying on data that is "anecdotal and somewhat self-evident" (SAV1 self-study, page 58).

At this time, co-curricular programs do not appear to be included in the program review process.

CFR 4.2 *The institution has institutional research capacity consistent with its purposes and characteristics. Data are disseminated internally and externally in a timely manner, and analyzed, interpreted, and incorporated in institutional review, planning, and decision-making. Periodic reviews are conducted to ensure the effectiveness of the institutional research function and the suitability and usefulness of the data generated.*

IBS notes that "data used in the aforementioned program review are generally collected by the IBS (and/or GTU) Registrar..." and that the "data is collected and analyzed by the Dean, who also serves as the director of institutional research, in consultation with the faculty..." (Self-Study 60). The systems and processes for institutional research appear to be nascent and in need of further development to support the appropriate development of a culture of evidence based decision making. Among all the criteria under standard 4, institutional research (IR) capacity stood out to the team as needing significant improvement. The institute has only been able to collect, analyze, and interpret data at a basic level; and it has not yet begun to incorporate these data in planning and decision making in any substantial way. However, to track learning results over time, the institution will need to reference comparative data from external sources and improve all levels of assessment in a way that requires a more fully developed IR capacity. The team encourages IBS to carefully evaluate and approach the adoption of Taskstream or some other assessment software tool with a focus on ensuring that a robust culture of inquiry into teaching and learning is understood and embraced across the institution.

Institutional Learning and Improvement

CFR 4.3 *Leadership at all levels, including faculty, staff, and administration, is committed to improvement based on the results of inquiry, evidence, and evaluation. Assessment of teaching, learning, and the campus environment—in support of academic and co-curricular objectives—is undertaken, used for improvement, and incorporated into institutional planning processes.*

As evidenced in the draft Comprehensive Program Review (CPR) document, IBS appears have invested initial thoughts and efforts into what it means to create and maintain a culture of evidence supporting the assessment and improvement of student learning, the but institution will need to be systematically engaged at all levels of the for this culture to fully develop. The pragmatic need for accreditation due to Senate Bill 1247 seems to have driven appropriate inquiry, but efforts at further development and follow-up action steps related to self-review are yet to be well-defined. IBS sought to model the CPR, at least in part, on the already-developed GTU program review process. It will be important for IBS to identify appropriate benchmarks and to articulate criteria for student success that are fully appropriate for their own unique student body.

CFR 4.4 *The institution, with significant faculty involvement, engages in ongoing inquiry into the processes of teaching and learning, and the conditions and practices that ensure that the standards of performance established by the institution are being achieved. The faculty and other educators take responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes and uses the results for improvement of student learning and success. The findings from such inquiries are applied to the design and improvement of curricula, pedagogy, and assessment methodology.*

Led by the Dean, IBS faculty members have been actively involved in the ongoing inquiry into processes of teaching and learning. Core and adjunct faculty have collectively developed course-level student learning outcomes and curriculum maps; however, assessment rubrics have not yet been developed. Much of what is described in the self-study report regarding assessment of institutional learning and regular assessment of institutional effectiveness is anchored in what IBS intends to do through implementation of the draft Comprehensive Program Review (CPR) process. The draft CPR needs to be completed and implemented so that the first results of its use can drive the continuous review process.

CFR 4.5 *Appropriate stakeholders, including alumni, employers, practitioners, students, and others designated by the institution, are regularly involved in the assessment and alignment of educational programs.*

IBS has access to an outside network of constituents that could be involved in the assessment of institutional effectiveness; however, the CPR does not appear to include students, alumni or outside constituents in any way. Once IR capacities and institutional review processes are more organized and sophisticated, the institution may want to explore appropriate ways to use external data for benchmarking student achievement, retention data, and other relevant aspects of assessment.

CFR 4.6 *The institution periodically engages its multiple constituencies, including the governing board, faculty, staff, and others, in institutional reflection and planning processes that are based on the examination of data and evidence. These processes assess the institution's strategic position, articulate priorities, examine the alignment of its purposes, core functions, and resources, and define the future direction of the institution.*

The IBS Strategic Plan Draft dated November 15, 2016 is thoughtful and broadly conceived, demonstrating nascent levels of strategic planning at the institutional level (CFR 4.6). It is unclear to the team what kind of reflection process led to the identification of the strategic goals and whether these strategic goals truly reflect the empirical needs of IBS at this time. The team was not able to glean evidence of any specific steps IBS plans to take to accomplish the goals of the strategic plan such as specific dates, persons responsible or resources required.

The plan lacks specificity in several key areas. The strategic plan does not seem to account for the potential impact of the additional responsibilities of accreditation, possible changes to the IBS relationship with GTU, or potential changes to the student data management software. The strategic plan does not adequately address enrollment, necessary enrollment

increases, or the kinds of program developments that might attract new students beyond the current MDiv and chaplaincy programs. IBS may want to consider, for example, programs designed to draw in students who may be attracted to a wider range of employment opportunities in church and service professions. Whatever programming is deemed appropriate for the IBS mission and ethos, IBS must give thought to how it can take full advantage of accreditation for marketing and student recruitment sufficient to attract the numbers of students necessary to support essential infrastructural developments, and provide for faculty, staff and administrative expertise to support the institution. This strategic planning, based on sound missional and market considerations, must be integrated with financial planning so that IBS's development is successful and sustainable. This work may work in concert with plans for additional fundraising to identify, shape, and sharpen priorities for specific strategic developments.

CFR 4.7 *Within the context of its mission and structural and financial realities, the institution considers changes that are currently taking place and are anticipated to take place within the institution and higher education environment as part of its planning, new program development, and resource allocation.*

IBS has identified some significant institutional changes such as declining endowment returns; changing student demographics, such as an influx of more part-time students; and the reliance on partner organizations for funding and academic support. IBS identified the increasing importance of online and distance education and an increase in returning or "second career" students" as further changes to consider (Self-Study 65). Other areas of concern discovered by the team that should be noted are the instability of GTU, and the general challenges facing all seminaries and small faith-based institutions. Although the response to SB1247 of seeking regional accreditation and institutional restructuring in response to the WSCUC eligibility review are examples of IBS's willingness to respond to changes in the higher educational environment, IBS did not provide evidence of a sustained track record of anticipating and responding to the changing environment within higher education as part of its planning, new program development, or resource allocation. Expanded experience with the GTU, status as an accredited institution, and more active participation in the broader higher education environment would all serve to enhance the institution's ability to respond more effectively to an educational environment that continues to pose challenges for even mature and well established institutions.

Summary for Standard 4

Although the team applauds the significant steps taken thus far by IBS in response to the Commission action letter of December 2015, there is still a good deal of work to be done in this standard. IBS must seek ways to develop a robust capacity for identifying and collecting the data necessary to drive informed and thoughtful inquiry about student performance and achievement, to inform careful fiscal and strategic planning, and to assure the institutional resilience necessary to weather the dynamic climate of higher education. Such planning and inquiry must focus on new ways to make the academic endeavors of IBS sustainable as it moves forward towards accreditation.

The WSCUC team finds that IBS meets Standard 4 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, understanding that only the Commission is authorized to make the final determination as to whether or not an institution is in compliance with the Standards.

The team found the following CFR to be sufficient for Initial Accreditation:

CFRs 4.5

The team found the following CFRs sufficient for Candidacy but needing more development for Initial Accreditation:

CFR 4.1 Continue planning for assessment to include the identification and development of tools to gather, aggregate and analyze appropriate data that will feed the implemented program review process and generate actionable next steps.

CFR 4.2 Continue to develop institutional research capacity related to data mining for planning and assessment purposes.

CFR 4.3 and 4.4 Continued work is needed to ground continuous improvement steps and decisions in a culture of evidence with systematic assessment of teaching and learning, and clearly defined student success.

CFR 4.6 Continued work on developing a culture of strategic planning grounded in a realistic sense of where and who IBS, but that both casts a vision and outlines concrete actions steps (such as enrollment goals tracking, growth and projections) sufficient to take them there.

CFR 4.7 Continue to monitor and resolve evolving issues with GTU while also attending to the broader climate of faith-based higher education.

SECTION III. PREPARATION FOR ACCREDITATION UNDER THE 2013 HANDBOOK OF ACCREDITATION

Conversations during the visit confirmed the team's sense in reading the report that the Institute of Buddhist Studies recognizes that their affiliation with the GTU, a consortium of accredited schools, has been useful in exposing them to accreditation standards and principles; thus, IBS is able to see regional accreditation, though new, as compatible with their historical development and instrumental to their continued development as an institution of higher education. IBS constituents emphasize that in adopting the WSCUC educational effectiveness model they will be seeking carefully selected and concrete data which will replace what they refer to as the "largely anecdotal knowledge" that has thus far served them as an unaccredited institution. Members of the IBS community have good cause to think of their upcoming accreditation work as a refinement or more systematic development of past work done to celebrate and now to document the success their students have seen in service in Buddhist churches and ministries both in the US and in Japan.

The Institute recognizes that the implementation of their Comprehensive Program Review plan, not yet finalized, will become the basis for the future work of achieving initial accreditation and reaffirmation; however, discussion of the meaning, quality and integrity of their degrees or even the mechanisms by which those discussions will take place has not yet begun. Essential to their continued development as an accredited institution will be a discussion of this question as they define for themselves what it means to be a graduate institution within the WSCUC framework of standards. Of critical import to establishing a sustainable culture will be the institution's ability to articulate a financial plan and strategic planning process that can address issues of how to build the enrollment necessary to sustain the health of the institution. IBS seems conscious of the need for more concrete enrollment projections and for programmatic and financial planning based on those projections.

Although there is awareness of the work ahead and anticipation of and general support for the process through which the continued work of seeking accreditation will need to be

accomplished, practical and concrete next steps have yet to be articulated in significant ways that will drive the necessary discussions. As with many of their efforts, success will depend upon their ability to ask probing, self-reflective questions; and to carefully develop, to select, and to make full use of the data necessary for the institution and its students to enjoy greater levels of success.

IBS further acknowledges the dynamic landscape of higher education, particularly for seminaries and theological schools, which face challenges of decreasing numbers of students able or willing to relocate for degree training, or increasing numbers of their students seeking second degrees and careers in ministry and academia. Thus, IBS has appropriately emphasized that collection and analysis of student success and learning outcomes data will be a key to sustainability and to the process of future accreditation efforts, whether they be the achievement of initial accreditation or subsequent reaffirmation of accreditation under the 2013 WSCUS standards. Tight budgets, small numbers of faculty and staff, and rapid changes in the ecology of higher education will combine to require that IBS work quickly but carefully to avoid overextending their efforts so that they are able to focus on the most crucial developments. These efforts will guide their concentrated efforts towards sustainability and educational quality, two efforts they have continued to confront in their past and present circumstances.

SECTION IV. INVENTORY OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS INDICATORS

The Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators are incomplete to the extent that it represents the progress to date in creating a culture of assessment that will drive future educational effectiveness. IBS has identified four institutional learning outcomes for all programs, two of which are actual student outcomes, two of which are institutional goals. Each program has also identified learning outcomes; however, there is no evidence of alignment of these outcomes on syllabi, and not all the program outcomes are student-centered or measurable. Likewise, outcomes on syllabi are not always measurable or student-centered, nor did all syllabi presented contain outcomes. There were no outcomes presented for certificate programs. As noted under Standard 2, continued work is needed to refine these learning outcomes, to develop rubrics to measure those outcomes, to systematically gather data, and to engage in periodic analysis of that data, and to implement a robust program review process. IBS has made significant strides to transform their institution in line with an educational effectiveness model, but continued transformation will require constant, careful, and systemic development of the system that will be both effective and sustainable for a small institution graduate education.

Both core and adjunct faculty members have been involved in the process of developing outcomes and have indicated that they are engaged in implementing these new outcomes in meaningful ways that impact the teaching and learning process. In some cases, awareness of outcomes has been used, perhaps more intuitively than intentionally, to drive appropriate curricular change, but such anecdotal evidence is not yet institutionalized or process-driven, nor is there much evidence that discussions have yielded any substantial work towards rubrics designed to measure outcomes.

The registrar is identified as the party responsible for data collection, and the dean "coordinates and reviews" the various data with faculty. With the exception of the occasional anecdote such as mentioned above, there is little evidence that there are any concretely articulated plans for the data beyond dissemination for "discussion, recommendation, and action." No data was available at the time of the visit, and the team was unable to extract from its various meetings and interviews much sense of how such data might be used to drive decision-making, budgeting, curriculum change, resource allocation, or quality improvement. The institution does not yet appear to be asking

questions that would drive robust or significant data collection and analysis, but these significant steps towards developing processes will facilitate discussion once those questions begin to surface.

Results of data collected for the Common MBA offered by the GTU are shared with the Council of Deans for discussion and action; however, as an affiliate member only, IBS is represented on the council but does not have a "seat at the table." Full membership in the GTU would strengthen the ability of IBS to foster changes to the educational effectiveness of a program that impacts a good number of their students.

The institutional report did identify that benchmarking student assignments, developing curricular maps and making policy revisions necessary to integrate more fully into the GTU processes were all necessary next steps, and the team affirms the need to move forward in these areas.

SECTION V. FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commendations:

The team wishes to commend the Institute of Buddhist studies in the following areas.

- Their responsiveness to accreditation and the amount of work the institution has accomplished since deciding to respond in this way to SB 1247 and the findings of the BPPE. The team has found all their interactions with WSCUC and other regulatory bodies to be honest and open.
- The commitment faculty demonstrate to engage in scholarship is exceptional, especially given the heavy teaching and administrative loads that faculty carry. It would be easy for them to use this load as an excuse not to engage in such activity, but this faculty chooses to rise above that challenge in their dedication to students and desire to the enterprise of teaching and learning in the Buddhist tradition.
- The willingness of all members of the institution to engage in broad dialogue, solicit diverse perspective, and consider new approaches will serve IBS well on their journey towards accreditation.
- Finally, IBS is to be commended for their commitment to improvement. A resounding note throughout all discussions and the institutional report was a universal desire to see IBS embrace accreditation as a means to that improvement.

APPENDICES

FEDERAL COMPLIANCE FORMS

OVERVIEW

There are four forms that WSCUC uses to address institutional compliance with some of the federal regulations affecting institutions and accrediting agencies:

- 1 – Credit Hour and Program Length Review Form
- 2 – Marketing and Recruitment Review Form
- 3 – Student Complaints Form
- 4 – Transfer Credit Policy Form

There are no off-campus or distance education programs.

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? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
	Where is the policy located? Institutional catalog; see also GTU policy: http://gtu.edu/sites/default/files/users/registrar/Credit_Units_Policy.pdf
	Comments: Please see attachment 81-GTU-Credit Units Policy for details. The policy needs to be included in the IBS catalog and in other official documents where such policies are publically available.
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)? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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? NA
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)?
	What degree level(s)?
	What discipline(s)?
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? <input type="checkbox"/> 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) <i>Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.</i>	How many syllabi were reviewed? 4
	What kinds of courses? Graduate-level seminars
	What degree level(s)? MA, MDiv
	What discipline(s)? Religious studies, Buddhist studies, theology
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: Suggested best practice to include the policy statement on syllabi.
Sample program information (catalog, website, or other program materials)	How many programs were reviewed? 3
	What kinds of programs were reviewed? Graduate-level degree programs
	What degree level(s)? Graduate level
	What discipline(s)? Religious/Buddhist studies, theology
	Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:

Review Completed By: Stephen Varvis, WSCUC Visiting Team
Date: February 28, 2017

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? ✓ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: For IBS program students, IBS follows federal regulations on recruiting students. For GTU Common MA students, GTU follows federal regulations on recruiting students.
Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? ✓ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? ✓ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: IBS provides a description of their expected length of time to degree in the degree programs overview section of the website and the course catalog. Data on actual length of time to degree is not available (how long does it take the average IBS student to complete). IBS or GTU do not provide any sort of cost calculator to determine overall cost of the degree, however the semester and annual fees are clearly stated on the website and in the course catalog, along with estimated non-tuition cost of attendance living expense estimates provided on the GTU financial aid website so, with a little effort, consumers could determine the approximate overall cost of the degree. IBS collects and reports this information to the BPPE annually, so could make this available to prospective students on their website and in other publications.
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? ✓ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? ✓ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: In general, the degree program descriptions state what those programs prepare students for (e.g., "The Master of Divinity degree...prepares students to engage fully and with confidence in ministry, chaplaincy," and so forth). These are on the website and in the catalog. As part reporting to the BPPE, IBS provides information about the employment of their graduates in Student Performance Fact Sheets, available here: http://www.shin-ibs.edu/academics/current-catalogue/

*§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: Dawn Dirksen, WSCUC Visiting Team Member
Date: 3/2/2017

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? ✓ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, Is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Where? Institutional catalog.
	Comments: IBS follows the procedures in the "Student Grievance" and "Sexual Harassment" sections of the institutional catalog.
Process(es)/ procedure	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? ✓ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, please describe briefly: Briefly, students file a complaint with the Dean (or his superior as needed); the Dean conducts an investigation and creates a faculty panel to address the issue, bringing the matter to the Board as needed; if students are unsatisfied, they may bring the complaint directly to the Board for appeal.
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? ✓ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Records	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? ✓ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where?
	Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? ✓ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, please describe briefly:
	Comments: All written records are held by the Dean, however there have been no known formal complaints filed in history of the current leadership.

*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Complaints and Third Party Comment Policy.

Review Completed By: Dawn Dirksen, WSCUC Visiting Team Member

Date: 3/2/2017

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? √ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Is the policy publically available? √ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where? IBS catalog p. 63
	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? √ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:

*§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: DawnEllen Jacobs, WSCUC Visiting Team Member
Date: 2 March 2017