

REPORT OF THE WSCUC VISITING TEAM SPECIAL VISIT

Fresno Pacific University

September 17-20, 2018

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

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

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SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of Institution, Accreditation History, and Visit

Fresno Pacific University (FPU), located in the San Joaquin Valley of California, was founded by the Mennonite Brethren Church in 1944 and it continues its affiliation with the Pacific District Conference of the Church. FPU received its initial accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) in 1961 and since that time has been granted reaffirmations of accreditation, submitted numerous substantive change reviews, completed a 2018 mid-cycle review, and is now participating in this 2018 special visit. The university is scheduled for an Offsite Review in Fall, 2021 and an Accreditation Visit in Spring 2022.

The university's mission is, "Fresno Pacific University develops students for leadership and service through excellence in Christian higher education." The university expresses its mission through its commitment to the *Fresno Pacific Idea*, a statement that reflects its interpretation of the meaning of a community of learners as an integral part of the church engaging its students in a collaborative search for knowledge and experience leading to a creative relationship with God, humanity, and the natural world.

FPU is located on more than 50 acres at its main campus in Fresno, CA and is comprised of 82 permanent structures. Additionally, four other regional centers are home to various graduate and adult undergraduate degree programs. FPU has been recognized as an Hispanic-Serving Institution since 2009, and it maintains membership in the Hispanic

Association of Colleges and Universities. FPU offers 38 bachelor's degree majors in its traditional undergraduate and degree completion programs as well as 29 master's degree majors.

Following a sudden change in presidential leadership and the subsequent Educational Effectiveness Review in February 2015, the Commission's July 15, 2015 letter established a Mid-Cycle Review for spring of 2018 and this Special Visit for fall 2018 with a focus upon Communication and Decision-Making, Diversity, Strategic Planning, and Financial Stability.

The team found that the Special Visit Report addressed the central issues and concerns raised by the Commission. The report focused upon initiating actions and progress that have been taken to address the Commission's concerns.

1. Implement a holistic approach to diversity including attention to structure, climate, staffing, and curricular areas demonstrated by a plan that will address the residual challenges in the current transitional period and fully respond to diversity issues that have been an ongoing concern for the institution. (CFR 1.1, 1.4, 1.7, 3.1, 3.3)
2. Continued work on institution-wide development and ownership of the strategic plan (CFR 4.1, 4.6, 4.7)
3. Continued work on reconciling and sustaining the budget under the leadership of the CFO supported by advancement efforts under the leadership of the President and the Board. (CFR 3.4, 3.6, 3.8)
4. Greater inclusion of and broader representation from faculty and staff in decision-making bodies and processes. (CFR 3.7, 3.10)

5. Continued development of intentional mechanisms of communication that create feedback loops for bi-directional communication, transparency and understanding. (CFR 3.6, 3.7, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6)

B. Description of team's Review Process

In preparation for the visit, the team exchanged email communication prior to the team conference call and divided the team's responsibilities for the writing and inquiry to be conducted during the visit. The breadth of professional experiences of the team enabled them to design questions, prepare lines of inquiry, and draft preliminary documents to develop the report and guide the visit. The team took the opportunity to fine tune its plan for inquiry and interviews during its conference call on August 20, 2018 by reviewing the submitted Worksheets of the team.

Four of the five team members, along with our WSCUC liaison, took the opportunity to attend the WSCUC Evaluator Training session in Oakland on August 23, participate in example simulations, and write responses to the example scenarios. Additionally, the team discussed next steps in the FPU special visit, met briefly with FPU's staff liaison, Cindy Carter, and requested additional information and visit schedule revisions. Overall, the team members present found this face-to-face meeting beneficial in preparation for the FPU site visit.

The team arrived on September 17 and conducted a preliminary meeting to finalize questions and lines of inquiry for the visit as well as identifying additional documents, data, and schedule changes necessary for completing the visit and team report. The team had adequate time throughout the visit, September 18-20, 2018, to explore questions, review documents, and conduct interviews which provided the findings necessary to shape the team's conclusions,

prepare the final report, and prepare its recommendations to the Commission. The team presented an overview of its findings by providing the team's Commendations and Recommendations to the representatives of Fresno Pacific University at the exit meeting on September 20 as it concluded its campus visit.

C. Institution's Special Visit Report: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence

The institution's report identifies the response of FPU to take the Commission's recommendations seriously, prepare appropriate actions to engage the university community, and to provide a report with extensive, linked supporting materials. This process began with a communication from the Provost/Senior Vice President to key leaders of the university in September 2015. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness began a review of the Commission's recommendations for the construction of action plans by campus leadership for the formation of a plan of response.

The result of the action plans brought about the creation of Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC) that met eleven times between June 2017 and October 2018 and supplied information for the Inquiry Circles who were tasked with additional data gathering, reviewing findings, and the creation of recommendations for strategies to address each of the five recommendations of the Commission's letter.

The design of the process, using the Inquiry Circles, provided broader participation by members of the university's faculty, staff, and student body. This effort was an important strategy for the university to demonstrate both communication and engagement of its members at a time when the climate of the university was challenged by issues of communication and

transparency. The report indicated efforts across the university to expand communication, participation, and clarity of processes as significant strategies in the preparation of the report responses. Furthermore, the report describes the steps to address each recommendation through the gathering of evidence, application to the specific Commission recommendation, the stated relationship to the FPU Strategic Plan, and the subsequent actions or strategies taken to address the recommendations within the FPU practices, policies, and planning strategies.

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF ISSUES UNDER THE STANDARDS

A. Implement a holistic approach to diversity

Implement a holistic approach to diversity including attention to structure, climate, staffing, and curricular areas demonstrated by a plan that will address the residual challenges in the current transitional period and fully respond to diversity issues that have been an ongoing concern for the institution. (CFR 1.1, 1.4, 1.7, 3.1, 3.3)

In response to the issue of diversity, the Special Visit Report reiterated the language of the 2015 EER team’s recommendation that it “[i]mplement a holistic approach to diversity, including attention to structure, climate, staffing, and curricular areas demonstrated by a plan that will address the residual challenges in the current transitional period and fully respond to diversity issues that have been an ongoing concern for the institution.” The team noted that multiple diversity initiatives have been undertaken since the EER visit and the institution has begun developing this holistic approach.

With respect to structure and through enhanced budgeting, improvements to infrastructure have been made to address cognitive and physical diversity. Hiebert Library has “diversified” its collection “in the broadest sense of the term,” with “25% of the budget”

dedicated to acquiring “titles spanning topics such as racism, general diversity, immigration, other religious beliefs (particularly Islam) in the U.S. and/or the world, gender, LGBTQ issues, and disability.” It is clear in these two areas, the institution has made diversity a budgetary priority, as recommended by the CPR report. (CFR 1.4)

With its adoption in 2017 of an appreciative inquiry approach to diversity and inclusion, which was suggested by consultant Dr. Juan Martinez, the University Diversity Committee (UDC) has responded to the recommendation that FPU’s climate be examined. This approach has provided the university with an opportunity to consider what it does well, a consideration that gives the UDC a perspective of where challenges still exist, and where improvements might be made.

Moreover, the university administered the Higher Education Resource Institute (HERI) Faculty Survey in 2016-2017. Although only a sample of the results from the survey were provided and the response rate was not indicated, what the team reviewed does give a snapshot of faculty’s sense of the institution’s priorities. (CFR 1.1) When considered in relation to the comparison group, FPU’s faculty regard the institution’s commitment to diversity as fairly high with respect to recruiting more minority students, promoting gender diversity in the faculty and administration, and promoting racial and ethnic diversity in the faculty and administration. Interestingly, the institution had lower favorable ratings on the commitment to gender diversity than in the other areas, which might indicate that more attention is granted to race and ethnicity than to gender. (CFR 1.4)

FPU’s faculty identify two aspects of climate as requiring attention: 1. “institution takes responsibility for educating underprepared students” and 2. “faculty are not prepared to deal with

conflict over diversity in the classroom.” Given the faculty’s responses, these factors of campus climate for diversity were lower than the comparison group’s responses. The first aspect of climate, “responsibility for educating underprepared students” (keep in mind that “underprepared” does not equal historically “underrepresented” students”) is not addressed in the “Curricular Diversity Content” section of the Special Visit Report. The second climate area, “the need for professional development in handling difficult conversations” or “conflict over the diversity in the classroom,” was also identified as a concern among faculty and students during the team’s visit.

When asked whether “there is a lot of campus racial conflict,” 35% of the faculty respondents agreed with this statement whereas 25.3% of the comparison group’s respondents agreed with the statement. This 10% response difference may indicate greater attention is needed by the institution to clarify and address the issues of racial conflict as well as the difficult conversations in the classroom and the campus more broadly.

During the team visit, it was noted that White/Caucasian faculty reported greater “stress due to racial discrimination” when compared to faculty from historically underrepresented groups. The institution may wish to examine the data to determine why this is the case.

The need for consistent interpretation of survey results is also apparent with respect to data gathered through other surveys (which have included Adult Student Priorities Survey, National Survey of Student Engagement, Student Satisfaction Inventory, and Institutional Priorities Survey) conducted over the last few years. The Special Visit Report describes a process wherein survey “results have been shared through interactive meetings with school caucuses and administrative departments” and “also been posted on the FPU intranet.” While

such dissemination is to be applauded, the report does not consistently indicate the methods of analysis and interpretation undertaken. (CFR 4.1, 4.2) It would be important to continue guiding the university community in drawing conclusions, after discussion of the results, and consistently matching those conclusions with actions targeted to address them. (CFR 4.3)

The team reviewed staffing processes and observed some steps in the recruitment/hiring phase that ensures candidates are aware of how important FPU regards diversity; however, 57% of the faculty did not agree with the statement, “this institution has effective hiring practices and policies that increase faculty diversity.” Aligning with best practices, the institution does require all applicants for faculty positions to submit diversity statements. (CFR 3.1) However, it is unclear to what extent search committees are trained to analyze and interpret diversity statements. FPU may want to consider the relative weighting given to these statements when compared to other materials submitted by applicants in the hiring process. (CFR 4.3) In the review of the diversity statements, the team did not find the use of rubrics or other methods that could guide Human Resources and search committees in a consistent and deliberate practice. Although the team found that staffing and hiring were addressed in the Special Visit Report, it did not have information on retention efforts or the attrition rates for faculty and staff to consider trends or progress in the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and staff.

Of noted concern in the EER team report was campus attention to the development of its members’ intercultural competencies. The report presents a narrative wherein caucuses “frequently address diversity and the development of cultural intelligence (CQ)” and wherein a “2016 university-wide CQ training for faculty, staff, and administrators” was conducted (19). The team, however, was not provided any analysis of how effective this training has been and

believes that analysis would be helpful for the university in implementing and assessing strategies in this area.

In 2015, FPU was awarded a federal Title V grant for a proposal entitled “Advancing Latino [sic] Academic Success.” The award “facilitated a new intercultural learning center, emphasizing support for first-generation undergraduates.” It was reported that the project “made substantive and lasting contributions to campus intercultural competence and supports Latina/o undergraduate success and retention.” The team noted impressive retention in year one reporting at 71% with 34 of the 48 students participants in this project returning, and a second year retention rate of 86% with 53 of 61 students returning. While these data are encouraging, further analysis and attention to these initiatives are needed to be determine if the results will establish lasting contributions. The team also observed that introducing “Latin American studies/Hispanic content” into the curriculum, while laudable, may potentially communicate that the two can or are conflated into a broader global vision that may substitute for curricular innovation in U.S. Latinx studies at an HSI. (CFR 2.2a)

With 42% of its students identifying as Latinx, the team questioned whether the ALAS initiative are yet adequate to meet the needs of a significant number of these students. In one of the exhibits provided, a goal of having Latinx graduation rates match those of the most successful student group is laudable; however, it is not yet clear what steps the institution proposes to achieve this goal.

The team encourages continuing assessments in this area and believes the efforts should “include well-articulated metrics that measure progress over time, an examination of disaggregated retention and graduation statistics, and the gathering and analysis of comparable

data and trends in individual schools, departments, and the campus as a whole” (WSCUC Equity and Inclusion Policy, page 4). Establishing targets and goals, placing these alongside those of comparison institutions, whether peer or aspirational, and creating realistic timelines might assist the university in ensuring success for all students, particularly their largest group of students.

The team notes that there has been great energy expended on the multiple diversity initiatives that have been created and developed since the EER Visiting team report was submitted. Diversity has been a priority for the university as has articulating a shared vision of diversity through its 2015 Strategic Plan and its Diversity Rationale. Though FPU has a Diversity Rationale statement, the team observed that not all employees are well acquainted with this statement. (CFR 1.2) The team observed that developing a shared understanding of the diversity rationale might address some of the points of tension revealed in the survey results and confirmed during the visit.

In discussion of the University Diversity Committee (UDC) and the Chief Diversity Officer (CDO), the institution suggested that it had been responsive to the CPR recommendations by “rebranding” the UDC and naming a CDO. The team was unclear of the results of the “re-branding,” and the clarity of the UDC’s and the CDO’s responsibilities and roles. However, the team noted efforts to establish lines of responsibilities and where they intersect and diverge . (CFR 3.7)

During the special visit the team learned the Office of Spiritual Formation had become the Office of Spiritual Formation and Diversity and the Campus Pastor’s role was expanded to include the CDO responsibilities. While the team learned the change of leadership for the CDO was an appointment, after the team review of the CDO job description (as provided in the

appendices), the team believes: a) the job description should be made widely available to the university community and b) the institution should support and train its newly designated CDO through organizations such as the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education. (CFR 3.1)

It is noteworthy that much has occurred since the EER team visit in responding specifically to the EER team recommendations: Site Visit Report exhibits on diversity, attendance at conferences, consultant visits, surveys, summits, and campus-wide discussions. Some sections of the Special Visit Report reveal an expansive definition of diversity to include gender, race, and religion. Documentation shows that some of these diversity categories have been promoted more over others. At times, race and ethnicity assume more significance than other dimensions of difference, including gender and sexuality. In examining the gender dimension indicated in the IPS survey, specifically the issue of respect and mutual regard across gender, the team observed a significant gap between satisfaction with actual experiences and the stated priority of gender equity. Working to close such gaps is crucial in aspiring to create the type of community that FPU states in its 2015 Strategic Plan. (CFR 1.1, 1.4) Additionally, the team noted the need for appropriate training, the development of confidence in the procedures, and knowledge of where to report issues of safety and concern in regard to gender issues, particularly in a context of Title IX and the “Me Too” movement.

The team found that attention and funds have been given to cognitive and physical diversity and the team also observed that good faith efforts have been made to achieve curricular diversity. The team further encourages FPU to consider how the recommendations of Dr. Martinez, particularly in referencing Dr. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier’s construct of moving from

“hospitality to shalom,” might be incorporated into the mission and diversity efforts of the university as a Christian institution and that these efforts be assessed and analyzed for improving diversity efforts and results.

B. Development and Ownership of the Strategic Plan

Continued work on institution-wide development and ownership of the strategic plan. (CFR 4.1, 4.6, 4.7)

The team reviewed FPU’s progress and continued work on the University’s Strategic Plan as outlined in the Special Visit Report and as verified during the team visit. In addition to the report, available documents included the October 2015 Board approved Strategic Plan focusing on: University Core Values, Healthy Diverse Community, Mission Driven Program Development, Infrastructure and Internal Working Culture. Also included in the report was the 2017 list of nine Presidential Priorities. These Presidential Priorities, which linked to areas within the 2015 Strategic Plan, focused on: increase efficiency and effectiveness of academic and administrative governance (restructure), plan for financial stability, develop an academic plan, strengthen the links between main and satellite campuses, cost and plan for deferred maintenance, design and initiate a comprehensive capital campaign, strengthen collaboration between seminary and other academic programs, develop a collaborative governance model between faculty and staff, appointment and revision permanent provost’s position, and identify funding priorities for 2018-2019.

A series of questions arose during the team conference call concerning the reported comments and recommendations of the strategic planning Inquiry Circle. Questions pertained to who was in charge of strategic planning and if there was a strategic planning committee, as it

wasn't clear what group presented the 2015 plan to the Board of Trustees. The Special Visit Report indicated the majority of the campus wasn't clear about the strategic plan, given the introduction of the new presidential priorities. Though departmental learning outcomes aligned with the 2015 plan, and some were prioritizing expenditures, assisting in the fulfillment of the strategic plan, it was observed this was not pervasive across the campus. During the site visit, the team focused on these questions seeking responses from the president, board, new cabinet, academic cabinet, and the Strategic Planning Inquiry Circle to review, confirm, and dialog about the continued work and progress on the institution-wide strategic plan. (CFR 4.1, 4.6, 4.7) The team did confirm that more work needs to be done in the area of strategic planning; however, strong steps have been taken to focus on presidential priorities which do align with the 2015 strategic plan.

The Special Visit Report noted the steps towards implementing the WSCUC recommendations started with the board approving the University's Strategic Plan in October, 2015. The Special Visit Inquiry Circles were then established in June 2017 by asking for volunteers to select a preferred committee in which to serve. As noted in the report and confirmed during the site visit, the Strategic Planning Inquiry Circle examined the evidence of strategic plan implementation provided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, reviewed subcommittee reports on this evidence and assigned additional areas of research, analysis and findings. The team noted the breadth of intent in seeking input as the surveys were administered to the general FPU population, Inquiry Circle members, and the Board of Trustees. (CFR 3.7, 4.1, 4.3, 4.5)

When reviewing what percentage of all major budget managers are using the Strategic Plan in their budgeting, how department heads integrated the Strategic Plan into their programs, and how the Chief Financial Officer prioritized and aligned according to the Strategic Plan, it was determined that no results-based accountability framework existed within the university to link Plan and budget. In addition, very few milestones or performance measures tied to the strategic plan seemed to exist, making most of the evidence discretionary and anecdotal. Acquiring comprehensive and measurable data was not achieved. (CFR 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6)

The report indicated the Inquiry Circle spent over 400 hours reviewing, analyzing, and interpreting data surrounding implementation of the Strategic Plan. Member conclusions were forthright and expressed the need for campus-wide inclusion in the decision making process. During the site visit, the Inquiry Circle members confirmed these concerns and voiced the need for revisiting the 2015 Strategic Plan or creating a new strategic plan given the new priorities and updates on priorities. Also, the Inquiry Circle recommended consideration of a repository for information or an office for strategic planning where systematic reporting, accountability for a strategic implementation plan and ensuring metrics for measurement could occur.

The team, however, confirmed that FPU's 2017 departmental budgeting expectation was to include how expenditures aligned with planning. In the report, it was verified on October 20, 2017 that the CFO identified several critical funding decisions aligned with the Strategic Plan. And, it is also noted that the Budget Director recommended linking all line items in budgets to the Strategic Plan and added a column for this purpose. Though only 8 of the 28 managers used this column in their FY2017 planning, the expectation exists. Additionally, a budget planning memo, as it links to the Presidential Priorities, occurred in 2017, though it did not mention

linking budgets to the Strategic Plan (CFR 3.4, 4.6). In survey follow-up from the Inquiry Circle, over 80% of the respondents indicated that the Strategic Plan should be tied to budgeting; 51% of the respondents reported not doing this at all which indicates there is still work to be done in this area of aligning budget with strategic planning.

Aligning department plans with the Strategic Plan began in 2016 when the president and interim provost began to develop their own sub-plan in continuity with the Strategic Plan which showed evidence of the integration of the Strategic Plan elements across academic and administrative domains. During the site visit, deans and department directors confirmed doing this, yet registered concerns about which planning document should be cited given there are now four planning documents in existence (2015 Strategic Plan, Strategic Elements, President's Priorities, and Strategic Priorities).

The new president established Presidential Priorities in 2017 which referenced the 2015 Strategic Plan. These were shared after involvement of the campus community in listening sessions, input from Cabinet and Council, adjusting Priorities based on input, implementing, and updating the campus in the August 8, 28, and September 18 communications. These strategic initiatives were intended to focus the campus community and, according to the president, "create the culture and conditions necessary to make the Strategic Plan a reality, operationalize it, and encourage the community to think institutionally by shifting current paradigms." (CFR 3.6, 3.7) During the site visit, the team learned from the president that President's Cabinet drives the plan and this team did collaborate on the Presidential Priorities, thus assisted in finalizing the ten priorities for the year. However, the team noted that the 2015 Strategic Plan is only engaged as it

pertains to specific items of the current year priorities as listed in the 2017 President's Priorities and in the 2018 Strategic Priorities.

While some work has been done in the area of planning, the team confirmed during the visit that more needs to be done. Questions remain as to who does strategic planning, how does the campus own the plan and implement, align, and assess the plan. With the new president's focus on annual priorities, many in the campus community wished for clarity regarding linking and aligning their plans to the planning document. Questions of clarification were raised asking which of the four plans (2015 Strategic Plan, Strategic Elements, Presidential Priorities 2017 & 2018), is the Strategic Plan, should a new plan be written, and which plan should be referenced when aligning department plans and budgets.

C. Reconciling and sustaining the Budget

Continued work on reconciling and sustaining the budget under the leadership of the CFO supported by advancement efforts under the leadership of the President and the Board. [CFR 3.4, 3.6, 3.8]

Both the report and the evaluation of the team during the visit confirm that FPU has managed its financial situation with increased transparency and fiscal responsibility.

After three years of surplus (FY10-12) the university experienced significant deficits in FY13 and FY14. The university at that time acted decisively to appoint an experienced CFO and to hire a financial consultant for FY15. Under their leadership, a series of budget and financial management tools were introduced with the intention of reversing the downturn. The changes in FY15 were implemented with the support of the university Board, faculty, staff, and administration. (CFR 3.4, 4.1, 4.2) These were difficult changes that included reduced staffing

positions, restructured offices for enrollment emphasis, reduced salaries for personnel above a designated earning threshold, and suspended retirement benefits contributions. The changes were deployed over three years to ensure sustainability.

FPU ended FY15 with an operating surplus. However in FY16 FPU missed enrollment budget targets and with a higher than expected bad debt allowance, ended with another operating deficit. Enrollment budget targets were missed again in FY17 even though tuition revenue was higher than the previous year. The university ended the year with yet another operating deficit due to another higher than expected bad debt allowance and the integration of the foundation with the university financial statements, including a write down of foundation debt. (CFR 3.4)

Over these last two years FPU recognized that still further structural changes were needed for budget targets to be achievable and consistent and for financial improvement to be sustainable.

Further changes have included appointing a fulltime budget director who has been working with departments to develop budgets, reconcile budgets to actual expenses, and assess variations to budget. A new general ledger chart of accounts has been introduced. The university budget now includes a revenue contingency to offset budget fluctuations. And, a formal cash reserve has been established with a policy in place on contributions from net operating income going to the cash reserve. The university is paying down debt and has now adjusted the bad debt contingency to maintain annual consistency and avoid extraordinary debt write downs.

The team was encouraged to learn that an experienced higher education auditor has now been engaged and the university has moved to an annual financial reporting year in line with USDE and NCAA. FPU has moved to greater transparency and accountability by distributing

financial data to program level budget managers and reviewing program costs with them through a new software service. The team heard positive reports from budget managers and staff on how the data enables expense line item transparency and availability (CFR 3.4, 4.1, 4.2)

Other changes have included diversifying revenue by introducing new programs, moving to greater online programming, establishing an international student recruitment program and establishing new, senior leadership in the advancement department. (CFR 3.6)

Enrollment has been a challenge, with forecasting historically being over optimistic. The university has responded to this by engaging an external consultant. For FY18, on the recommendations of the consultant, FPU has adopted a new revenue budgeting model based on detailed enrollment, retention and graduation history, and has included a revenue shortfall contingency in revenue budgets. The university expects that the new tuition modelling will improve revenue budget accuracy and accountability while restraining tuition discounting. (CFR 3.4, 3.6)

Advancement, under new leadership, is addressing technology issues, segmenting the university's alumni and donor database, and focusing resources on legacy gifts and on major business relationships in the Central Valley. The president is connecting with major donors to good effect. With the integration of the Foundation, the university will benefit from a focused advancement effort with no overlap in roles and target groups. Both enrollment and advancement budget targets will need to be managed with focus to ensure the operating budget is sustained and further operating deficits are avoided. (CFR 3.6, 3.7)

At June 30, 2018 the balance sheet is strong with assets higher and liabilities lower than the previous year. Unrestricted net assets are significantly higher than the previous year and

working capital has more than doubled. The university has been paying down its debt and strengthening its net worth. Its current ratio allows unrestricted assets to cover all operating expenses plus the available line of credit plus cash has more than doubled. The federal composite financial ratio has been stable for the last four years. The university achieved an operating surplus in its 14 month June 30 financial year based on the unaudited draft of June 2018 financial statements assessed by the team. The team sees the university's financial position as improving toward sustainability. (CFR 3.4)

D. Inclusion and broader representation in Decision-making

Greater inclusion of and broader representation from faculty and staff in decision-making bodies and processes. [CFR 3.7, 3.10]

In the Commission's letter, decision-making was the fourth area of concern for FPU to address prior to the special visit. Specifically, the Commission asked FPU to create "Greater inclusion of and broader representation from faculty and staff in decision-making bodies and processes." (CFR 3.7, 3.10) The team reviewed FPU's report and the supporting documents provided, including committee meeting minutes, task force reports and survey analysis reports. During the site visit, the team met with the president, Board, new cabinet, academic cabinet, faculty, students, and the Decision-making Inquiry Circle to review, confirm, and dialog about the continued work and progress on the institution-wide action to improve decision-making at FPU. (CFR 3.7, 3.10).

It was clear to the team that there was some effort to create open and transparent processes for decision-making so that faculty and staff throughout the institution could be better

heard and more involved when decisions were being made. For example, to address concerns heard about the earlier hiring process for the university's president, administration worked with their faculty and staff to create a 30-point plan for a "normal presidential search and transition process," which was subsequently adopted by the Board on June 6, 2015. In addition to the normal plan, a 15-point policy guide, "Exceptional Presidential Transition Process for Special Circumstances" was created.

There was also some attempt to create clarity around university committee membership and purpose. The team learned from both the report and the site visit that committees across the university were asked to archive committee descriptions and document their membership and decision making process. In addition, the Board elected to add faculty representation to each of the five standing Board committees. A new President's Council was formed with faculty representation and the Academic Cabinet was reviewed. (CFR 3.6)

The team also acknowledged the university's attempt to create greater documentation and discussion about when and how decisions are made throughout the university. The creation of documents, such as the departmental Decision Trees and Governance Task Force Report, appear to provide useful and clarifying information about decision making processes of various units. In addition, the CFO has been leading a task force charged with gathering existing policies into a centralized site on the university's intranet portal. The executive assistant to the provost also maintains updated lists of committee assignments, which are also posted to the FPU intranet. FPU has also created organizational charts to reflect the relationships between the various university entities. Lastly, deans were asked by their interim provost to include regular reporting

opportunities in their caucus meetings and the Faculty Senate were asked to include committee reports within those same meetings. (CFR 3.6, 3.8)

Some decisions by the university appear to be the result of evidence and research. There was evidence provided both within the report and at the site visit that many departments were using institutional research to inform their decisions through multiple surveys, both internally and externally. However, some faculty and department chairs questioned the accuracy of some of these data during the team's site visit. Some of these survey results appear to be shared with the university community through various communication outlets like the Squawk Box or posted on the intranet. Focus groups and town halls are being conducted to both gather information and communicate more transparently when decisions are being made. (CFR 3.7, 3.8)

While campus culture appears to be improving slightly since the last visit, both the report and the site visit revealed that the university still has significant areas of growth. Some of this was revealed during the site visit as resulting from the numerous changes the university has faced in its leadership. While general reaction to the recent presidential search process was a positive one, faculty expressed at the site visit their dismay at not meeting the president until after his hire and expressed the desire for a colloquium by the candidate or candidates, before hiring, to the general community. The report asserts, work still “remains to help faculty and staff understand and support the intersections between their roles and administration's roles in leading the university.” (CFRs 3.6, 3.7, 4.6). This was confirmed at the site visit.

There still seems to be significant suspicion of decision-making processes for those not within the upper administration or unfamiliar with the scope and membership of the university's wide range of committees. Despite the breadth of committee work being done throughout the

university, there still remained an uneven awareness of the purpose or scope of committee work or how recommendations from committees get implemented within the university. When the team spoke to faculty and staff they indicated very few improvements in communication, transparency and trust and pointed to recent decisions by administration to remove graduation ethnic sashes, appoint a chief diversity officer, recent leadership changes in the seminary leadership, and changes to the structure of convocation as a few examples of unilateral decision making. In addition, members of the faculty senate (the full faculty) expressed uncertainty about how their role fits within the larger governance structure within the university.

Lastly, while the report acknowledged that a task force “encouraged additional representation on the President’s Cabinet” by faculty and a revision of the Academic Cabinet to include more faculty, faculty expressed that neither action was implemented nor rationale provided by its members. Though some progress has been made and noted, it is the team’s summation that FPU give significant attention to systematic governance processes and clearly define committee member roles and responsibilities within the context of the institution.

E. Development of Intentional Mechanisms of Communication

Continued development of intentional mechanisms of communication that create feedback loops for bi-directional communication, transparency and understanding. (CFR 3.6, 3.7, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6)

In the Commission's letter, communication was the fifth area of concern for FPU to address prior to the Special Visit. Specifically, the Commission provided two recommendations: the institution should arrange for “continued development of intentional mechanisms that create

feedback loops for bi-directional communication, transparency and understanding” (CFR 3.6, 3.7, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6) and to create “greater transparency and better communication across units at all levels within the university and among all constituents and stakeholders. (CFR 1.7, 4,1, 4.2)

The team reviewed FPU’s *Special Visit Report* and the supporting documents provided, including committee meeting minutes, formal communications to the university community, and survey results. During the site visit, the team met with the president, Board, new cabinet, academic cabinet, faculty, students, and the Decision-making Inquiry Circle to review, confirm, and dialog about the continued work and progress on the institution-wide action to improve communication at FPU. (CFR 1.7, 4,1, 4.2)

The breadth of communication strategies taken reflects FPU’s commitment to improvement. Much like the other inquiry circles used to address the Commission’s recommendation, the communication Inquiry Circle used an evidence-based approach to examining the institutional gaps and opportunities around communication prior to making its recommendations. The Inquiry Circle employed case study analysis, survey research and a thorough analysis of the current committee structure. From these results, the committee created a plan to improve communication structures and processes throughout the university and presented it to the university community (CFR 1.7, 4,1, 4.2). The university understood that a key component to improving communication was making a focused effort to also clarify decision-making processes. Details about the university’s attempts to improve decision-making processes are included in section D of this report.

FPU put mechanisms in place to improve communication and make the processes bi-directional, if not multi-directional, and transparent (CFR 3.6, 3.7, 4.3, 4.5). Ten key

committees were asked to post their minutes on the intranet for increased access. The team was able to get access to these minutes during the site visit. Members of the university community were invited to write for the president's blog, "Connections." The practice of regular town halls held on the main campus with regional campuses linked electronically has also proved to be an effective means of feedback and communication. In addition, the provost held a series of listening sessions with faculty which was generally well received by many of the faculty.

The university has made some effort to make data-directed decisions around communication (CFR 1.7, 4.1, 4.2). For example, "A Faculty Needs Assessment Survey" sought faculty input on professional development needs in an effort to guide training for the faculty. In addition, the university released a communication survey to its community to guide its actions. A new communications diagram was created to illustrate a new process of information flow and feedback loops via surveys from staff, faculty, and administration regarding the Strategic Plan to confirm inclusive processes. Lastly, board report templates were created to include an area for deans and department leaders to provide feedback on challenges and needs regarding implementing the Strategic Plan.

While FPU has made strides to improve the dissemination of information to its community, the report and subsequent site visit revealed a number of areas of growth in the communication strategies and processes. For example, implementation of the charge for committee members to report back to caucuses has been uneven and there appears to be little accountability to committee chairs for doing so. A search through the meeting minutes on the intranet revealed an uneven representation between committees. In addition, both the report and site visit revealed that committee members often have a more optimistic view of communication

than non-committee members who have not benefited from direct experience. There were disagreeing opinions about the effectiveness of Squawk Box as an effective way of disseminating information to the FPU community. While there was acknowledgement and appreciation that the university created a place where information could be housed and reached, there was also a strong view that the breadth of types of announcements “watered down” the impact of those announcements amongst the community and that important university-impacting communications could be easily lost among less important ones. Lastly, there continues to exist an impression by both faculty and staff that communication is strongly “top down” with little opportunity for dialogue and discussion about university decisions prior to them occurring. (CFR 1.7; 1.8)

SECTION III – COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Commendations:

1. The team commends FPU for its detailed, serious and honest response to the Commission’s recommendations in its July 15, 2015 letter. The university has focused on the issues raised and worked well to have the community engaged in the Special Visit Report preparation.
2. The team commends FPU for such nascent efforts as requiring a diversity statement to create clear processes for hiring a diverse faculty and staff . It encourages the institution to adopt consistent methods for training search committees in assessing those statements.
3. The team commends FPU for the initial steps to improve communication through committee engagement and minutes distribution, establishing a Board-adopted process

for presidential selection, the practice of town hall information meetings, and the expansion of information available through the university's intranet.

4. The team commends FPU for its progress with stabilizing finances and returning to a net positive operating balance. Enrollments have improved and costs are being assessed in a structured and consistent manner. A significant number of improvements have been made in accounting processes. Communication on financial and budget processes has improved and is well received by the university community. The university currently has strong financial ratios over several years and the Special Visit team is confident that the financial improvement will be sustained.

B. Recommendations:

The team found encouraging progress in the university's finances and initial progress on the Commission's other recommendations. However, with the leadership changes in the presidency and the President's Cabinet, the team believes it is important for the university to mature the initial actions in order to ensure effective and timely progress is established within the university. Therefore, the following team Recommendations are presented:

1. The team recommends that the university (faculty, staff, students) continue to articulate its approach to, and definition of, diversity within the FPU context, to develop metrics for achieving diversity goals, and to determine how the responsibilities for diversity are to be distributed (among the CDO, UDC, and HR). Moreover, the team recommends that the CDO job description is clear and widely available and that the CDO receive support and training. (CFR 1.4, 3.7, and WSCUC Equity and Inclusion Policy)

2. The team recommends clarifying which plan (2015 Strategic Plan, Strategic Plan Elements, 2017 Presidential Priorities, 2018 Strategic Priorities), is the institution's strategic plan, or develop a new plan, and give significant attention to the overall strategic planning processes which include academic and non-academic areas, campus-wide ownership, communication, intentional implementation, alignment, budget allocation and outcome assessment. (CFR 1.1, 3.6, 3.7, 4.1)
3. The team recommends that significant attention be given to creating a clear systemized process for decision-making within the university, clearly defining institutional committee purposes, roles and responsibilities of committee members and how each committee fits within the larger governance process of the university. (CFR 3.6, 3.7, 3.10)
4. The team recommends that significant attention be given to creating clearer, multidimensional pathways for communication between upper administration and university staff, faculty and students. (CFR 1.7, 1.8)