REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM

Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR) of Accreditation

To NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

Oct. 7-9, 2020

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SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of Institution and Accreditation History

Description of Institution: In 1909, the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) began as the School of Marine Engineering at the United States Naval Academy, reflecting a shift in educational priorities as the Navy transitioned from sail to steam. By 1912, NPS became the Navy's post-graduate school for technical studies and during World War II, Congress passed legislation for the school to become a fully accredited, degree-granting graduate institution. In December 1951, NPS moved to its current campus in Monterey, California. From its origins as a technical and engineering school, NPS has continued to modify and add post-graduate offerings, it currently offers over 40 Master's and 18 doctoral degrees. NPS serves the needs of officers and civilians in all branches of the military, other U.S. government agencies, and allied and partner governments. Applied research is integrated into these academic programs.

Currently there are more than 1,400 students attending NPS who are enrolled full-time in academic programs offered on campus. These students are military officers from the five U.S. uniformed services, military officers from approximately thirty partner countries, and a small number of civilian federal and state employees—all nominated for admission. Additionally, NPS has a 20-year history with distance learning and now offers over 20 distance learning (DL) master's programs, in which nearly 1,100 students, mostly civilian government employees, enroll part-time annually. Overall, 35-40% of the students attending NPS do so through distance learning (DL), with 25% of all courses offered designated as DL. Delivery methods are largely synchronous, with students meeting through an online forum such as Zoom or Teams. In addition, over twenty thousand students participate annually in short-term, executive education, and professional development programs throughout the U.S., aboard U.S. Navy warships traveling around the globe. (CFR 2.11, 2.12, and 2.13)

The educational programs and the applied research efforts at NPS are led by over 500 faculty, 10% of whom are active duty military officers. There are 220 faculty who are tenured or in a tenure track (all with doctoral degrees) and another 340 non-tenure-track that includes research faculty, lecturers and visiting professionals. NPS reports that to strengthen expertise and program relevance, and to expedite research successes, applied research is integrated into instruction in courses and that this demonstrates to faculty, students and external constituents the immediate applicability of scholarly solutions to defense-related problems. Faculty are organized in twenty academic departments, groups, or areas within four graduate schools: The Graduate School of Defense Management (GSDM), The Graduate School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (GSEAS), The Graduate School of Operational and Information Sciences (GSOIS) and The School of International Graduate Studies (SIGS). (CFR 3.1)

The academic culture at NPS is unique with this focus on applied research conducted by teams of students, faculty and sponsors (from units within the military, predominantly Navy and Marine Corps). The academic programs offered by NPS are reviewed by "curriculum sponsors" (from units within the military, predominantly Navy and Marine Corps) in a unique "Curricular Review" process every two years. Thus, curricula are continuously updated to meet the requirements of these sponsors. The students at NPS bring recent operational experience, sponsors bring research requirements, and faculty bring both subject matter expertise and research experience that creates a synergy designed to increase the combat effectiveness of the force. The faculty place the intellectual and professional development of students above competing demands. Students recognize and respond to this commitment and benefit from personalized attention from the faculty. The result is an applied educational experience that meets sponsors' requirements, students' professional goals and thus fulfills the mission of NPS. (CFR 2.2)

Approximately 400 staff members execute a host of functions ranging from office support, financial services, travel, laboratory assistance, IT services and domain management, management of classified facilities and systems, registrar services, and student services. NPS is a tenant on the Monterey campus, Naval Support Activity Monterey provides facilities management (e.g., base maintenance and security) for the more than 45 buildings on 133 acres. Several oceanography labs and additional remote lab facilities are located on 51 additional ocean front acres. Partnerships with the U.S. Army Garrison at the Presidio of Monterey and a private developer provide more than 2,100 student housing units. Due to the pandemic, the team was unable to visit the campus. (CFR 3.1 and 3.5)

Description of Recent Accreditation History: NPS operates under the authorities granted in U.S. Code 10 Chapter 8548, which requires maintaining accreditation. NPS was first accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges in 1955. In addition to WSCUC accreditation, NPS also maintains programmatic accreditation with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) for the Graduate School of Defense Management, National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) for two degree programs (MBA and MS in management), and Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) for five engineering degree programs (astronautical, electrical, mechanical, systems engineering, and systems engineering-DL).

The last WSCUC reaffirmation of accreditation review for NPS was in 2010. In 2011, the Commission asked for an Interim report in 2014 in three areas: (1) Completion of assessment protocols across all academic units; (2) Progress in expanding international partnerships, recruiting distinguished research scholars, broadening sources of revenue, and strengthening delivery systems in distance learning and (3) The development of strategies for sustained cost savings, reputational advancement, further diversification of the student body, and enhancement of the physical plant. In the 2014 Interim Report, NPS reported that initiatives and continuous improvement efforts were ongoing in (1) information

technology and systems infrastructure, (2) civilian personnel management, (3) internal control for business operations, (4) reputational advancement strategy, (5) diversification, and (6) enhancement of the physical plant. In response to the 2014 Interim Report from NPS the Commission noted that there was significant evidence of progress in each of the areas, achieved in a time of many competing institutional priorities imposed by external agencies. That is, both the Navy's Inspector General's report and federal budget sequestration imposed unanticipated challenges, which impacted the three elements of the Commission's second 2011 recommendation, "progress in expanding international partnerships, recruiting distinguished research scholars and broadening sources of revenue". The Interim Report review panel noted "that the School must be responsive, first and foremost, to the needs of its parent organization".

Upon receiving the Interim report in May of 2014, the Commission asked NPS to continue with their scheduled reaffirmation reviews. The Offsite Review was set for spring 2020 and the Accreditation Visit for fall 2020, ten years after their last review. In addition, the Commission requested that the institution convey a copy of its strategic plan, upon completion, to the WSCUC staff liaison. In 2017, WSCUC approached NPS and invited them to participate in a new process, the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation (TPR), offered only to institutions that received a 10-year reaffirmation review window based on strong performance in three areas—fiscal, student outcomes and quality performance. In May 2018, NPS submitted its TPR proposal with the overarching theme of *Pursuing Graduate Education Excellence* and three subthemes (1) *Curriculum 2020: Strategically Redesigning the Curricula*; (2) *Classroom 2020: Enhancing Teaching and Learning* and (3) *Colleagues 2020: Strengthening the Facult*y.

Description of Team's Review Process: The NPS Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation (TPR) review team began with the recruitment of members in October 2019. Under the leadership of the Team Chair, the team began to organize itself in advance of the review process. After the team

conference call on Monday, June 29, 2020, team assignments were determined, and the team began preparation for the TPR remote site visit. Due to the closure of all California colleges and universities because of the COVID pandemic an onsite visit was not possible.

Once the NPS Institutional Report (IR) became available on July 29, 2020, the team began its review. It was guided by the Commission's Standards in the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation, the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation Evaluators Guide, The Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation Team Worksheet, and the WASC publication, Tips for Conducting Remote Reviews for Teams. In addition, the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation Guide for Institutions was reviewed to better understand the initial guidance given to NPS for developing and implementing the themes.

On September 8, 2020, the team held a team conference call to review their responses to the TPR Team Worksheet. In addition, the remote visit schedule was discussed. Follow up communication by the Assistant Chair with the NPS Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) clarified both the timing and participants in each session from NPS.

The customary phone call by the Team Chair with the President and Provost was held on October 1, 2020 to discuss any current conditions or circumstances that the team should be aware of during the visit. A team conference call was held on October 2, 2020, to discuss the specific issues and questions related to the Institutional Report (specifically the essays on TPR sub-themes and compliance with the Standards) to be explored during the remote visit. The team again identified additional information needed which the ALO provided. Based on further discussion by the team and the NPS ALO, in consultation with NPS Accreditation Steering Committee, a schedule and meeting rosters for a remote visit was finalized. On the day before the visit, October 6, 2020, the team held a conference call to

finalize the specific questions to be asked during each visit session and the responsibility of each team member for hosting the session.

The remote visit with NPS for the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation took place on October 7-9, 2020. The visit focused on the NPS Institutional Report (Component 1, Response to previous Commission action; Component 2, Review under WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements; Component 8, the NPS essays on the TPR sub-themes; and Component 9, Reflection and Plans for Improvement). During the remote visit, which used zoom, the team held 16 interviews, in groups ranging from two to 33 people who were selected by both NPS and the team, based on the team's review of documents and evidence provided by the institution.

By the end of the visit, the team determined its confidential recommendations to the Commission and a list of commendations and recommendations to the institution. The visit concluded with the Team Chair meeting privately with the NPS President and Provost, followed by an exit meeting at which the Team Chair shared the teams' commendations and recommendations with the NPS community. (CFR 1.8)

Following the visit, the team members prepared next-to-final drafts of their assigned report sections which were then integrated into a final draft by the Assistant Chair and Team Chair. The Team Chair then sent the resulting draft team report to the CEO at NPS for correction of errors of fact and redaction of proprietary information, with the request for a letter setting forth any desired changes to be provided. When the CEO's comments were received, the Chair made revisions that were deemed necessary in consultation with the assistant chair and WSCUC liaison. The team chair then sent the final team report to the WSCUC Accreditation Process Manager and the team to meet the December 4, 2020 deadline.

C. Institution's Reaccreditation Report and Update

Quality and Rigor of the Institutional Report and Supporting Evidence: As was the case with previous reports the Institutional Report for NPS' Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation was well organized and clearly written and presented. In focusing primarily on the themes of the TPR in the report, less emphasis was given to a detailed discussion of the recommendations from prior reviews. However, in the Institutional Report, NPS made some connections between specific prior WSCUC recommendations and the themes as well as citing relevant CFRs.

In order to accurately portray the evolving conditions of the institution at the time of the TPR, a considerable portion of the Institutional Report was used to describe the shifts in the larger educational environment in the Navy that more recently have led to a major reassessment of the NPS mission and its strategic direction. The NPS Accreditation Steering Committee (ASC-comprised of civilian and military faculty and campus leaders, some were on the ASC during the 2010 reaccreditation) began its work in 2017. It was charged with preparing the TPR proposal, guiding the self-study, then preparing the Institutional Report and site visit. However, shortly after the ASC started to work, a Secretary of the Navy-level Education for Seapower (E4S) study was completed (December 2018) with a follow-on Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Action Memo (February 2019). It is important to note that this was just after the arrival of the new NPS President in January 2019. Thus, the extent and nature of the involvement of NPS administrators, faculty, student, and staff in the discussion of recommendations that led to the three TPR sub-themes and eventually to the TPR institutional Report, have to be evaluated in terms of this changing educational environment for the U.S. Navy.

The evidence provided in the Institutional Report supported the narrative. However, the team had unanswered questions from (1) the Commission's 2011 first recommendation, *What is the extent that educational effectiveness measures have continued to progress at institutional, school, departmental, and course levels*; (2) the TPR Evaluator's guide, TPR themes and US Navy's recently published Education for Seapower (E4S) Strategy: *What is the overlap of the TPR themes and E4S, the anticipated challenges,*

and specific plans going forward in the next 3-5 years; and (3) the NPS third sub-theme, *Colleagues*,

Faculty Diversity*: What actions do you plan to take, over what time-frame to address identified faculty

diversity issues?* In response to these questions, the NPS ALO provided an extensive set of

supplementary materials to those found in the Institutional Report and Appendices.

The Institutional Report, the evidence provided in the appendices to the report, and the additional

evidence requested by the team informed the site visit and led to the team's commendations and

recommendations.

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ESSAYS

Component 1: Response to previous Commission actions

In response to the 2010 WSCUC accreditation review for NPS, the Commission asked for an Interim

report in 2014 addressing three areas: (1) Completion of assessment protocols across all academic units;

(2) Progress in expanding international partnerships, recruiting distinguished research scholars,

broadening sources of revenue, and strengthening delivery systems in distance learning and (3) The

development of strategies for sustained cost savings, reputational advancement, further diversification

of the student body, and enhancement of the physical plant. The review panel for 2014 Interim Report

noted, "that the School must be responsive, first and foremost, to the needs of its parent organization".

This advice also must be considered in the current Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation

review since a major change in the Navy's educational organizational structure and focus occurred

concurrently with the TPR process and development of the Institutional Report.

The current Institutional Report provides some comments that generally respond to the Commission's

three recommendations from 2014 (as reframed by NPS): (1) **Commitment to a Quality Education:**

Completion of assessment protocols across all academic units with the assistance of groups such as the

EESG (Educational Effectiveness Steering Group) and PETAL (Promoting Excellence in Teaching to

Advance Learning); (2) **Expanding the Institution's Reach:** Progress in expanding international partnerships, recruiting distinguished research scholars from the international pool, broadening sources of revenue and strengthening delivery systems in distance learning; and (3) **Business Strategies for the 21st Century (Practices & Support):** The development of strategies for sustained cost savings, reputational advancement, further diversification of the student body, and enhancement of the physical plant to match capacity needs. These limited responses are keyed to appendices in the Institutional Report with additional evidence that was also provided. It is important to note that TPR is a new process which required flexibility on both the part of the institution and the team. The team wants to commend the ALO, who was remarkably responsive to requests for additional information.

Component 2: Compliance

As was stated above, NPS mainly focused the Institutional Report on the three sub-themes of the TPR process. The team's review of the NPS' current status regarding compliance was made from the evidence presented in the Institutional Report, the IEEI and the Compliance with Federal Requirements form as well as additional evidence provided by the ALO and interviews conducted throughout the remote site visit.

Review of NPS Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (IEEI): The team deems that NPS demonstrates satisfactory performance related to the IEEI. The team observed that each entry in the IEEI was the same even for those programs where no formal student Learning Outcomes were indicated in the first column. Therefore, the team had to supplement the IEEI with additional materials and interviews of the faculty, that expanded on areas that were not sufficiently addressed in the IEEI itself. Based on the IEEI the primary means of collecting assessment data is through the use of indirect methods, such as surveys, with some use of direct methods, such as tests, quizzes, and other assignments, although interviews with faculty and other materials revealed that direct assessment methods are used. The team recommends that NPS implement an institution-level structure, with

responsibility for assessment coordination and oversight, that integrates department, school and command assessment processes and results. (CFRs 2.6, 4.1, and 4.3)

Compliance with Federal Requirements. The forms provided in the appendix were completed by team members based on additional information requested by the team (documents and links) and interviews during the visit.

Credit Hour and Program Length: Once directed to it the policy is easily accessible, however, the credit hour policy was last approved in May 2012. A quick review of the academic policy manual indicated many areas were outdated. The team suggests that NPS update the credit hour policy along with the other policies within the manual, including establishing a process to ensure regular updating.

Marketing and Recruitment Review Form: The students at NPS are military officers from the five U.S. uniformed services, military officers from approximately thirty partner countries, and a small number of civilian federal and state employees—all nominated for admission by their sponsoring agencies. Therefore, there is no marketing and recruitment per se.

Student Complaints Review Form. Overall, the process for handling student complaints could be strengthened, apart from publishing in the plan of the day. Many distance learning students are unaware there is a process for handling academic complaints as indicated by exit survey of DL students.

Transfer Policy Review: The policy is clearly stated in the Academic Policy Manual (6.6.3).

Review of NPS Key Performance Indicators from WSCUC. Several key indicators regarding enrollment, programs offered, and graduation completions that are required by WSCUC were provided to the team. The team was asked to review these and provide feedback to NPS on these indicators and more broadly on data informed decision-making. NPS has fully embraced the challenges and benefits of developing a data driven planning, resourcing, and assessment model. While waiting for the Navy's publication of a Data Strategy, to its credit, it has already began developing an overarching data architecture that will

include a data warehouse, a Data Governance Council, and an office responsible for data management. NPS has also developed a data maturity model that consists of rubrics for human, organizational, structural and material capacities. NPS is encouraged to share these exceptionally well-thought-out rubrics with other peer institutions.

The team encourages NPS to continue to aggressively pursue the implementation its data management efforts, as it believes this will greatly enhance the desired integration across the institution and the streamlining of assessments. The team also encourages NPS to more clearly describe the role of the Institutional Research Office in supporting its new data strategy.

Review under WSCUC Standards

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

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

NPS has defined its purpose and communicates how it contributes to meeting the needs of the U.S Navy. In 2020, NPS developed a revised mission statement in accordance with guidance in the Navy's Education for Seapower Strategy (2020) that appears to be significantly more complex which may then be difficult to assess its achievement. As of the writing of this report, the mission statement is still in draft form. (CFR 1.1)

NPS published its current Strategic Plan, 2018 – 2023, in 2018. This Plan describes ten action areas that support the three TPR sub-themes: Excellence and innovation in emerging fields critical to national defense; Interdisciplinary education and research programs; and Institutional innovation and effectiveness – constant search for improvement and cost-effectiveness. Included within each of the ten action areas, NPS defines the strategic direction that has a horizon of five to ten years in the future along with tactical actions that have a horizon of two to five years. Since the NPS Plan is dynamic, it was

not clear to the team what the processes are for updating this Plan, what the involvement of community members in doing so is, and then how updates are communicated to NPS stakeholders.

The team observed that there is not a central office that manages the updating, implementation, and assessment of the NPS Plan. The team also did not find a vision statement among the provided materials, or on the website. Therefore, the team recommends that NPS publish a vision, mission, and strategic plan that is aligned with the Navy's Education for Seapower (E4S) Strategy with institutional goals and measures of performance and effectiveness to be used to allocate resources and guide future planning.

Not unlike most other institutions of higher learning, NPS is experiencing resource challenges, particularly funding for facility modernization and maintaining competitive salaries. During the team's interview with the NPS governing board, it was encouraging that senior Navy leaders expressed strong support for NPS, the importance of its mission, and especially its need for resources. The team hopes this expression of support results in the provision of needed resources in the future. Therefore, the team recommends that NPS seeks resources necessary to effectively accomplish its vision and mission, especially those that address facility modernization and competitive faculty and staff salaries. (CFRs 1.4 and 3.1)

Indeed, education is NPS' primary purpose and it operates as an academic institution with the appropriate autonomy. In its review of the provided information and based on numerous interviews, the team found a broad and deep engagement of all stakeholders of NPS in support of its currently approved mission. NPS demonstrates consistency with its mission and purpose in its admissions, policies, programs, and, in general, organizational practices. For example, the student body consists of military officers from the five U.S. uniform services, military officers from approximately 30 partner countries, and a small number of civilian federal and state employees. The NPS workforce (911 people)

does not appear to be racially and ethnically diverse with approximately 76% being white, 10% Asian, 6% Hispanic or Latino, and 4% Black. The team suggests NPS establish diversity goals that could facilitate prioritization of recruitment strategies for new employees. Six different reports were presented to the team from the Inclusion and Diversity Council that covered a wide range of topics indicating substantial work. It is important to note that the ad hoc group, "Lean In", comprised of faculty and staff, is making an important contribution to a positive climate at NPS. (CFR 1.4 and 1.5)

There are clear educational objectives at the institution and program levels. NPS posts on its website graduating student survey and graduation statistics as well as a comprehensive student handbook. Although an excellent rubric for assessing capstone projects was presented that connects student work to institutional learning outcomes, the team did not observe processes or assessments that indicate achievement of student learning of these outcomes. (CFR 1.6).

Academic freedom at NPS is described in its Faculty Handbook (paragraph 8.2), which highlights that NPS faculty have "considerable freedom in research and the appropriate publication of the results, and freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject. In the exercise of these freedoms, faculty members should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution." (CFR 1.2 and 1.3)

Recommendations 2 and 4 address identified concerns related to Standard 1 and Standard 3:

2. Seek resources necessary to effectively accomplish the NPS vision and mission, especially those that address competitive faculty and staff salaries and facility modernization. (CFRs 1.4 and 3.1)

4. Publish a vision, mission, and strategic plan that is aligned with the Education for Seapower Strategy (E4S) with institutional goals and measures of performance and effectiveness to be used to allocate resources and guide future planning. (CFR 1.1)

Standard 2 Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

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

All programs appear to have appropriate content, standards of performance, rigor, and nomenclature for the degree level awarded and are supported with sufficient qualified faculty (CFR 2.1). NPS stated that assessment activities were decentralized and that NPS faculty demonstrate responsibility for setting SLOs, stating them in course syllabi. NPS provided sufficient evidence showing that courses, capstone programs, and discipline specific accreditation reports are an integral part of the Institutional Research / NPS Assessment Program summarized in the Review and Assessment Processes (RAP) framework. Graduate degree requirements are clearly stated and appropriate and SLOs are developed and implemented for student learning at all levels as evidenced in the documentation of learning objectives, Educational Skill Requirements (ESR), and Academic Policy Manual. (CFR 2.2 and 2.6) The institution's academic programs actively involve students in learning and that they receive feedback on their learning. And, the institution demonstrates that its graduates consistently achieve its stated learning out-comes and established standards of performance at the course and program level and that expectations for student learning are embedded in the standards that faculty use to evaluate student work. (CFR 2.5 and 2.6) In additional, academic program reviews include SLOs, retention/graduation data, external evidence and use of external evaluators. (CFR 2.7)

While there is evidence of assessment occurring across schools, departments, programs and courses, the team found that there is not (1) a set of institutional SLOs with related metrics and standards, (2) coordination or oversight of assessment of these SLOs at the institutional level, (3) evaluation of the strength of assessment activities institution-wide, and (4) the determine where improvements are needed at an institutional level. That is, even though faculty take individual responsibility at local levels, it does not appear that NPS faculty take collective responsibility for establishing appropriate standards

of performance and demonstrating through assessment the achievement of these standards at an institutional level. (CFR 2.3 and 2.4).

NPS demonstrates strong support and appreciation for scholarship, creative activity, and curricular and instructional innovation engaging both students and faculty. Interviews with the team showed that teaching, scholarship, and service are integral components of faculty evaluation (CFR 2.8 and 2.9).

NPS excels in identifying and providing impressive, multiple layers of support personnel to students that extend beyond the learning environment that are essential for military students such as maintaining military requirements and mental health support. These services are provided with dedicated and competent mentors and supervisors coming from across agencies within and outside the Department of Defense. Interviews and documentation provided show that NPS does a good job of aligning co-curricular programs with academic goals. Evidence showed that NPS provides excellent advisement and useful and complete program information. NPS provides appropriate student support services and assessment of these services (CFR 2.10, 2.11.2.12, 2.13, and 2.14).

Recommendation 1 addresses identified concerns related to Standards 2 and 4:

1. Develop and implement an institution-level structure, with responsibility for assessment coordination and oversight, that integrates department, school and command assessment processes and results. (CFR 2.3, 2.4, 4.1, and 4.3)

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

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

Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes: Since 2019 the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) has been part of the newly formed Naval University System (NUS) with oversight of naval education through the newly formed Naval Education Enterprise (NEE). Oversight of these two bodies

is shared between two positions, both reporting to the Secretary of the Navy. One is the Chief Learning Officer (CLO), a newly established civilian Secretariat position who coordinates policy development, and the second is the Director of Warfare Development (OPNAV N7), a Navy admiral who develops education requirements and determines resources. The President of NPS reports to the Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations, through the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) and Director of Warfare Development (OPNAV N7), respectively, while the hiring authority for the NPS President is the Secretary of the Navy.

Fiscal, operational and requirements oversight for NPS is accomplished by OPNAV N7, Marine Corps Combat Development and Integration (CD&I) and the CLO. The NPS President Is responsive to and attends meetings of the NPS Board of Advisors (BOA), military and civilian members who are appointed by the Secretary of the Navy. The established purpose of the BOA "is to provide outside/external perspective from respected leaders as well as providing independent advice to the Secretary of the Navy, thereby enhancing governance as well as diversity of view and perspective." (CFR 3.6 and 3.9)

NPS welcomed a new President at the end of January in 2019. This was after the initiation of the TPR in May 2018 and well after the planning process in 2017 for its current Strategic Plan (2018-2023).   The new President has been initially focused on various aspects of the organization such as personnel and organizational structures. As examples, the President hired a new CFO in March 2020, who, with their team, continues the implementation of the new accounting system from the Navy (SABRS) and the establishment of key data dashboards. The President reorganized the President's Cabinet (consisting of 14 individuals, including Deans) and as advisors to the Cabinet, senior representatives from the U.S. Army, Air Force and Marine Corps, and various NPS individuals (Faculty Council Chair, Inspector General, President's Student Council Chair, Librarian and Senior Enlisted Advisor). A charter specifies the Cabinet's operations and responsibilities. The President is committed to taking a "system of systems" approach to bring improvements to NPS, positioning it for the vision, mission and strategic planning

efforts that lie ahead. The NPS President's active role in the development of the Navy's E4S initiative will serve the institution well in aligning NPS efforts with this national strategy. (CFR 3.8)

Fiscal, Physical and Information Resources: NPS has an operating budget of $217 million with approximately 50% of the budget coming from the Navy directly, and 50% generated by tuition and fees in addition to awarded research funds. (CFR 3.4) NPS students are sponsored, funded and sent by a Department of Defense command, U.S. military service, or an allied country or government. As stated in a mini-audit (N10) from April of 2019, "The command has efficient work-flow business processes/systems in place based on a centralized and decentralized approach operating approach...". (CFR 3.4)

One major challenge for institutional planning and subsequent resource allocation that NPS currently faces is to address the decades of deferred maintenance as described in the NPS Information Paper for Modernization (updated in February of 2020). A second fiscal challenge will be to expand on current efforts such as salary cap relief, providing bonuses, and using recruitment incentives to reach competitive faculty salaries as compared to other academic institutions that meet the market demand for top faculty in many disciplines and to address the high cost of living in the area.

The information technology resources for NPS operations and academic programs seem to be meeting current needs very effectively. (CFR 3.5)

Faculty and Staff: NPS has 500 faculty, with 220 tenured and tenure track faculty and over 340 non-tenured faculty who include research faculty, lecturers and visiting professionals. Fifty faculty are uniformed, and the others are civilian. The result is a faculty that has extensive operational expertise for both teaching a cutting-edge curriculum and conducting research and guiding master's theses, which leads to the intellectual and professional development of the students of NPS. (CFR 3.1)

In 2017, the NPS faculty and administration identified the need for more coordinated, and accessible resources to support faculty in their teaching and learning activities (TPR Sub-theme 2). New structures were established to advance the quality of education campus wide. These include promoting continuous improvements; fostering innovation in teaching, learning, and assessment practices; and coordinating and streamlining accessibility to established educational resources and services. (CFR 3.3)

Over 400 staff, mostly civilians, serve in a variety of roles, that are operational in nature (including office support, financial services, laboratory assistance, IT services, and management of classified facilities and systems, etc.), and student services (delivered by NPS staff and personnel from across the agencies that sponsor students). Appropriate policies and practices are in place for faculty and staff recruitment, hiring, orientation, workload, incentives, and evaluation practices. It was noted that NPS is a complex, decentralized organization where the cultures of higher education and the military co-exist. As such, onboarding and orientation for faculty and staff new to NPS is important as is leadership development and ongoing faculty and staff training as changes are implemented. Recent faculty and staff development enhancements are described in the Classroom 2020 sub-theme. Both the Curriculum 2020 and Colleagues 2020 sub-themes review recent efforts to create a more inclusive culture and foster practices to recruit and retain a diverse faculty and staff. (CFR 3.2 and 3.3)

Recommendations 2 and 3 address identified concerns related to Standard 3 and 1:

2. Seek resources necessary to effectively accomplish its vision and mission, especially those that address and competitive faculty staff salaries and facility modernization. (CFR 1.4 and 3.5)

3. Continue inclusion and diversity efforts that are informed by best practices and assessment data on recruitment, onboarding, and retention of faculty, staff, and students. (CFR 3.1)

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

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

The team reviewed sufficient evidence and confirmed through the site visit that several quality-assurance processes are in place to collect, analyze, and interpret data; track results over time; use comparative data; and make improvements. NPS's Institutional Research / NPS Assessment Program and Review and Assessment Plan (RAP) specify the different elements of review and expectations for these elements as well as providing types of evidence. (CFR 4.1)

NPS's institutional research capacity appears to be sufficient. It is clear from the Institutional Report and interviews conducted by the team that data from the Institutional Research office and other units are shared widely and incorporated in planning and decision-making at the program, School, and executive levels. (CFR 4.2)

During interviews with faculty and staff, it was noted that the personnel from two academic departments selected to visit with the team, were able to accurately describe their assessment process; however, the team is unclear whether this familiarity with assessment, and setting of standards of performance, is common across the institution. What is clear to the team is that the assessment of program learning outcomes is decentralized with accountability at the level of the deans of the Schools at NPS and that this has limitations for assessment of student achievement of program and institutional level learning outcomes.

NPS' focus on the TPR sub-theme of Classroom 2020, and the progress made over the last two years demonstrates that NPS is committed to ongoing inquiry into teaching and learning to improve curricula, and pedagogy. This is evident especially in relation to the activities of Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) and its Promoting Excellence in Teaching to Advance Learning program (PETAL). NPS will need to take advantage of PETAL and the Institutional Research / NPS Assessment Program to guide its efforts to

develop and integrate data on student achievement of program and institutional learning outcomes into their quality improvement processes for teaching and learning. (See review of the Classroom 2020 sub-theme below for more detail. (CPR 4.4)

NPS maintains close contact with academic program sponsors (external constituents who are sending their personnel to NPS) and aligns institutional strategic thinking, assessment and School and department level planning with sponsor interests to maintain innovative, cutting edge curricula that are response to sponsor needs. This is done through sponsors providing ongoing feedback to faculty and through the more formal NPS Curriculum Review process: "Biennially, each NPS master's curriculum is reviewed in partnership with flag-level curriculum sponsors. Educational Skills Requirements (ESRs) and individual courses are reviewed, revised, and updated to meet current educational requirements." NPS faculty then revise and modify curricula based on this information. Sponsors may also propose specific projects, and review student work as evidence of the impact of the curriculum.

As noted in relation to the IEEI, even though the Curriculum Review by program sponsors is described as a major form of assessment of student learning, it is unclear what information is provided to them. A concern is that while stakeholders provide valuable feedback regarding needed revisions to the curriculum based on changes observed in the operational environment of the U.S. Navy, this feedback does not take into account the achievement or not, by students, of specific program learning outcomes. (CFR 4.5)

NPS engages campus constituents in strategic and annual planning. The NPS Faculty Council indicated that they felt strongly that the institution effectively engages their voice in planning processes. (CFR 4.6) In particular, NPS has demonstrated over the past few years both its capacity to respond to changes that are occurring in higher education, and changes that are occurring in naval education. (CFR 4.7) With the changes that are occurring both internally and externally, NPS leadership may want to evaluate its

organizational structure in terms of efficiencies and clear lines of authority, decision-making, and engagement of constituents.

Component 8 - **Essay on institution-specific themes**

The NPS Institutional Report provides a comprehensive description of the institution's efforts relative to the main theme and its three sub-themes. It describes in very general terms how the theme *Pursuing Graduate Education Excellence* and sub-themes were developed based on consultation with faculty, staff, students, and NPS stakeholders and their alignment with the NPS Strategic Plan, 2018-2023. NPS focused the TPR to align with strategic plan areas that most impact students' learning experience. Each sub-theme section provides a general set of criteria for its development and considerable detail on what was accomplished over the last several years. The team noted, however that the Institutional Report provides insufficient evidence regarding the extent to which the results of the impact of the work on the sub-themes were analyzed and interpreted, appropriate conclusions were drawn, and plans developed for the future as a result of the TPR process as indicted in recommendation. Thus, the team directed the following question to the institution prior to the visit: What is the overlap between the TPR themes and E4S requirements, the anticipated challenges, and specific plans going forward in the next 3-5 years?

Sub-theme One: Curriculum 2020: Strategically Redesigning the Curricula

As described in the Institutional Report, **Curriculum 2020** captures efforts by NPS to review its mission and the curricula of its graduate programs. This review resulted in revising and modifying existing curricula as well as developing new curricula. Two major documents, the NPS Strategic Plan and the Navy's Education for Seapower (E4S) Strategy, have guided this effort. The NPS Strategic Plan committed the institution to stay ahead of emerging changes in naval education and continue to be innovative in the redesign of its curricula. In this regard this sub-theme had several criteria: alignment with NPS's mission and strategic plan, Navy education requirements, and the NPS Institutional Learning

Objectives; attention to emerging defense and national security fields; consideration for the student learning environment, and teaching and learning best practices. The team commends NPS for its distinctive and forward-looking graduate education grounded in innovative and cutting-edge research that prepares graduates to solve complex real-world problems of national significance.

It should be noted that in describing the **Curriculum 2020** sub-theme for the TPR, NPS was already reviewing and redesigning its curricula. NPS has initiated various new programs to reach a broader community of Navy learners. NPS faculty are building a constructive relationship with the Director of Warfare Development (N7) to address key Navy issues through education and applied research. Concurrently, it has worked to evolve its graduate curricula toward more innovative, flexible, and future-oriented programs to better serve the current needs of the warfighter.

The existing processes and criteria for developing new programs were described in the TPR. This included a description of their program review process that assures academic standards and resource infrastructures are sufficient to ensure the quality and success of the new program they are reviewed at the department, school, and institutional levels. The deans and Chairs Council provides final review and acceptance of the business merits of the new program, while the Academic Council decides on the academic merits. There are two criteria that must be met: alignment with mission and strategic plan, Navy education requirements, and institutional learning objectives; and attention to emerging defense and national security fields. The team discussed with NPS how these criteria would be used to ensure sufficient interest from students and resources available, and how the creation of a new program would affect the same of existing programs. NPS uses a praiseworthy and unique Curriculum Review process to ensure all new programs meet the high standards and expectations of NPS and its sponsors.

NPS provided examples of new programs in three areas: Global Security: Developing Future Naval Strategic Leaders; Emerging Technologies: Education for The Future Defense Environment; and Reaching

the Fleet: Flexible Education Programs to Fit the Naval Career. Within these three areas, 12 programs were described. It was not clear to the team if these new programs will replace existing programs, given that the student populations do not appear to have changed, and if not, how they would be resourced.

The next steps for this theme include reviewing new degree programs and curricula and ensuring alignment with its newly revised mission statement (still in draft form) and its existing Strategic Plan. The Institutional Report also noted that NPS will continue to be very active in developing new program modes, although there were no stated goals, or connection to the new degree programs and their curricula with each of the three sub-themes within the Strategic Plan. During the visit, the team discussed the resource implications of **Curriculum 2020** and responses largely focused on the ability and potential of NPS to obtain funding through its research efforts.

Sub-theme Two: Classroom 2020: Enhancing Teaching and Learning

As stated in the Institutional Report, p.26, the **Classroom 2020** sub-theme "encompasses a variety of strategic activities that emphasize innovative and engaged teaching and learning, the integration of educational technologies to enhance instructional effectiveness, and efforts to provide cohesive organizational collaboration, clear priorities, and procedures to ensure quality and continuous improvements in the NPS education programs." Clearly progress has been made in advancing the **Classroom 2020** sub-theme based on the description in the Institutional Report of its overall scope and focus.

The report describes four areas of focus that provided a logical way to organize the sub-theme (Teaching and Learning Commons, Student Learning Initiatives and Student Transitions, Teaching Initiatives and Learning Spaces and Future Learning Environments) and cites CFRs. The exploration of this sub-theme has led to several substantial improvements and while the report describes what was accomplished, there is not much detail on the investigation of this sub-theme and its' development, reflection on the

meaning of outcomes and what was learned, and what remains to be accomplished and what improvements may be desired. For example, the TPR Proposal states that two questions shaped the development of Classroom 2020 (Appendix 1.13): Will the initiatives improve learning and instruction? and How we will know? However, it is not evident to the team that these two questions are answered. The Institutional Report does not provide data to show how these initiatives have addressed the gaps that they were presumably meant to fill. Surveys of faculty and students as well as a series of open forums appear to be the main form of investigation employed to identify the desired capabilities that were not supported within the classroom. The team did not see that the assessment of student achievement of learning outcomes informed the initiatives or led to improvements in student learning as a result of changes in classroom structure and technology. NPS should consider how it intends to assess the success of **Classroom 2020** in the future by taking these observations into consideration.

Sub-theme 3: Colleagues 2020: Strengthening the Faculty

Through the **Colleagues 2020** sub-theme, NPS has achieved an important set of goals on impressive initiatives that seek to strengthen its faculty. These goals focus on efforts to ensure the best faculty are being recruited; programs for developing existing faculty; efforts to improve the retention of faculty; and expanded roles and increased engagement of faculty.

Well proven methods and best practices, blended with both bottom-up and top-down approaches, were deployed to begin the planning and implementation of recruitment efforts in key areas such as salary, incentives for faculty members, and student loan repayment; appropriate faculty development support that includes strong mentorship of junior faculty members, sabbaticals, initiation of interdisciplinary research, and innovative approaches to form industry partnerships; effective faculty retention efforts; and promising methods for faculty engagement in research to address emerging national needs.

These initiatives are supported by an emerging set of strategies to diversify the faculty at NPS including the creation of the Inclusion and Diversity Council to conduct a thorough review of NPS recruitment and hiring policies and to advise the President and Provost on best practices; efforts to build collaboration with industry that will leverage Silicon Valley's talents (in leaders and young scholars); and plans to assess the institution's ability to hire and retain both postdoctoral researchers and senior faculty leaders, as Chaired Professors, in areas of strategic importance that have the potential to enhance NPS' culture for innovation.

NPS' plan to expand its research and education in areas that are critical to U.S. national defense aligns well with its initiatives in recruiting, developing, and retaining diverse talent. The focus on interdisciplinary collaboration and collaboration with industry recognizes the fact that these types of collaboration are needed for emerging research areas (e.g., autonomous systems, cybersecurity, data analytics, and computing).

Additionally, **Colleagues 2020** has defined areas to address cross-domain challenges and interdisciplinary research and education (data science, maritime environments, cyber operations, and the ethics of war). An assessment plan is in place for new initiatives (e.g., newly formed and multidisciplinary Data Science and Analytics Group, Center on the Ethics of War); means to incentive structures for faculty retention, tenure and promotion; and streamlined cooperative research programs that remove inefficiencies and obstacles.

NPS reflected on what has been learned from previous accreditation visits and input from stakeholders, especially from employers of its graduates and government agencies, that articulated their needs at a national level. **Colleagues 2020** has comprehensive goals in attracting new talent and improving talent management, by assessing the impact of newly proposed programs (e.g., work on site, "experience tours" and learning outcomes). The **Colleagues 2020** initiatives have gained initial momentum. The key

to maintaining this momentum and sustaining institutional support will be to develop measurable metrics for these initiatives and to use the metrics as the basis to allocate resources and make continuous improvements. With its existing strong leadership and unity from top-down and bottom-up levels, NPS appears to have the ability to complete its agenda with **Colleagues 2020**.

Component 9: Reflection and plans for improvement

This component focuses on the team's findings regarding the extent to which the institution successfully summarized the results of their focus on the chosen TPR theme and sub-themes, analyzed and interpreted the results, drew appropriate conclusions, and articulated plans for the future. The team found that the NPS' TPR focused Institutional Report provides a comprehensive description of the results of the TPR theme efforts in the form of the descriptions of the three sub-themes. However, little or no information was provided to the team in the Institutional Report or in visit interviews that suggests that the development process for the sub-themes and the results of the activities in the sub-themes were analyzed and interpreted in a systematic way that would allow the institution to draw appropriate conclusions and articulate comprehensive plans for the future.

To reiterate from above, in preparation for the visit, the team directed the following question to the institution: What is the overlap between the TPR themes and E4S requirements, the anticipated challenges, and specific plans going forward in the next 3-5 years? This question remained unanswered, thus the team 's fourth recommendation is:

 4. Publish a vision, mission, and strategic plan that is aligned with the Education for Seapower Strategy (E4S) with institutional goals and measures of performance and effectiveness to be used to allocate resources and guide future planning.

SECTION IV – COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings described throughout the report of the team's review of NPS' Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation led to the team's commendations and recommendations.

Commendations

The team commends the Naval Post Graduate School for the following five accomplishments and

practices:

1. Demonstrated passion and dedication to the NPS mission and to student academic achievement and professional development.

2. Comprehensive student support services offered by a network of dedicated and competent personnel from NPS and across agencies.

3. Effective faculty development that enhances teaching and learning, provides mentorship for junior faculty, and fosters opportunities for interdisciplinary research in a collegial environment.

4. A distinctive and forward-looking graduate education grounded in innovative and cutting-edge research that prepares graduates to solve complex real-world problems of national significance.

5. A comprehensive biennial curriculum improvement process that ensures relevant and dynamic academic programs responsive to the needs of the uniformed services and other stakeholders.

Recommendations

The team has identified the following four recommendations to focus NPS' ongoing efforts:

1. Develop and implement an institution-level structure, with responsibility for assessment coordination and oversight, that integrates department, school and command assessment processes and results. (CFR 2.6, 4.1, and 4.3)

2. Seek resources necessary to effectively accomplish its vision and mission, especially those that address and competitive faculty staff salaries and facility modernization. (CFR 1.4 and 3.5)

3. Continue inclusion and diversity efforts that are informed by best practices and assessment data on recruitment, onboarding, and retention of faculty, staff, and students. (CFR 3.1)

4. Publish a vision, mission, and strategic plan that is aligned with the Education for Seapower Strategy (E4S) with institutional goals and measures of performance and effectiveness to be used to allocate resources and guide future planning. (CFR 1.1)

APPENDICES

A. Federal Compliance Forms

1. **CREDIT HOUR AND PROGRAM LENGTH REVIEW**

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate.)
Policy on credit hour	Is this policy easily accessible? X YES ❒ NO
	If so, where is the policy located? The policy is located in paragraph 6.1.3 within the Academic Policy Manual which is posted online.
	Comments: NPS defines credit hour as: "An amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that reasonably approximates not less than: One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by NPS, including laboratory work, internships, practica, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours." The credit hour policy was last approved in May 2012. A quick review of the academic policy manual indicated many areas were outdated. NPS should update the credit hour policy along with the other policies within the manual, including establishing a process and proponent to ensure regular updating.
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)? YES X❒ NO
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? YES ❒ NO
	Comments: NPS has an established curriculum review process that was described in a slide presentation prepared for the review team. This process includes multiple levels of review. However, a review of credit hour assignments was not mentioned in this process; this was asked in one of the NPS interviews but could not be verified that it happens. It was also not clear if the material in the slides has been properly documented in an approved policy.

Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? YES ❐ NO
	Comments: N/A
Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.	How many syllabi were reviewed? 4
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? Online – distance learning programs
	What degree level(s)? ❐ AA/AS ❐ BA/BS X MA ❐ Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Defense management and systems engineering
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? X YES NO
	Comments: Well defined student learning outcomes
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) Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.	How many syllabi were reviewed? 4
	What kinds of courses? Asynchronous
	What degree level(s)? ❐ AA/AS ❐ BA/BS MA ❐ Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? O Cost Analysis Program: OS3006—OR for Cost Analysts o Space Systems Group: SS3011—Space Technology o Space Systems Group: SS3740—Nuclear Command and Control o Mechanical Engineering Dept: ME4101 – Thermodynamics
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? YES X NO
	Comments: None of the syllabi from the above four courses described the material assigned so it was difficult to determine if the appropriate amount is covered.
Sample program information (catalog, website, or other program materials)	How many programs were reviewed? 4
	What kinds of programs were reviewed? Masters - Spacecraft Systems
	What degree level(s)? ❐ AA/AS ❐ BA/BS X MA ❐ Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? National Security Affairs and Operations Research
	Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? X YES ❐ NO
	Comments: Well defined student learning outcomes

Review Completed By: Jerry Kobylski
Date: Oct 6, 2020

2. **MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT REVIEW**

Material Reviewed	Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.
**Federal regulations	Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students? **X** YES ❑ NO
	Comments:
Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? **X** YES ❑ NO
	Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? **X** YES ❑ NO
	Comments:
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? **X** YES ❑ NO
	Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? **X** YES ❑ NO
	Comments: The Naval Postgraduate School students are military officers from the five U.S. uniformed services, military officers from approximately thirty partner countries, and a small number of civilian federal and state employees—all nominated for admission by their sponsoring agencies. Therefore, there is no marketing and recruitment per se.

Review Completed By: Nhut Ho
Date: 9/7/2020

3. **STUDENT COMPLAINTS REVIEW**

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Policy on student complaints	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? **X** YES ☐ NO
	If so, is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Is so, where? In the Student Handbook.
	Comments: NPS students can submit complaints via the President's or Dean of Student's suggestion box, or via a formal academic process, both of which are covered in the student handbook.
Process(es)/ procedure	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? **X** YES ☐ NO
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? **X** YES ☐ NO
	Comments:

	Complaints to the suggestion box are addressed, and publicly displayed in the Plan of the Day when appropriate.
Records	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? ☐ YES ☐ NO
	Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? **X** YES ☐ NO
	Comments: History of complaints to the electronic suggestion box are stored in long-term digital records in the NPS Sharepoint site. Complaints are stored in a central location so review of past similar complaints can easily be performed.

Review Completed By: Peter J. Gray
Date: Sept. 9, 2020

4. **TRANSFER CREDIT REVIEW**

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Transfer Credit Policy(s)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? ☐X YES ☐ NO
	Is the policy publicly available? **X** YES ☐ NO If so, where? ACADEMIC POLICY MANUAL
	Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? **X** YES ☐ NO
	Comments: The policy for transfer credit is clearly stated in Academic Policy Manual (6.6.3)

Review Completed By: Cheryl Ney
Date: Sept. 9, 2020

B. Distance Education Review

Institution: Naval Postgraduate School
Type of Visit: TPR
Name of reviewer/s: Lonnie Olsen
Date/s of review: August 2020

1. Programs and courses reviewed (please list): Due to pandemic measures, there was no face to face meeting and specific programs weren't reviewed. Review consisted of a general discussion with a committee of administrators and faculty regarding DL at NPS.

2. Background Information (number of programs offered by distance education; degree levels; FTE enrollment in distance education courses/programs; history of offering distance education; percentage growth in distance education offerings and enrollment; platform, formats, and/or delivery method)
   NPS has a 20-year history with distance learning. Overall, 35-40% of the students attending NPS do so through distance learning (DL) with 25% of the courses designated as DL. Delivery methods are largely synchronous, with students meeting through an online forum such as Zoom or Teams.

3. Nature of the review (material examined and persons/committees interviewed)
   Dr. Mary Sims, ALO
   Dr. Doug Moses, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
   Dr. Dennis Lester, Director, Graduate Education Advancement Center
   Dr. Michael Freeman, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs
   Dr. Ralucca Gera, Associate Provost for Graduate Education
   Ms Laurel Mink, Director of Institutional Research
   Dr. Ali Rodgers, Director, Faculty Development

The review consisted of frank conversation with the participants and the review of surveys and other documents provided to the committee.

Observations and Findings

Lines of Inquiry (refer to relevant CFRs to assure comprehensive consideration)	Observations and Findings	Follow-up Required (identify the issues)
Fit with Mission. How does the institution conceive of distance learning relative to its mission, operations, and administrative structure? How are distance education offerings planned, funded, and operationalized?	-DL aligns well with the mission of education mid-career naval officers, who do not have time to be in residence. -DL is planned and funded comparable with residence courses.	None

Connection to the Institution. How are distance education students integrated into the life and culture of the institution?	-DL students are brought to campus at the beginning of their program and also at the conclusion. Depending on the program, students may be brought into NPS more frequently.	DL exit survey reveals that only 7% of students feel NPS personnel facilitated their transition to student life. (Q. 30).
Quality of the DE Infrastructure. Are the learning platform and academic infrastructure of the site conducive to learning and interaction between faculty and students and among students? Is the technology adequately supported? Are there back-ups?	-Institution uses Sakai as LMS and Zoom/Teams based on instructor preferences. -Institution has robust IT support and back-up systems.	
Student Support Services: What is the institution's capacity for providing advising, counseling, library, computing services, academic support and other services appropriate to distance modality? What do data show about the effectiveness of the services?	-Student support services for DL is comparable to other institutions of similar size and are organized to support DL students. -Data from 2019 DL exit survey reveal that only 29% of students were aware that NPS has a process for student academic complaints.	-This gap was identified during the review of Component 2. Recommend NPS address and develop a transparent process for addressing academic complaints ensure this is well publicized.
Faculty. Who teaches the courses, e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct? Do they teach only online courses? In what ways does the institution ensure that distance learning faculty are oriented, supported, and integrated appropriately into the academic life of the institution? How are faculty involved in curriculum development and assessment of student learning? How are faculty trained and supported to teach in this modality?	-DL courses are taught by several categories of faculty and not pigeonholed into one group. There is a robust infrastructure in place to train faculty in DL techniques, through the Faculty Development office.	
Curriculum and Delivery. Who designs the distance education programs and courses? How are they approved and evaluated? Are the programs and courses comparable in content, outcomes and quality to on-ground offerings? (Submit credit hour report.)	DL programs are designed by the faculty teaching them and go through the same rigorous process as the resident courses. They are comparable in content with	2019 DL Exit Survey identified that only 17% of DL students consistently found (that their capstone thesis project made a useful contribution to national defense or combat

	the on the ground programs and courses.	effectiveness. Given the mission statement of the institution, this is worth exploring, as this was not a point made by the resident students at NPS.
Retention and Graduation. What data on retention and graduation are collected on students taking online courses and programs? What do these data show? What disparities are evident? Are rates comparable to on-ground programs and to other institutions' online offerings? If any concerns exist, how are these being addressed?	-Retention and graduation rates do not seem too disparate between DL and Resident. DL students have a somewhat lower graduation rate that is most likely explained by being deployed and holding full time jobs as officers and civil servants compared to students in residence.	
Student Learning. How does the institution assess student learning for online programs and courses? Is this process comparable to that used in on-ground courses? What are the results of student learning assessment? How do these compare with learning results of on-ground students, if applicable, or with other online offerings?	-There does not appear to be a robust, formal program for assessing student learning outcomes at the program and course level. Whatever assessment is being done seems specific to the program/department and ad hoc. Reviewer asked if any yearly assessment reports were done or if assessment of SLOs was tracked at the programmatic level and there is no data available. Therefore, no comparison is possible.	-This is an issue of concern as it appears student learning outcomes are not being assessed and tracked and used to inform institutional decisions. At least not in an organized, formal way. It is difficult to see how curricular changes are justified without data speaking to the success or failure of the current instructional processes.
Contracts with Vendors. Are there any arrangements with outside vendors concerning the infrastructure, delivery, development, or instruction of courses? If so, do these comport with the policy on *Contracts with Unaccredited Organizations?*	This section was not covered in the time available to meet with the committee. However, since NPS is a naval organization and operates under federal law, these vendor arrangements are subject to extraordinarily rigorous oversight and	Will follow up with NPS ALO to gain a better sense of this area.

	control. That being said, the reviewer is unable to ascertain at this time whether contracts conform with WSCUC policy.	
Quality Assurance Processes: How are the institution's quality assurance processes designed or modified to cover distance education? What evidence is provided that distance education programs and courses are educationally effective?	This section could not be covered in the time allotted for this meeting. However, the same observation noted for student learning is applicable here. Without assessment data from student learning outcomes, it is difficult to ascertain how the quality assurance process can be effective. That being said, there is a very robust QA process for the non-academic side of NPS operations, DL included.	This is an issue that bears further review, as apart from indirect methods (surveys) there appears to be no evidence provided regarding the educational effectiveness of DL. In interviews, it was stated that external stakeholders (Navy units that receive NPS graduates) review program performance and student preparedness during biannual curriculum reviews. But that is more anecdotal and there is no data available to demonstrate the educational efficacy of DL.