

**REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM
SPECIAL VISIT**

**To
Presidio Graduate School**

March 24-26, 2021

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The team evaluated the institution under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

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SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of Institution, Accreditation History, as relevant, and Visit

The mission of Presidio Graduate School (PGS) centers on educating those in management and leadership positions who wish to focus on sustainability in all aspects of their professional practice. PGS primarily offers graduate programs that focus on the intersection of business and public policy. PGS's Master of Business Administration, Master of Public Administration, and dual MBA/MPA program are PGS's central offerings. A Sustainability Certificate Program and continuing education for K-12 teachers focused on climate change are new offerings. Initially established in 1973 under a different name, PGS has classroom space in Oakland. Enrollment has varied from 100-153 students since 2015; of these, only 12-15 students are enrolled in certificate programs.

PGS was granted initial accreditation on July 7, 2014 for a period of 5 years, through June 2019. A Structural Change was approved in 2016 (acquisition of Pinchot University). In 2018, a Change of Control was approved to reflect the partnership with Amity Global Education Organization (Amity University). In 2019, accreditation was reaffirmed for 6 years, with a Notice of Concern. The Notice of Concern was issued due to compliance concerns with WSCUC Standards 3 and 4.

This Special Visit Report addresses the following seven recommendations detailed in the February 26, 2020 Commission Action Letter:

1. Build alignment between the administration and the Board regarding the nature, goals, and vision for the PGS-Amity partnership. Communicate the results to faculty, staff, students and alumni through a board-approved statement. Provide regular updates and forums to keep the community apprised and engaged in the institution's vision and direction. (CFRs 1.1, 3.7, 3.9, 4.6)
2. Ensure that the administration's actions to stabilize PGS are in alignment with the Board's greater long-term vision as articulated in the Change of Control documents submitted to the WSCUC Commission in 2018. Any major changes to that vision should be communicated to WSCUC in a timely and comprehensive manner. (CFRs 1.8, 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 3.9)
3. Develop and manage multi-year financial projections that are aligned with educational purpose, realistic enrollment assumptions, and core faculty development, as well as

promotion and product diversification. (CFR 3.4)

4. Ensure academic quality and cohesion through strategic faculty hiring, faculty development, structured opportunities for faculty dialogue, regular direct assessment of student learning outcomes, and the formation of an Academic Affairs Board Committee. (CFRs 2.1, 2.4, 2.8, 3.10, 4.4)
5. Ensure that graduates achieve educational objectives through regular direct assessment that demonstrates achievement of standards. Create an appropriate cycle of program review. (CFRs 1.2, 2.6, 2.7, 4.1, 4.3)
6. Strategically diversify the program mix beyond the current Sustainability MBA by leveraging existing PGS curriculum and exploring synergistic program development opportunities (including those available through the Amity partnership). (CFRs 3.4, 4.6)
7. The partnership with Amity provides PGS with an opportunity available to few US academic institutions to develop a truly innovative, integrated and comprehensive international educational program. PGS should explore ways to expand PGS's impact and reputation through its partnership with Amity and in the context of Amity's network, including, but not limited to, enrollment growth, academic program development, international study, faculty exchange, team projects, and research collaboration. (CFR 4.7)

B. Description of Team's Review Process

The Special Visit team was provided access to and reviewed the 2019 Reaffirmation of Accreditation report and accompanying materials as well as the PGS's January 2021 Special Visit report and accompanying materials. The team convened by videoconference on March 5 and March 23, 2021 to plan the visit. These meetings resulted in requests for additional materials, which PGS made available for the first day of the visit. These materials were reviewed by the team and were used to inform the interviews. The Special Visit occurred March 24-26, 2021. This review was conducted entirely remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, it must also be noted that PGS's operations were also occurring remotely during this period.

Interviews were held with the following Presidio administration, faculty, and staff:

- CEO/President
- ALO/AVP for Institutional and Student Effectiveness
- Chief Academic Officer (CAO)/Academic Dean
- Finance Director
- Board of Directors
- Board Chair
- Senior Leadership team
- Assessment team
- Program development team
- Faculty
- Staff
- Students

A confidential email account was created by WSCUC and the address distributed first to PGS students, staff and faculty and then at the open staff and student meetings. The confidential email received several emails, and these were reviewed and discussed by the team.

The team conferred throughout the visit to discuss materials reviewed and information learned from interviews. After the visit, team members continued working on the written report.

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

PGS's January 2021 Special Visit report was organized and clearly written. The report provided helpful information for the team to begin to gauge if appropriate progress was being made on the seven recommendations. Evidence was provided to illustrate steps being taken by PGS. Still, the report would have benefited from a more substantive response to the recommendations and more detailed analysis to support the institution's conclusions. Team members requested additional materials before the visit commenced, which PGS was able to make available promptly.

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF ISSUES UNDER THE STANDARDS

Recommendation 1. Build alignment between the administration and the Board regarding the nature, goals and vision for the PGS-Amity partnership. Communicate the results to faculty, staff, students and alumni through a board-approved statement. Provide regular updates and forums to keep the community apprised and engaged in the institution’s vision and direction. (CFRs 1.1, 3.7, 3.9, 4.6)

Since the last WSCUC visit, the institution has reaffirmed its mission and seems to have coalesced around a common vision and some key goals. In separate meetings with the board, the board chair, the president and the administration, the team was in consensus that PGS has emerged from what it refers to as its “period of stabilization” with a stronger leadership team, a more fully developed board of directors, a clearer vision for program development and a credible phase-out of its financial dependence on Amity. The board, the president and the leadership team expressed that PGS had needed to attend to foundations and were now at a place where they could better focus on the future.

The partnership with Amity is characterized as participation in an accredited US institution. Amity has completed its \$2 million pledge to PGS. Financial contributions from Amity have helped PGS hire a qualified leadership team and put the institution on a path to stabilization. These contributions are described in the institution’s report as “generous philanthropy”. PGS indicated their appreciation for Amity’s financial support in their recent period of stabilization, and the relationship with Amity was described as collaborative. Going forward, the expectation is that PGS’s US-based programs will be financially self-supporting.

PGS and Amity have congruent philosophies of wanting to make the world a better place and help form solutions to some of the world’s biggest problems. The potential exists to expand the impact of PGS’s thought leadership in sustainability through the network of Amity campuses and programs. While exchange opportunities have been curtailed during the pandemic, and PGS has been busy attending to internal stabilization, the vision for collaboration has not abated. The board continues to be interested in future global initiatives and collaboration around PGS’s areas of expertise and thought leadership, and Amity has resources to enhance such opportunities.

The board of directors reaffirmed PGS’s mission and aspiration to educate changemakers to create a more just, sustainable, and flourishing future.

PGS has grown its board of directors to a current total of twelve members, of which four are from Amity, proportionally less than at the time of the last WSCUC visit. While this may be indicative of a shift to more local control, it more importantly reflects that the board is

functioning as a joint board and has an intentional approach to board development and bringing additional expertise in specific areas, including academic affairs, technology and revenue diversification. The board is more fully formed and structured than at the time of the last WSCUC visit, with the formal addition of Academic Affairs and Development Advisory Committees. At the time of the visit, Amity was represented on the board's Finance Committee and the Academic Advisory Committee, as well as through the board chair.

PGS followed up on Recommendation 1 as requested, with a new statement of strategic alignment developed by the board of directors and the president in 2020.

The PGS Board of Directors stands united and aligned behind the strategy prepared by the PGS Administration. The current strategy builds and expands upon the multi-year vision of the school, begun in 2018, to achieve several major objectives:

- *Grow our student enrollment, including through engaging international students**
- *Improve our current hybrid MBA and Dual program through curricular and pedagogical updates and enhancements*
- *Launch new program and certificate offerings to diversify the PGS portfolio*
- *Build partnerships with other universities and organizations – including Amity University -- to collaborate and share PGS curriculum, thought leadership, and more*

**Note that enrolling international students in the Bay Area has been delayed due to COVID-19 and will be revisited when safe and appropriate. Our 2018 vision has been updated and improved with a new administration that is making decisions based on market research data, financial soundness, and mission alignment. We strongly endorse the direction of the administration and look forward to helping the school meet its goals.*

The statement was emailed to students, faculty, staff, alumni and donors in September 2020 and highlighted three areas of strategic focus:

1. Strengthening and improving the curriculum of the MBA
2. Updating and improving the MPA program while creating new standalone certificates and other degree programs
3. Doubling down on making the PGS community even more diverse, global, and connected

The statement of strategic alignment is further supported by a 3-year Strategic Plan (2020-2023), which was discussed at a State of the School address in January 2021. The central focus of the plan is to grow enrollment through new program development. This includes relaunching the MPA (first cohort started in spring 2021); revising the MBA (work in progress for fall 2021); expanding certificate programs such as an online continuing education climate change course for K-12 educators (piloted and now enrolling); and adding market-relevant mission-enhancing new master's programs (currently in research and development phases).

The COVID pandemic has put further internationalization on hold for now but the goal persists of growing international enrollments and expanding international collaboration when it is safe and appropriate.

The team found that PGS has made substantial progress on Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 2: Ensure that the administration's actions to stabilize PGS are in alignment with the Board's greater long-term vision as articulated in the Change of Control documents submitted to the WSCUC Commission in 2018. Any major changes to that vision should be communicated to WSCUC in a timely and comprehensive manner. (CFR 1.8, 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 3.9)

Since the previous WSCUC visit, the board and administration have made notable strides to align their vision for PGS.

The team's meetings with the board of directors and the board chair confirmed that the long-term vision for the partnership remains unchanged, albeit with a recognition that internal stabilization had been the most immediate priority. With that essentially done, PGS is now focused around the four objectives outlined in the 2020 statement of strategic alignment.

- *Grow student enrollment, including through engaging international students*
- *Improve the hybrid MBA and Dual MBA-MPA programs through curricular and pedagogical updates and enhancements*
- *Launch new program and certificate offerings to diversify the PGS portfolio*
- *Build partnerships with other universities and organizations – including Amity University -- to collaborate and share PGS curriculum, thought leadership, and more*

Stabilization of the administration has started at the top with the president, and the demonstrated support she has received from the board. The team found that the president was given the opportunity and flexibility to build and retool the immediate and extended leadership team. Hiring a new CAO has set the stage to provide stability and consistency from an academic perspective. In her short tenure, the CAO has proven to be accessible to faculty, administration, and students as PGS works through their current phase. PGS has continued to round out their leadership team, with layers starting to develop:

- COO
- Finance Director
- AVP of Admissions
- Director of New Programs
- Director of Development
- Marketing Director
- Director of Instructional Design and Online Learning

PGS has demonstrated a commitment to improving the hybrid MBA and dual MBA/MPA programs. Administration indicated curricular and pedagogical improvements have been significant and well received by faculty and students. The MPA has relaunched. The MBA PLOs are being reviewed for fall 2021 under the leadership of the CAO. While the students interviewed during the visit were mixed in their reactions to the improvements, the team concurred that administration has started to make significant strides in their updates of these programs, and it will continue to be a work in progress.

PGS invested in a market research consultation that helped them identify and prioritize potential areas for program development with an eye to both strategic alignment and revenue. Several potential new programs are being considered for development. PGS is researching and actively meeting with potential donors who could fund their development. Launch dates will likely depend upon which funding occurs first. PGS is projecting they will launch two new degree programs in calendar year 2022 and are hopeful to launch two more in 2023.

The board expressed confidence in the president and the administrative leadership team she is assembling, in terms of both energy and capacity. PGS has made good progress in getting internal alignment with regard to institutional priorities and a vision for program development.

The team found that PGS has made substantial progress on Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 3: Develop and manage multi-year financial projections that are aligned with educational purpose, realistic enrollment assumptions, core faculty development, as well as promotion and product diversification. (CFR 3.4)

PGS has prepared a three-year financial projection in accordance with the recommendation. The projected budget lays out plans for an increase in net revenue of a little over \$3 million between FY 21 and the end of FY 23, with expenses to mirror this projection closely. The budget projection was approved by the board's Finance Committee in October 2020 and presented and approved by the board in November 2020.

The parameters presented to support PGS's budget model were based on the following assumptions, according to PGS's Special Visit report:

- "The launch of several new certificate and master's degree programs, including the relaunch of our online MPA in February 2021 and the planned launch of a new certificate in K12 Education in early 2021. This professional development certificate is intended to equip teachers to bring climate change curriculum to their classrooms, in service of PGS's commitment to environmental sustainability. In addition, in 2022, PGS plans to launch two new master's degree programs. We are currently conducting market research to finalize our decisions.

At least one of the programs will be designed as an online program with a particular appeal to a global audience that can be reached through our partnership with Amity University.

- Increasing the faculty count, both adjunct and full-time faculty, to enable intellectual program leadership. Specifically, PGS plans to grow and have allocated budget resources to allow growth from two full-time faculty in FY21 to four in FY22 and to as many as six in FY23 depending on program growth and institutional need. The growth of adjunct faculty is more completely explained in the multi-year financial model (see Attachment 3A), with costs including both teaching and course development.
- Continued nurturing and development of non-tuition revenue sources, including contributions from alumni, other major donors, and the PGS Consulting arm.
- Thoughtful investments in marketing, technology, and academic support in order to maintain quality and student success in an era of growth.”

PGS has successfully relaunched their online MPA and is launching a climate change course for K-12 educators. PGS was able to keep the price point low for the K-12 course due to fundraising efforts. They are hopeful students taking this course will be a feeder into future online degree programs in education. The president indicated to the team that PGS is currently in discussion with potential donors to fund implementation of additional new online degree programs, potentially two in 2022, and hopefully another two in 2023.

Several members of the board and PGS administration voiced their support for using the projected increase in revenue to increase full-time and adjunct faculty numbers. The team found this will be important for several reasons, including but not limited to providing:

- Increased academic oversight of existing and planned degree programs.
- Increased levels of interactions and communications between faculty and students. This was deemed highly important by the students due to their perception of high faculty turnover in the last 1-2 years.
- Increased need for curriculum development and instruction.

The team received confirmation of continued fundraising efforts from the administration, particularly the president and the associate director of development. The K-12 climate change course was made possible due to outside funding. Amity has completed their full \$2M contribution promise. Further, the federal PPP loan received by PGS has provided additional funding this year. However, there was an increase in scholarships and financial aid awarded this year. There are plans to bring institutional aid back to historical levels.

PGS has made investments in marketing in the past year. UPCEA (University Professional and Continuing Education Association) was hired to provide market research and analysis for PGS plans to start new degree programs. In addition, the new director of instructional design indicated they have made strides in technology and the development of new programs.

The team felt the planned budgeted revenue increase seemed speculative as it was not yet clear that tuition had been determined for the degree programs being planned. The budget plan showed an increase in staffing and marketing over the next two years. The team expressed concern as to whether the resources planned for these areas would be enough to support the projected increase in enrollment since break-even for new programs often takes approximately 2 years. The scalability of their programs and final decisions on tuition will affect the viability of this budget plan.

PGS is expecting to have \$1.5 million in cash at the end of FY 20-21. While they expect many discretionary expenses to return that were eliminated due to COVID, they stated that they will sustain some savings by not seeking office space for FY 21-22. Administration confirmed that budgeting is an inclusive process. The finance director regularly goes over departmental budgets with department heads and has sought feedback on budgeting for FY 21-22.

PGS has thoughtfully addressed Recommendation 3 and is paying close attention to budgets, but the team noted that projections are based on enrollment in programs that are yet to be developed and funded. The team recommends that PGS monitor the strategic plan and adjust the plan and corresponding budget projections in response to evolving information and projections. (CFRs 4.6, 4.7)

Recommendation 4: Ensure academic quality and cohesion through strategic faculty hiring, faculty development, structured opportunities for faculty dialogue, regular direct assessment of student learning outcomes, and the formation of an Academic Affairs Board Committee. (CFRs 2.1, 2.4, 2.8, 3.10, 4.4)

PGS reported that their faculty were largely contracted as part-time adjuncts although many have taught for PGS for many years. PGS's current CAO and their previous CAO serve as their two core full-time faculty in the MBA program. PGS is in the process of hiring a faculty member to lead their MPA program and also plans to hire another full-time faculty to teach across their MPA and MBA programs. PGS encourages faculty retention by offering competitive salaries with progressive increases based on faculty qualifications, longevity at PGS, and performance

evaluations. However, in visiting with the faculty, the team found a lack of consistent awareness about the salary increases for longevity because this is perceived as a new initiative.

PGS leadership expressed their commitment to involving adjunct faculty in decision-making processes and assessment processes. To this end, PGS has created a Faculty Council to aid in faculty dialogue and collaboration. The Special Visit team was provided with information that explained how the Faculty Council was formed, how the members are selected and by whom, what their responsibilities are, and how members are rotated. It was noted that members only serve one year. To increase adjunct faculty engagement, PGS pays Faculty Council members a stipend for their involvement. While the adjunct faculty attested to numerous invitations to be engaged with the Faculty Council, they also reported challenges with balancing involvement with their other responsibilities that are outside of PGS. Since the creation of the Faculty Council is a newer initiative, the new CAO reported seeking ways to increase adjunct faculty engagement with the council.

The faculty hiring process involves both faculty input via the faculty council and administrative input from the CAO. Faculty are assessed not only by their subject matter expertise, teaching experience, and academic and professional accomplishments, but also on their understanding of environmental sustainability, social justice, and systems-thinking and their ability to integrate these concepts in the course curriculum.

The CAO demonstrated commitment to engaging all faculty members in ensuring program quality and to looking for different ways to engage faculty more fully in governance issues and assessment. Notably, adjunct faculty expressed an interest in participating in these activities, indicating that what they have participated in has been valuable in revising their courses and assignments, as well as in understanding the curricular threads and themes in their respective programs. Adjunct faculty also reported wanting more opportunities to dialogue about course design and how the curriculum can be improved.

PGS reported that an Academic Advisory Committee of the board was launched in 2020 that included faculty as well as academic leadership and board members.

While PGS reported that classroom visits occur to improve pedagogy, evidence of what has changed as a result of this practice was unclear. The CAO, who is also a faculty member in the MBA program, indicated she is available and meets with faculty to discuss assignments, syllabi, SLOs, course evaluations, and any other aspects of curriculum delivery and the student experience.

While PGS encourages faculty research and provides faculty development funds to both adjunct and full-time faculty to attend conferences to present research, this practice did not appear to

be widely known or understood by adjunct faculty although they expressed a desire to have access to these funds.

PGS has many faculty governance structures in place as well as plans to involve faculty in assessment and other matters of inquiry into teaching and learning. Regular direct assessment of student learning outcomes is in a nascent stage at PGS. PGS conducts multifaceted indirect assessment via course evaluations, student and alumni surveys, and graduate exit surveys. These assessments have led to curricular revision that is underway as of spring 2021 for rollout in fall 2021. Foundational to direct assessment of SLOs has been the creation of course, program, and institutional learning outcomes informed by thought leaders. Faculty expressed an interest in more opportunities to collaborate and discuss what they teach in order to improve the curriculum. In addition, faculty mentioned that curriculum and program changes were being made quickly, resulting in some student confusion about requirements, a sentiment that was also expressed by some of the students during the visit.

The team found that plans and nascent efforts are underway and that more work remains to be done under Recommendation 4. The team recommends that PGS continue to grow and develop the faculty in alignment with program offerings and to foster opportunities for faculty to dialogue about course and curriculum design, and about changes needed to keep the curriculum in alignment with the PGS mission and vision for its degree programs (CFRs 3.3, 3.10 and 4.4)

Recommendation 5: Ensure that graduates achieve educational objectives through regular direct assessment that demonstrates achievement of standards. Create an appropriate cycle of program review. (CFRs 1.2, 2.6, 2.7, 4.1, 4.3)

PGS's Special Visit report discussed the development of various activities focused on both student learning outcomes assessment and program review. It was clear that PGS has taken WSCUC recommendations seriously and made progress, at multiple levels, to create structures for assessment. The alignment of student learning outcomes (SLOs), course learning outcomes (CLOs), program learning outcomes (PLOs), and institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) illustrated this well. As PGS described, faculty participated in substantive ways at all levels with appropriate support from the institution including stipends to engage in this work. Other steps taken to create structures to facilitate assessment included the establishment of a Faculty Assessment Team, clear involvement of the Chief Academic Officer, and the purchase of *Portfolium*, an assessment platform that integrates with Canvas (PGS's learning management system), which is expected to be implemented in fall 2021. These are all early steps in committing to assessment.

While PGS has taken steps to establish an appropriate cycle of program review, it was noted that the MBA program is in the process of being reviewed and subsequently updated. Of note is that the process is being done in collaboration with the faculty, administration, senior leadership, and a professional accreditation consultant. The MPA program was redesigned using this process. Plans for the process to be used in review of the MBA in Sustainable Studies were described including creating artifact assignments and using *Portfolium* with the goal of revising curriculum in time for the fall 2021 semester. Scant detail was provided as to the specific process of program review, but in interviews with the ALO, steps were described with specific and substantive curricular changes shared. Despite the CAO having only arrived in early 2021, this work is fully ongoing. It is planned for adjunct faculty to be actively involved in program review and direct assessment of student learning. Steps are being taken to appropriately compensate them for their time and effort. Coupled with the ALO's details regarding the assessment infrastructure that will ultimately be implemented through the software *Portfolium*, it appears that Presidio is putting into place a means to ensure regular direct assessment and program review occurs and findings are considered and addressed.

The team found that PGS is putting in place credible plans for assessment. The team recommends that PGS continue building and implementing assessment infrastructures and practices with particular attention to engaging all faculty in the articulation and documentation of these practices in order to facilitate an iterative process of improvement centered on student learning. (CFR 2.4)

Recommendation 6: Strategically diversify the product mix beyond the current Sustainability MBA by leveraging existing PGS curriculum and exploring synergistic program development opportunities (including those available through the Amity partnership). (CFRs 3.4 and 4.6)

In addressing this issue, the team looked closely at PGS's new board Academic Affairs Committee, including minutes and statement of purpose. The team also reviewed the MPA online PLO map, the updated F21 financial forecast, and, most importantly, the revised Strategic Plan from July 2020. In addition, meetings were held with the program development team, which included the Director of Program Expansion, the CAO and Academic Dean, the Director of Instructional Design and Online Learning, the AVP for Admissions, the president and a faculty member.

PGS has invested significantly in benchmarking and research studies through an external consultation with UPCEA and used those results to strategically diversify their academic product mix. (CFR 4.6) The first result of this research was a revision of the MPA. UPCEA research revealed that PGS had a market advantage by being a smaller school, but recommended several

key adjustments, which included offering the program online, reducing program tuition, and focusing on equity and sustainability.

The MPA was quickly revised to be 100% online (which allowed for a lower price point) and was launched in this new format in February 2021. With the quick turnaround in this revision, PGS was able to surpass their enrollment goal of seven students with nine currently enrolled. PGS has a fall 2021 matriculation goal for the MPA of 20 students. This projection is based on a large list of prior inquiries, search engine data analysis, and the hiring of a dedicated staff member to oversee MPA enrollment. The team felt this was a strategic, and easily implementable, adjustment that fulfilled the previous review team's recommendation to leverage the existing PGS curriculum. (CFR 3.4)

In addition, PGS developed a professional development class on climate change for K12 teachers that is being implemented this spring. PGS hopes that this class will be an entry point into the "teacher education space" and raise awareness among students for future recruitment to their degree programs.

The Program Development Team shared areas of exploration for several additional master's programs, including three focused on different aspects of sustainability. At the time of the visit, PGS leadership expressed that two of four proposed programs were expected to launch at some point in 2022, while additional research was needed for programs that would veer further from the institution's current core capacities.

The team commends PGS for investing in market research and pursuing innovative and mission-congruent new programs. It cautions PGS, however, that students have expressed some concern that resources may be directed into new programs at the expense of current programs. PGS leadership will need to remain vigilant to ensure close communication with students even in times of rapid change.

The team found that PGS has made progress on Recommendation 6. In addition, they are using marketing data to make informed decisions about future programs that are sustainable and mission-aligned.

Recommendation 7: The partnership with Amity provides PGS with an opportunity available to few US academic institutions to develop a truly innovative, integrated and comprehensive international educational program. PGS should explore ways to expand PGS's impact and reputation through its partnership with Amity and in the context of Amity's network,

including, but not limited to, enrollment growth, academic program development, international study, faculty exchange, team projects, and research collaboration. (CFR 4.7)

PGS indicated a number of new initiatives were underway prior to the onset of COVID including inviting Amity faculty to PGS, joint training of Amity and PGS faculty on the business curriculum, and bringing international students to the Bay Area through partnerships with other institutions. These initiatives were paused due to the pandemic, although an international online master's degree is being explored with Amity. While, understandably, COVID has been impactful on implementation of international plans, the team questioned whether more collaborative planning conversations could have taken place to prepare for future implementation. (CFR 4.7)

PGS's board indicated their interest in potential opportunities available through the affiliation with Amity. The team recommends that, as PGS continues to stabilize and as opportunities for international cooperation resume after COVID, PGS continue to explore ways to expand its impact and reputation through its partnership with Amity. (CFRs 4.6 and 4.7)

SECTION III – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings

PGS has emerged from what it refers to as its “period of stabilization” with a strong leadership team, a more fully developed board, a clear vision for program development and a credible phase-out of its financial dependence on Amity. It is now staking its future growth on the development of mission- and market- relevant new programs, which also forms the focus of its fundraising strategy. Securing federal stimulus funds has also helped build PGS's cash reserves and positioned the institution for investment in new programs and faculty in fiscal years 2022 and 2023.

Commendations

The team commends PGS for:

- 1. Developing strategic vision alignment between the Board of Directors and the administration and communicating the strategic direction to the PGS community.*
- 2. Putting in place a solid leadership team with key hires in academics, finance, and admissions.*

3. *Managing finances closely including strategically reducing discretionary expenses and accessing additional sources of funds while still investing in key personnel.*
4. *Growing the Board of Directors and formally structuring it to include an Academic Affairs advisory committee and a Development committee.*
5. *Updating and relaunching the online MPA program.*
6. *Investing in market research and pursuing innovative and mission-congruent new programs such as a climate change course for K-12 educators.*

Recommendations

The team recommends that PGS:

1. *Continue building and implementing assessment infrastructures and practices with particular attention to engaging all faculty in the articulation and documentation of these practices in order to facilitate an iterative process improvement centered on student learning. (CFR 2.4)*
2. *Continue to grow and develop the faculty in alignment with program offerings. Foster opportunities for faculty to dialogue with each other about course design, curriculum design, and necessary changes to keep the curriculum in alignment with the PGS mission and vision for its degree programs (CFRs 3.3, 3.10 and 4.4)*
3. *Monitor the strategic plan and adjust as appropriate, under the Board's leadership in collaboration with the administration, faculty and staff in response to evolving information and projections. (CFRs 4.6 and 4.7)*
4. *Monitor and adjust multi-year budget projections. Install internal audit procedures and continue working toward realistic budgetary goals, based on enrollment, expense management, necessary investments, and fundraising. (CFR 3.4)*
5. *Continue to explore ways to expand PGS's impact and reputation through its partnership with Amity. (CFRs 4.6 and 4.7)*